

one day, and four hours on the half-holiday, totalling forty-seven hours per weeks, whereas the harsher masters exact the full fifty-two hours allowed by the present law, getting the full time from girl assistants, and unlimited hours from the men.

These "unlimited hours from the men" cause me to suggest that some measure for the protection of male shop assistants, similar to that recommended for men in factories, should be introduced. It was of little use giving all shop-assistants a weekly half-holiday if on ordinary working-days the hours of male assistants could be indefinitely prolonged to more than nullify the advantage of the holiday. Some scale of working-hours should be fixed, preferably time-limits within which they should be forbidden to work, as women in factories now are forbidden to work between 6 p.m. and 7.45 a.m.

Other provisions of the Factories Act might also with advantage be introduced into the Shops Act. For instance, a minimum wage for overtime would be a great boon to many overworked shop-assistants whose private time is now unfairly exploited to the prevention of recreation and detriment of health. The provisions of the Employment of Boys and Girls without Payment Prevention Act should also be made to apply to youngsters in shops as well as in factories, since there are some persons whose consciences do not forbid them to make money out of the unpaid labour of weary children.

I sincerely trust that the Bill of last year regulating clerical labour in offices will again be laid before the House, and this session pass into law. The generous treatment which the clerks in a few banks and offices receive from their employers only throws into darker contrast the "sweating" and parsimony to be found in other establishments. Only the firm hand of the State can possibly secure permanent improvement. For this purpose the present Act will need amending in some small but vital sections.

Warehouses have hitherto escaped notice in labour legislation, being neither shops, offices, nor factories. They, however, in some cases, are in need of supervision, and should be brought into line with other industrial establishments in regard to sanitation, hours, &c.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION ACT.

It is a matter of congratulation to labour in New Zealand that this Act and its regulations have now been proclaimed as in force. It had only too long been considered fair that a workman should include as an equivalent for his daily wage not only his toil, but the risk of life and limb—nay, even the ruin of his family, if a serious accident happened. It is too much to hope that industrial enterprises will ever be carried on without the profit of one person being bought by the danger of some one else; but, at all events, the evil is to some extent now minimised by making the industry bear the pecuniary loss, instead of the victim of an accident and his family having to do so.

CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

In accordance with the provisions of the new Act, a separate return is herewith forwarded showing the number of members of each industrial union. Many trade-unions, and persons desirous of forming industrial unions, had been impatiently awaiting the passing of the new Act in order to relieve themselves of the disability caused by a judgment of Mr. Justice Edwards, President of the Arbitration Court, to the effect that only unions of workers who were "producers" were entitled to come under the jurisdiction of the Act. By this judgment all distributors, such as shop-assistants, sailors, carters, tram-drivers, &c., were excluded, and after the Act of last session was passed these classes of workers hastened to register. Very considerable addition to our ordinary duties thus fell not only on myself as Registrar, but on the clerical staff. Some eighty-five industrial unions have been registered during the last eight months, and are thus entitled to the wider privileges afforded by the Act of 1900. It will probably be necessary to pass a short amending Act this session, as the practical application of the present Act has shown that in the process of passing through Parliament some few points of friction were introduced, and need reconsideration before we can regard the statute as absolutely perfect.

EDWARD TREGGAR.

SIR,—

Wellington, 25th June, 1901.

During the past year a larger number of men have been assisted to employment on Government works than usual, owing to the North Island Main Trunk, Otago Central, Midland, Stratford, Kawakawa, Waipara, Cheviot, and other lines being pushed on with greater vigour than hitherto. Private employment has also been very busy, and in many cases, both for Government and private work, we have been unable to get the class of men required. There is great difficulty experienced in getting young men and lads for dairy farming, the great objection being the long hours which this branch of labour entails upon the employés, and the sleeping accommodation is not always as good as it should be. In the cities work of all kinds has been fairly plentiful, very few complaints having been received. Boot-manufacturers say that they cannot get girls as machinists. For some reason or other this branch of industry does not seem to be a favourite one with women, and yet good wages are earned. Clothing-manufacturers also complain that they cannot get enough hands, while the servant-girl difficulty is as pronounced as ever.

I have as usual during the past twelve months visited most of the towns in the colony, and have found the Inspectors alert and active in the discharge of their duties, which, as is well known, are at times exceedingly difficult, much tact being required in dealing with what is termed the conflicting interests of employer and employé. Very few complaints have been received, thus showing that the Inspectors carry out their duties faithfully, impartially, and well. The work of