

FACTORIES ACT.

Factories throughout the district have been kept busy, and factory-owners are apparently satisfied with the amount of business done during the year.

The general complaint has been the scarcity of labour, which has caused a considerable amount of overtime to be worked in all branches of trade.

Very little difficulty is now experienced in carrying out the provisions of the Act. Special attention has been paid during the year to the protection of machinery in sawmills, sanitation in bakchouses, and the regular payment of wages to employees; and employers, as a rule, have given every consideration to suggestions made for protection of machinery or for better sanitary arrangements, air-space, &c.

The number of factories registered during the year is 257, employing 1,547 hands—viz., 1,306 males and 241 females, an increase of 3 factories on last year's returns.

The number of hands employed in factories shows an increase of 269 males and 10 females.

Overtime: 144 warrants to work overtime were issued to 139 boys under sixteen years of age and women, who worked 5,179 hours; 143 males worked 4,968 hours: total, 282 persons worked 10,108 hours, as against 6,057 hours worked by 204 persons last year.

Permits to work in factories were issued during the year to 41 young persons—viz., 29 boys and 12 girls.

ACCIDENTS.

Eight accidents were reported and inquired into during the year. The most serious was the loss of two fingers at the second joint on the right hand by a man taking sawdust from under circular saw. The other accidents were of a minor nature, chiefly cuts and bruises resulting from over-confidence in working machines. I consider this to be a very low percentage of accidents, and it speaks well for employers as to safeguarding machinery in factories.

PROSECUTIONS.

The following cases were taken under this Act during the year: 1 case failing to report accident; 4 cases failing to register factories; 1 case exposing goods for sale made other than in a factory without affixing label; 2 cases for failing to pay wages fortnightly; and 2 cases for failing to keep proper records in factories: total, 10; convictions obtained in all cases. Three cases were also taken on behalf of female workers, back wages recovered amounting to £11.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

During the year 265 shops have been registered under this Act, employing 626 persons.

The various provisions of the Act may be said to have worked fairly smoothly during the year. Early closing has been requisitioned for by a majority of the shopkeepers in nearly all trades, and in the opinion of the larger shopkeepers it will not be long before the late night will become a thing of the past, the tendency now being to make Saturday afternoon the statutory half-holiday. At the present time this is being tried in this district, but no definite opinion can yet be obtained as to its success or otherwise.

During the year warrants were issued to 122 shop-assistants, who worked 2,397 hours overtime. There were 8 cases under this Act brought before the Court, and convictions secured in all cases.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

There are no servants' registry offices in this district.

SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT.

There are 7 shearing-sheds in the district, and the accommodation for shearers in all cases is satisfactory. In most cases the shearers are local. At the various stations visited I found everything clean, with ample sleeping-accommodation, and, as a rule, all meals being taken at the homestead.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

The various awards may be said to be working fairly smoothly, and the amount of friction existing is very small considering the number of persons affected in the district by the various awards. During the year 16 alleged breaches of awards, lodged by secretaries of unions and others, have been investigated; after careful inquiry 13 alleged breaches could not be sustained. During the year 29 cases were brought before the Court, conviction obtained in 18 cases, 7 dismissed, and 4 withdrawn. The majority of these cases were filed twelve months prior to the sitting of the Arbitration Court, and in many cases witnesses had then left the district, so that when the cases were called, through inability to procure evidence, they had either to be withdrawn or were dismissed. It would, in my opinion, be to the interest of all parties concerned if the Act was amended so that breaches of awards could be heard by Stipendiary Magistrates; cases would then be heard within a reasonable time, and before witnesses had left the district.

In concluding my report, I desire to thank the officers of other branches of the public service for the cheerful manner in which they have rendered me any assistance required, also other persons with whom my duties have brought me in contact, for their courtesy and attention to any suggestion which it has been my duty to make.

I have, &c.,

S. TYSON,

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

Inspector of Factories.