

attributed to the lack of safeguard appliances, great care always being exercised in this direction on inspection in order to minimise danger of accidents.

PROSECUTIONS.

There were 16 charges made during the year. In each case conviction was obtained.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

This Act is working very smoothly, giving little trouble. It would be an advantage if it were amended to make provision for a wages-book for ordinary time, as well as overtime. At present there is no provision other than that contained in section 27, subsection (2), which only applies to offices.

During the year warrants to work overtime in shops were issued for 612 assistants, who worked a total of 6,753 hours, 349 male assistants working 4,588 hours, and 263 females 2,165 hours.

Section 4, clause (b) of subsection (1), provides for one day in each week when eleven hours may be worked. Several shops in the city close at 1 p.m. on Saturday, and do not observe any long night. They claim the right to bring assistants back on separate nights during the week. It is therefore possible that assistants may be back each night in the week except Saturday, and no breach of the law occurs. I think the Act should be altered so as to provide one specific day in each week to be observed as the long night when Saturday is the closing-day.

During the year 20 charges were preferred against 16 employers, all substantiated.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

There is little or no trouble with this Act. There are very few complaints, and in these—with the exception of the case mentioned below—the complainants were at fault, as they had failed to take up places procured for them, and then endeavoured to have the fees refunded.

Forty-one licenses were issued during the year. This is a large increase on the number granted last year, and may be accounted for by the general prosperity that has obtained, and also by the continued applications made prominent in the advertisements inserted by employers for workers.

There was one prosecution, and the license-holder was heavily fined (and his license indorsed) for taking a watch and chain as security for a fee of 6s. 6d.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

The Court held only one sitting—at the beginning of the year—when 18 cases, which had been filed in the previous year, were disposed of: 3 were dismissed, and convictions obtained in the other 15, penalties amounting to £54 being inflicted.

During the year just ended there has been a marked increase in the number of breaches of awards and industrial agreements committed by parties. Hitherto the Department had adopted a lenient course, especially where the awards were in their infancy. This leniency, I am sorry to state, has been abused, parties simply ignoring their liability, and we have been compelled to adopt a deterrent policy by recourse to the Court. From the year's investigations there are no less than 115 cases filed for enforcement. In addition, settlement was permitted in 42 cases without recourse to the Court, they being cases of inadvertence on the part of employers and workers. Beyond these cases quoted, there were a very large number of complaints investigated, which were found to be without foundation. In others it was found that the employers were at fault; but a citation could not operate on account of the unions having failed to keep the "employment-book" in the manner provided. Greater care is, however, now being exercised in this respect.

These statistics, besides Auckland City, embrace the country districts of Paeroa, Thames, Te Aroha, Rotorua, Hamilton, Cambridge, and Drury.

The prominence in the newspapers of such a large number of cases dealt with by the Court will, it is hoped, impress parties with the necessity and importance of giving the same conformity to these awards as they know they are required to give to the statutes. Over 40 of the cases filed for enforcement are brought against workers, and it is to be hoped employees will be brought to recognise their responsibility to keep the awards. If they do so breaches will certainly be diminished. The long delay in the hearing of the enforcements is considered to be a large factor in the laxity exhibited by parties in complying with the awards.

The additional regulations respecting interpretations, whereby the Inspector may make direct application, has proved a great boon and enables many conflicting questions to be expeditiously settled.

In the month of November a number of motormen and conductors of the Auckland Electric Tramways Company summarily left their cars, and caused a complete stoppage of the tramway service. Fortunately, the deadlock was of short duration, consideration of the matters in dispute at a mass meeting of the employees with the managing director resulting in the men at once resuming their duties; and what might have been a very serious situation for those immediately concerned and the community was happily smoothed over. Investigations of the trouble were made and reported, the result being that citations are being filed against all parties, and will be heard at the first sitting of the Court.

In conclusion I have to thank the officers of the staff for their courtesy and willingness to assist me in the labours of the Department, and in a special manner I wish to thank Mr. E. Le Cren, who is a most obliging, energetic, and efficient officer.

I have, &c.,

JAMES SHANAGHAN,

Inspector of Factories.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.