

advantage to restrict the hours of Chinese in this direction, and no doubt this provision will prove extremely beneficial to the European workers in New Zealand.

#### SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

Statistics relating to shops are published for the first time. They give analogous information to the factory figures, and should prove of great interest to those who study industrial matters, although the value of the figures, as in the case of the factory returns, will be greatly enhanced when future statistics are published, so that comparisons can be made.

The total number of shops in the colony is 10,727, employing 29,141 persons—viz., 22,812 males and 6,329 females. The total wages paid for the year are £1,482,373.

Section 21 of the Act, providing for closing by requisition of shopkeepers, has, generally speaking, been largely availed of throughout the colony; but in some trades, such as tobacconists, great difficulty has been experienced in stopping unfair competition by grocers and Chinese store-keepers, who stock tobacco and cigarettes as side lines, and reap a harvest while the tobacconists are closed.

A new paragraph on the lines of section 17 of "The Factories Act, 1901," is necessary for insertion in the Shops and Offices Act, to provide for the keeping of records as to the names of employees, ages, earnings, overtime worked, &c.

A further provision is necessary to provide that shop-assistants employed in hotels, restaurants, or eating-houses shall be allowed a half-holiday from 2 p.m. on the statutory closing-day instead of 1 p.m. as at present. It will be admitted on all sides that it is most unreasonable to expect employers to allow their waiters and waitresses to leave at 1 o'clock, just when they are most urgently required. A similar provision to this is already part of the Shops Act in New South Wales and Western Australia.

It is hoped that before the next report is presented I shall be able to inform you that a card system on the lines of that introduced under the Factories Act will be in force in regard to shops.

#### *Re* CHILD LABOUR IN THE DAIRYING INDUSTRY.

Last year careful inquiries were made into the conditions of the children employed in this industry, and, although the reports received generally showed that the tendency to employ children of tender years was decreasing, still sufficient evidence was found to justify some restrictive legislation. These reports have been submitted to the Government for consideration.

#### THE INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

During the year eleven employers' unions were registered with 178 members, and thirty-four workers' unions with 1,336 members, or a total of forty-five unions with 1,514 members. The total number of unions in the colony as at the 31st December, 1906, was—Employers, 109; membership, 3,337; workers, 274; membership, 34,978. Thirty-five partial amendments and fourteen complete amendments to rules were registered during the year.

The Inspectors of Awards have had a very busy year. They have conducted a total of 406 cases, of which 359 were won, thirty-eight dismissed, and nine withdrawn. It will be noted from the returns that a very small percentage of the cases have been lost, thus showing that great care has been exercised by the Department in inquiring into alleged breaches before taking the parties to Court. By far the largest number of cases were taken in Wellington District—i.e., 285, as against forty-nine in Canterbury, forty-nine in Otago and Southland, and nineteen in Auckland. The reason for this large number of breaches in Wellington is partly due to the attitude taken by some employers against the Wellington Cooks and Waiters' agreement. The conditions imposed on employers were, to a great extent, very different from those ruling under the old award, and this, combined with the fact that the employers, through inadvertence, did not refer the case to the Arbitration Court, caused considerable feeling against the agreement. Over seventy-six cases of alleged breaches were inquired into under this agreement alone, and sixty-seven were referred to the Arbitration Court. The principal bone of contention was the engagement of non-unionists.