

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

This Act is working very satisfactorily. There is practically no opposition to its provisions. 1,233 shops, in which were engaged 3,020 employees and 1,220 employers, were placed on the register during the year. Overtime worked has not varied much from last year, 638 persons having worked 9,896 hours—i.e., 276 males worked 4,584 hours, and 362 females have worked 3,312 hours.

Prosecutions.—During the year there were 20 cases brought before the Court. Twelve convictions were secured, and 8 cases were dismissed; these latter include 7 cases brought against chemists for keeping their shops open later than the hour fixed by requisition during "Fleet week." The Court held that the breach occurred under exceptional circumstances, and dismissed the cases. In the other case the evidence was conflicting.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

This Act has worked satisfactorily during the year. We have not experienced any difficulty in administering it, and have received very few complaints, all of which proved groundless when investigated. There are 31 offices registered in the city and suburbs.

LEGISLATURE ACT.

It was complained that a joinery firm refused to grant time off for their men to record their votes on general election day; proceedings were taken, and the firm was fined £1 with £1 10s. costs.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

This Act is working as satisfactorily as can reasonably be expected. The work done from this office extends over the whole of the Northern Industrial District, where 71 awards of the Court of Arbitration and industrial agreements are in force governing the industrial relations between a large proportion of the employers and workers in the district. Where the awards extend over such a large field as is comprised in the Northern Industrial District, visits of inspection to the country are frequently necessary, and in this connection visits have been made to the Northern Wairoa, Kaipara, Whangarei, Northern Mines, Rotorua, and the Waikato, to which districts some of the Auckland awards extend, in addition to local awards that are in force in the different localities; and, taking into consideration the number of awards and the number of persons working under them, there are very few breaches of awards committed, and it is very satisfactory to find that an earnest endeavour is generally made to adhere loyally to the awards made by the Court of Arbitration to regulate the industries concerned. The new conditions (providing, amongst other things, for enforcement cases to be taken in the Stipendiary Magistrates' Courts) brought into force by the amended Act of last year have not had sufficient trial in this district to enable one to judge of their advantage yet. Section 58 of the amendment, requiring all parties to an award to keep a wage and overtime book in the form provided in regulation form 1-42, a specimen page of which, with a copy of the award, has been sent to employers, seems to be the least observed, as many employers are keeping to their old methods, and are thereby rendering themselves liable to a heavy penalty for a breach of the Act for not keeping a proper wages-book, and also for failing to post in a conspicuous place in the factory or premises a copy of the award, where it may be seen by the workers. During the year there have been 556 alleged breaches reported, including those discovered by the Inspector. Of those, 155 were filed as applications for enforcement: penalties were inflicted in 45 cases, breach recorded in 29 cases, 20 cases were treated as interpretation, 12 cases were withdrawn, and the remainder were dismissed for various reasons. In 56 cases arrears of wages were promptly paid, and no further action was taken. 345 other cases were investigated in which no breach or ground for complaint was discovered. Very many of these complaints have arisen through ignorance of the parties of the provisions of the awards they have been working under, but now that the awards have been so widely distributed, the plea of ignorance will cease to be a valid excuse with the Court. One matter causing some difficulty in respect to enforcements is in procuring evidence. The fear of offending employers sometimes causes witnesses subpoenaed by the Department to give hostile evidence, while the defendants' witnesses may give evidence freely and fearlessly to their own advantage, with the result that a strong case for the plaintiff may be made to appear a frivolous one for want of the evidence that was promised before proceedings were commenced. There is also a reluctance on the part of the Magistrate's Court to grant witnesses' expenses, even in cases where the witness loses wages by attending the Court. This helps to make it more difficult to procure the necessary evidence that should be given at the hearing of the cases.

CONCLUSION.

I have to thank Dr. Purdy and the officers of the Public Health Department for the ready manner in which they have given their assistance when asked for, and for their uniform courtesy on such occasions.

In conclusion, I have to express my hearty thanks to the members of the staff for the manner in which they one and all have attended to their various duties during the year.

I have, &c.,

JAMES SHANAGHAN,

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

Inspector in Charge.

WELLINGTON.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Wellington, 14th April, 1909.

During the year ending the 31st March last trade generally has not been so good as for the preceding year, although from a manufacturer's point of view it cannot be said to have been bad. Some trades have been busy, and quite on a par with last year, while others have been slack.

The building trades have been exceedingly slack, although towards the end of the year an improvement has been shown. This slackness is particularly noticeable in the suburbs, where building operations have been practically at a standstill.