

## DUNEDIN.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Dunedin, 9th April, 1904.

I have the honour to submit my report on the working of this branch of the Department for the year ending the 31st March, 1904.

## FACTORIES.

I am pleased to say the period has been one of general satisfaction to employers and employees. Factory-owners give more attention to the general arrangements connected with their workrooms than was customary in past years. Little or no difficulty is now experienced in their providing for the comfort of their employees in such matters as fire-escapes, sanitary arrangements, and cleanliness. The general welfare of the worker has now the attention it deserves; and it is patent to all employers that better results can be obtained by studying the comfort of those employed in their factories. One of the chief factors is good ventilation, and this is most necessary. I think the time has now passed when employers were in constant temptation of securing wealth by means which were injurious to their workers. The new factories that have sprung into existence the last year have been a decided improvement on the old idea that any place was good enough for a workroom, for I find that employers have a great desire themselves to improve the condition of the worker in this respect. The Factories Act of 1901 is much admired, and is now working exceedingly well, giving general satisfaction to the employer. It is indeed pleasing to be able to say that not a single case has been brought against any employer for not adhering to or complying with the requisition to improve the sanitary condition of his workroom, and I wish to record the valuable assistance given me by the District Health Officer (Dr. Ogston) and his assistants, and by the city officials.

During the period there has been an increase in the number of factories, which is now 648; and the number of persons employed is 8,329—viz., 5,451 males and 2,878 females. It will be seen by the above numbers that Dunedin is capable of standing heavy knocks, such as last year, when the dredging slump affected so many, and the engineering trade suffered so heavily thereby, throwing a large number of men out of work. But this was only for a very short time. New life and energy have sprung into those industries again, and now every engineering shop is steadily increasing its hands; and I feel confident there will be a much larger increase next year, as everything points in that direction.

The amount of overtime worked is as follows: 1,306 males over sixteen years of age worked 129,242 hours; 1,487 females and youths under sixteen years of age have worked 46,200 hours: making a total number of hours worked by 2,893 persons of 175,442 hours.

During the year 502 permits have been issued to young persons to work in factories—viz., 219 boys and 283 girls. Of the boys, 71 passed the Fourth Standard, 69 the Fifth, and 79 the Sixth. Of the girls, 84 passed the Fourth Standard, 107 the Fifth, and 92 the Sixth.

## ACCIDENTS.

There have been 55 accidents during the year. One was fatal and three of a serious nature; the remaining 51 were of a slight nature. In all cases the machinery was inspected and inquiries made, and when additional guarding was necessary it was cheerfully done by the employers. It is now noticeable that in factories where machinery is used those in charge have a desire to guard and protect where necessary; this is a great assistance to the Inspector in carrying out his duties, for if machinery is protected properly it must have the desired effect in reducing the number of accidents.

## SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

This Act is working very well. Very few complaints are heard; but where a complaint has been made I have at once made strict inquiries, and in most cases found there was little ground for such complaint.

The great difficulty is in getting good domestic servants. The competition seems keen, and some of the licensees are making it a rule to charge only the applicants, which is most unfair to others who keep strictly to the scale of fees.

There are sixteen licensed offices in the city, and all are well conducted.

## SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

There is little to report on the working of the above Act, as the same difficulties still exist in administering it. A colonial closing-day is much needed.

I am of opinion that there should be no exemptions for fruiterers; they ought to close on the closing-day of all other shops. As the law stands at present they can sell articles that other shops have to close for selling, as under the heading of a "fruiterer" they can sell what is customary to the trade. An instance of this was given in a prosecution here against two fruiterers for selling flowers on the half-holiday, while the florist a few doors away was compelled to close for selling a like article. It was held that it was customary for fruiterers to sell flowers, and the charges against them were dismissed. This has given rise to much dissatisfaction among shopkeepers, and it makes it very difficult for the Inspector to carry out his duties.

## INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

This Act is working as well as can be expected; but, like most of the other Acts, it requires a large amount of attention and care, so that its use may not become an abuse. It is held by some employers to be one of the most equitable Acts on the statute-books of New Zealand. It was predicted by some that it would do away with energy and competition, but I think this has been proved to be wrong. In fact, the benefits of this Act to the employers and the workers and to the community as a whole are great. All differences can now be settled without having recourse to strikes or lock-outs.