

WAGES PROTECTION ACT.

It does not seem to be generally known that, in the absence of an agreement in writing to the contrary, and of other Acts providing otherwise, the entire amount of wages earned by or payable to any worker shall be paid to such worker at intervals of not more than one week; and, in order to bring the matter prominently before employers, 6 cases have been brought before the Magistrate's Court, but only nominal penalties have been asked for. The fines inflicted amounted to £1, with £2 5s. costs.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

It is rather early yet to report as to the working of the latest amendment of this Act as regards enforcement cases now taken before Stipendiary Magistrates. The only unsatisfactory element that I can see at present is the want of uniformity in the matter of penalties. In one instance you find a Magistrate inflicting a penalty of £10, in another instance a Magistrate imposing £5, and again another Magistrate fixing the amount at £2 or even £1—and all for similar breaches.

During the year just ended 24 cases were taken before the Arbitration Court sitting at Palmerston North; conviction was recorded in each case, and penalties amounting to £32 10s., with costs £4 12s. 4d., were inflicted.

Since the new amendment of the Act has come into force (1st January, 1909) 21 cases have been brought before the Stipendiary Magistrate. Two were dismissed and 19 convictions were recorded, with £19 fines and 16s. costs.

GENERAL.

Wage-books.—Both factory-owners and other parties to the various awards in force in this district express their hearty approval of the wages-books, which are being printed in the form prescribed by the Department. I can only again, for my own part, express regret that the same form of wage-book is not also compulsory as far as shops are concerned.

Flax-mills.—In spite of the low prices obtaining in London, most of the flax-mills in the Manawatu district are running. There has been a fairly plentiful supply of labour, which has been slightly augmented by men coming into the district from those northern mills which are closed down. The departmental returns show that, although there is a considerable falling-off on last season's output, the percentage of decrease is less heavy than in other districts.

CONCLUSION.

During the year when visiting factories and shops in Palmerston North and the employers' places of business affected by awards or industrial agreements, I have at all times received from the employers and the employees with whom I have come in contact every courtesy and consideration. I have also at frequent intervals visited Shannon, Levin, Feilding, Ashhurst, Pohangina, Woodville, Rongotea, Foxton, Komako, and Kimbolton, and to the local Inspectors (police officers) at these places I am much indebted for valuable help cheerfully given.

I have, &c.,

W. J. CULVER,

Inspector of Factories.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

MASTERTON.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Masterton, 8th April, 1909.

I have the honour to submit, for your consideration, the annual report of the working of this branch of the Department for the year ended 31st March, 1909.

GENERAL.

It is with a feeling of regret that I have to record a considerable falling-off in the various trades, more especially in regard to the building trades, which show a very marked decrease in the number of buildings erected when compared with those of the previous year. During the period under review 62 permits for buildings, estimated to cost upwards of £19,000, were issued by the local Borough Council, as compared with 100 permits, costing fully £60,000, issued the previous year. Coach and carriage building has been normal only, whilst the furniture trade has not been up to anything like the standard experienced in recent years. All the local flax-mills have closed down indefinitely owing to the low price of fibre. The sawmilling industry, owing no doubt to lack of building operations and various causes, has been very slack, necessitating the closing-down of several mills.

It is pleasing, however, to note that the dairying industry is progressing in a satisfactory manner, and, as there is still an abundance of feed, a record output of butter and cheese throughout this district is anticipated. The factories in connection with the butter and cheese making, generally speaking, are substantially built, the concrete floors and different appliances are kept clean, reflecting credit on those managing and working therein.

Reports from business people go to show that trade generally has been slack during the year; there has been nothing like the amount of business turnover throughout the district that has been previously experienced. As the different trades are more or less dependent upon one another, slackness of trade creates a depressing effect upon labour.

FACTORIES ACT.

During the year 147 factories were registered, employing 553 males and 118 females, making a total of 671 employees, as compared with 132 factories, employing 532 males and 111 females, making a total of 643 employees, last period.