

The half-holiday is closely observed by all shops and offices, and very little overtime is worked by employees in offices. In many cases occupiers come back to work themselves. Under these circumstances the doors are kept closed.

I am of the opinion that an amendment should be made in the Shops and Offices Act similar to sections 28 and 29 of the Factories Act, preventing girls or boys from working in either shops or offices unless they have passed the Fourth Standard, and are at least fourteen years of age. This would prevent the system which at present exists of employing boys before and after school. There are a large number of children employed in this way, and, although they are paid the full wages specified in the Act, it interferes with their education; in fact, in some cases they give up school and become permanent errand-boys at twelve years of age, having only passed the Second or Third Standard.

The provisions of the Act introduced last year granting a weekly half-holiday to hotel employees and restricting the sale of tobacco, cigars, and cigarettes have been closely observed.

It is evident that shopkeepers appreciate the facilities afforded them by section 25 of the Shops and Offices Act allowing the majority to fix the hours of closing shops either by separate trades, a number of trades, or the whole of the shops in the particular district. In New Plymouth the drapers and clothiers, hairdressers and tobacconists, grocers, chemists, and bootmakers are all closing by separate requisitions. The whole of the shopkeepers, with the exception of those specially exempt under the Act, close by requisition at Hawera, Stratford, Inglewood, and Opunake. The hairdressers and tobacconists at Stratford are closing under separate requisition from the rest of the shopkeepers. Whereas in the past many shopkeepers kept open late at night because one of their number would persist in doing so, by taking advantage of this section of the Act the majority can compel the minority to come into line.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

There are only 3 offices registered under the Act in this district. I have paid several visits of inspection to each of them during the year, and found them well conducted. I have come in contact with several employees who have obtained situations through these offices, all of whom have been treated fairly, and charged strictly in accordance with the schedule.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

No serious difficulties have arisen in this district in respect to the administration of this Act. Where irregularities have occurred they have been due to a want of knowledge of the requirements of the award or agreement, and when pointed out employers have in all cases readily complied. A great deal of time has been devoted to visiting the various factories throughout the province where awards and agreements are in force. Very few complaints have been received from employees, and of these none were of a serious nature.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, I desire to express my thanks to the District Health Officer and the local Inspectors for the assistance they have rendered me in carrying out my various duties. I have also to thank the employers of this district for the courteous manner in which they have met me, and for their ready compliance with my many requests.

I have, &c.,

HARRY WILLIS,

Inspector of Factories.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

WANGANUI.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Wanganui, 31st March, 1909.

I have the honour to submit herewith my annual report on the working of the various Acts administered by the Labour Department, &c., during the year just ended.

GENERAL.

During the period under review a tightness of money has been experienced, which has had a detrimental effect upon business generally.

People concerned in the building industry have perhaps felt the depression more than others, while employers in the furniture trades have generally been able to keep all their hands fully employed.

The engineering trade, with the exception of repairs, has been slack.

Retailers generally have complained of the shortage of ready money, and state that business has not been as good as it was during the preceding year.

At the time of writing business has improved, and the prospect is brighter. A number of contracts in the building trade will be proceeded with this winter, and these alone should have a beneficial effect upon the town.

Although requiring constant vigilance, the administration of the various Acts has not given much trouble, as will be seen by the scarcity of prosecutions. The various awards have also been worked without much friction. The preference clause in the various awards has perhaps caused the most difficulty.

FACTORIES.

During the year 235 factories were registered, giving employment to 1,241 males and 338 females, making a total of 1,579, an increase over the preceding year of 17 factories and 110 workers. The machinery in the various factories is well guarded, and the Act is well observed.