

Tradesmen employed in the various industries have practically made full time during the year, whilst in some trades a considerable amount of overtime has been worked; this is chiefly noticeable in the dressmaking, tailoring, and fruit-preserving industries, in which young persons and women workers are chiefly employed.

In the building trade throughout the year all branches may be said to have been fairly busy, new buildings to the value of £35,000 having been erected in the city and suburbs.

Sawmilling: During the year all mills in the country districts have made fairly full time, and a steady demand for building-timber still exists.

Flax-milling: Owing to the depressed state of the market, nearly all mills closed down during the early part of the year; it is, however, satisfactory to note that, with the improvement in the price of flax, the majority of mills have again resumed work.

Engineering has improved in all branches; the work done has been chiefly in connection with mining plant and shipping.

Cabinet and furnishing trades have been quite up to the standard of previous years, and employees have been kept in constant employment.

Dressmakers, milliners, and tailors have had a very good year; there has been very little slack time in these trades, whilst a fair amount of overtime has been worked.

Coachbuilding: A considerable amount of briskness has been manifested in this trade throughout the year, and, with few exceptions, employers state that more new work has been turned out than in any previous year.

Fruit-preserving: This is an ever-increasing industry in the Nelson district, and employers are continually extending and improving their plant to deal with the supplies. All factories have been run at top pressure to overtake orders, owing to the scarcity of suitable hands.

During the early portion of the year a considerable amount of private and public work was carried out in the city, and suitable men could easily find employment. This naturally brought a considerable number of men seeking employment into the district, but as these contracts drew to completion it became more difficult to place men in employment, as many of them would not leave town to take work in the country districts.

During the year 179 men, with 196 dependents on them, were assisted by the Department to private and public works.

FACTORIES ACT.

Nothing unusual can be noted in connection with the operations of this Act. Visits of inspection have been made to all factories in the district, and particular attention given to time and wage books, payment of wages, sanitation, and protection of machinery.

The specimen page of time and wage book issued by the Department greatly assisted in bringing about a uniform system of books being kept in all factories.

Considerable improvements have been made in many factories during the year, employers, as a rule, giving every consideration to any suggestions that would improve and better the working-conditions in their factories.

The number of factories registered during the year was 271, employing 1,579 hands—viz., 1,335 males and 244 females—an increase of 15 factories on last year's return. The number of hands employed in factories shows an increase of 29 males and 3 females.

Overtime.—164 warrants to work overtime were issued to 153 boys under sixteen years of age and women; these worked 4,646 hours; 146 males over sixteen years of age worked 3,575 hours overtime: total, 299 persons worked 8,221 hours, as against 10,108 hours worked by 282 persons last year.

Accidents.—11 accidents were reported and inquired into during the year; six of these were in sawmills, the most serious resulting in the loss of thumb at second joint on left hand. The other accidents were cuts by shapers and loss of tips of fingers by saws, resulting chiefly from timber slipping on saw-bench or from overconfidence in working saws. Of the other 5 accidents, 2 were in connection with gas-engines, through employees wearing loose aprons when starting engines, resulting in one case in a broken arm and in the other a severe shaking. Three accidents occurred in tinware-factories to men working stamping-machines—none of them, however, were of a very serious nature. Care has been taken to see that employees injured were acquainted with the provisions of the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act; also, as far as practicable, to have machinery guarded so as to reduce the risk.

Certificates of fitness to work in factories were issued to 39 young persons—viz., 31 boys and 8 girls.

Prosecutions.—During the year 10 charges were laid under this Act, for the following offences: 7 for failing to pay wages fortnightly, 2 failing to register premises, 1 making false entries in wage-book. Nine convictions were obtained and 1 case withdrawn.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

During the year 243 shops have been placed on the register, employing 643 persons—viz., 517 males and 126 females.

Saturday afternoon, which was adopted as the statutory half-holiday in the city, has apparently not given universal satisfaction, opinions being greatly divided amongst shopkeepers as to the best day for business. It has now been decided to take a poll under section 17 of the Act, which allows the electors to decide the day.

The various provisions of the Act may be said to have worked fairly smoothly during the year. Warrants to work overtime were issued to 86 persons to work 1,423 hours.

Prosecutions.—There were 9 cases under this Act brought before the Court during the year, as follows: 2 failing to close shop on Saturday half-holiday, 1 obstructing Inspector in execution of duty, 2 cases against hotelkeepers failing to give assistants half-holiday, 1 failing to give shop-assistant half-holiday, 1 for employing assistant for more than fifty-two hours per week. Convictions were obtained in 7 cases, and 2 cases were dismissed.