

MEN'S EMPLOYMENT BUREAU.

Consequent upon the improved conditions of trade and labour, the number of applicants for employment shows a falling-off. The Department was able to place nearly all applicants who were prepared to accept employment or who were employable. Many of the applicants were new arrivals. Altogether 677 persons were assisted—viz., 501 single and 176 married men, with 414 dependents.

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT BUREAU.

This department has succeeded in placing all suitable applicants, but the supply of domestics does not nearly meet the demand; 591 workers were found employment in suitable positions. A detailed report and summary is furnished by Mrs. Mitchell, the officer in charge.

FACORIES ACT.

A general inspection has been made of the factories in this district, which includes Lyttelton, Kaiapoi, Sumner, New Brighton, Woolston, Belfast, and the Spreydon, Heathcote, and Waimairi Road Districts. The inspection has been systematic, and entailed considerably more inquiry than formerly in regard to wages, &c., on account of the numerous employees in the various factories coming under one or other of the awards or agreements in force in the district. The workrooms and sanitary conveniences have been from time to time improved, until at the present time they may be regarded as very satisfactory indeed. There are still a few obsolete places that will have to be vacated shortly to make room for the erection of bigger and better buildings, so that in a few years the whole of the factories in the district should be of up-to-date structure.

The number of breaches of the Act has decreased. There is the usual small number of employers who have failed to make themselves thoroughly conversant with the Act, and have failed to give increases of wages when due, or to pay for overtime worked. The total amount of arrears of wages collected through the Department was £13 18s. 3d.

Sixteen cases of breaches of the Act were taken before the Court, and judgment was given in favour of the Department in every case. The penalties amounted to £13 15s., with the usual costs.

During the year 1,355 factories were registered under the Act, an increase over last year of 45; 11,946 persons were employed—viz., 8,239 males and 3,707 females (including employers personally engaged).

Permits of fitness to work in factories were issued to 467 persons under the age of sixteen years—viz., 237 to males and 230 to females.

During the year 2,831 males under the age of sixteen years and women worked 100,615 hours overtime, an increase in the number of those working overtime of 255, and in the hours worked of 28,991.

During the year there were 123 accidents in factories, none of which were fatal; 10 were serious and 113 were slight. The principal cases were as follows: Leg broken in three places, bone in wrist broken, loss of thumb, two ribs broken, loss of fingers, &c. An inspection of the premises or of the machinery in use at the time of the accident was made in every case, and advice tendered to the injured person in respect to the proceedings to be taken in claiming for compensation, &c., and generally the workers' interests were well safeguarded.

Special precautions have been taken to see that adequate fire-escapes have been erected where necessary, and means of exit provided in workrooms situated on any floors above the ground.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

The past year has been a comparatively uneventful one. There have been no strikes or lock-outs. So far as this district is concerned, the Act is working very well indeed, and little difficulty has been experienced in enforcing its provisions. The number of cases taken before the Court shows a very small decrease from last year, but there is a distinct falling-off in the number of serious cases. Many of the cases taken against employers and workers have been for failure to comply with the requirements in regard to the keeping of time-books, which has caused Inspectors trouble in ascertaining the hours actually worked by the employees in cases where overtime payment has been claimed. The provision of this Act and of the Factories and Shops and Offices Acts, making it compulsory for employers to keep books showing wages paid and hours worked, has been of considerable assistance to Inspectors.

The amendment to the Shops and Offices Act of last session, making awards and agreements entirely subservient to any statute, will necessitate bringing offenders before the Court for breaches of the statutes instead of for breaches of award.

Difficulties in regard to the employment of members of an employer's family still arise, through the failure of the employer to realize that he must comply strictly with the award, in respect to preference to unionists, deductions from wages, &c. Several of the awards now make provision excluding members of the employer's family from the operations of the award.

During the year 413 complaints were lodged by secretaries of unions and others, and in every case careful inquiries were made, and action taken against the offenders where the breaches were found to be intentional or serious. Many of the cases reported were found to be trivial, or had been committed through the oversight of the employers or of their book-keepers. This specially applies to cases where employers had failed to give increases of wages when due, or to pay proper overtime rates. Secretaries of unions are becoming more conversant with the various labour laws, and they generally require their members to give more definite particulars of alleged breaches, which enables them to decide beforehand as to the necessity of the case being reported to the Department. It is customary for Inspectors when inspecting factories or shops to make careful inquiries as to whether the various awards or agreements are being complied with. During the year the Department collected in arrears of wages due to the workers the sum of £266 7s. 3d.