

Overtime is still on the increase. For the period just ended 927 persons worked 50,119 hours—viz., 195 females and boys under sixteen worked 4,440 hours, and 732 males over sixteen worked 45,670 hours. This shows an increase of 14,962 hours over last year's returns.

Inquiries have been made and reports forwarded in respect to 52 accidents. Fortunately, only one was of a serious nature, due in a great measure, it may be said, to the care taken under the Acts to see that all machinery, belting, &c., is properly guarded. Where I found it necessary to make suggestions for the protection of workers, employers promptly had them carried out.

There have been 7 prosecutions under this Act during the year, and in each case the decision was in favour of the Department. The most important case was that in which a shopkeeper was charged with failing to affix proper labels to articles made in other than a registered factory, and for which he was convicted and fined.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

This Act works satisfactorily. During the period a majority of the hairdressers, tobacconists, drapers, mercers, tailors, and clothiers had the closing-hours in their trades fixed under section 25. Dissatisfaction has been frequently expressed by certain shopkeepers in this connection who refused to sign the requisition, but who are compelled by the majority of shopkeepers to close their shops.

The number of shops in this district is 270, and it can be said that these are well conducted.

The overtime worked in shops is still on the increase—171 males worked 2,597 hours, and 51 females worked 444 hours, making a total of 3,041 hours. This shows an increase of 1,182 hours as compared with last year.

There have been 12 prosecutions under this Act; 8 convictions were recorded, and the other 4 cases were withdrawn.

I must refer to the necessity of provision being made in the Shops and Offices Act to make it compulsory for shopkeepers to keep wages and overtime books, which would enable the Inspector to do his work more satisfactorily.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

There are now 4 offices duly registered, and from a close inspection I found (with one exception) the books all in good order. The only complaint I have to make is that advertisements for men wanted are kept in the newspapers for some time after the positions are filled. I would therefore suggest that the Act be amended to prevent workers from being misled in this way.

THE INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

The year just passed has been a somewhat eventful one, but I am pleased to report that the two strikes that took place were only of a few hours' duration. The first was that of the Hastings Bakers' Drivers, when I was able to induce the men to resume work. The strike only lasted eight working-hours. (In this case it was found there was no breach of the Act, as no award was in force.) The second case was that of the Fellmongers at the Paki Paki Freezing-works. In this case an application was made under the amended Act for a penalty for striking, and twenty men were fined £1 each and costs.

During the year I also prevented the Plasterers of Hawke's Bay from going out on strike by inducing them to refer their trouble to the Court and withdraw their ultimatum.

The year has been an exceedingly busy one so far as the number of complaints of breaches of awards, &c., inquired into is concerned, as the following figures will show: 179 investigations were made as to alleged breaches committed; in 56 cases no breach was disclosed, 35 cases were settled without the aid of the Court, and 105 breaches were taken before the Court; convictions were obtained in 83 cases; 8 cases were withdrawn; 5 dismissed; and 3 treated as interpretations; while the other 6 cases are awaiting the attention of the Court. Of the above number, 20 cases were awaiting the decision of the Court from last year. The total fines under the Act amounted to £144 3s. 3d.

SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT.

Following on the visits made during the year 1907–8 by special Inspectors appointed by the Head Office to make a thoroughly systematic inspection of all the shearing-sheds coming under the Act in the Dominion, when many alterations or additions were ordered to be made, I visited 37 sheds in my district during the past year for the purpose of seeing that the recommendations were given effect to. In most of the cases the work was done satisfactorily, but in a few cases, owing to bad roads, &c., the farmers were unable to get the timber to the ground in time to carry out the instructions given, and in these cases the time was extended to the 31st July, 1909.

EMPLOYMENT BUREAU.

During the year 436 applications were made for employment, and of this number 223 were assisted. Of these, 176 were single and 47 married, having 122 persons depending on them. 159 were sent to private work, and 64 to Government employment.

CONCLUSION.

During the year I have visited, at frequent intervals, Hastings, Waipawa, Dannevirke, and many other towns in the Hawke's Bay district, and I am pleased to say that generally I found the employees working in clean, comfortable, and well-ventilated workrooms.