

Engineering has improved. The turnover is not so large as formerly, but the past year's transactions are an advance on the output of previous seasons.

Ship building and repairing : First-class time made, and a large quantity of overtime worked, and an improvement on past returns.

Felt-hat manufacturing : Workers in this line have had a very bad year. This industry is on the decline, and many tradesmen have left for the Australian States.

Boot-manufacturing : Decided progress has been manifested throughout the year, and probably better time has been made than has been experienced for some seasons past.

Confectionery and preserving works have all been kept running full time, and it has been difficult to overtake orders, owing to a scarcity of suitable hands.

During the year skilled and unskilled workers to the number of 941 were assisted by the Department, 490 being sent to private employment and 451 to Government works.

An abundance of suitable work having been carried on throughout the province, the task of placing this class has been rather easy, and, notwithstanding many arrivals from the southern States of Australia, it was found impossible on some occasions to supply the demand for good navvies or serviceable country workers.

THE FACTORIES ACT.

Nothing unusual can be noted in connection with the operations of this Act, with the exception of section 14 of the amended Act of 1907. The provisions of this section rendering it compulsory on the part of employers to pay wages for the time lost under certain conditions during portion of a week is not favourably regarded by either employer or employee. 2,729 visits of inspection have been made to workrooms, and particular attention has been given to sanitation, payment of wages, and the keeping of records, and though our efforts in connection with these matters have not effected as good results as hoped for, yet considerable improvement has been made in many factories.

Considerable amount of time has been devoted to complaints and breaches. The number of items recorded to which special attention was given being 288. Of these, 10 were, with your approval, dealt with by means of prosecution. Of this number, 5 were decided in favour of the Department, 2 dismissed, and 3 withdrawn.

During the year 1,171 factories were registered, giving employment to 10,541 persons—namely, 3,360 women and 7,181 men. Certificates of fitness were issued to 584, representing 285 boys and 299 girls. 3,653 persons worked overtime, to the extent of 240,783 hours. Male workers over the age of sixteen years, numbering 1,881, worked 179,368 hours, while 1,772 women and lads under sixteen years were employed 61,415 hours.

Inquiries have been made and reports forwarded in respect to 121 accidents. Fortunately none were of a fatal character, only one could be said to be of a serious nature, and the major portion were trivial. We have nevertheless deemed it incumbent upon employers to take every possible precaution, and safeguard employees who are engaged in working machinery of a dangerous character. Special visits of inspection have been made in this connection, and efforts undertaken to carry out the provisions of the Act dealing with this contingency.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

Owing to the fact that it has long been regarded as customary for shops to close at specified times, very little difficulty has been met with in dealing with the hours of assistants, and no serious breaches have occurred in this respect.

A large amount of adverse criticism has been evidenced on behalf of office and warehouse assistants, who are, it is alleged, compelled to work long hours, and on account of the various exemptions of the Act are not covered by its operations. In this connection there appears to be a strong desire that this class of employee should in some measure be provided for.

During the year 17 breaches of the Act were dealt with by the Stipendiary Magistrate's Court, and convictions obtained in 16 cases.

The number of shops in this district is 1,234, employing 3,457 assistants—viz., 2,516 males and 941 females.

During the period under review 2,549 hours overtime were worked by 165 employees.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

A number of official visits have been made to various offices, and, with one exception, all interested have conducted their business in keeping with the statutory provisions.

The effect of the Amendment Act of 1907 in reducing the amount of fee payable by the employee has not led to increased business. It is, nevertheless, considered to be a more equitable charge than was the case previously.

Great difficulty was experienced by various agencies in the obtaining of suitable hands, this was particularly so in regard to domestics and country workers ; in these two branches there has been a great scarcity of workers.

The number of registered offices in this district is 20.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

No serious difficulties have arisen in this district in respect to the administration of this Act. In a great measure this is due to the action of the Department in issuing free copies of awards to employers who for the most part endeavour to make themselves familiar with terms and requirements of the various awards. It is also noticeable that the feeling existing between the representatives of the employers and the employees is of a commendable character, and, as a result, a very large number of com-