

This order is unchanged from the previous year. As previously explained, the Wellington District's position is probably due to the fact that it contains a greater number of large inland towns than the other districts.

The number of employees actually engaged at work in these shops was 15,782 in 1910–11, whilst this year the totals (which now include hotel employees) are 19,367—an increase of 3,585. Summarizing the totals for the Dominion, the returns show that there are 16,577 shops, hotels, &c., employing 48,938 hands, and paying £2,375,147 in wages.

*Prosecutions.*

Nature of Breach.	Number of Cases taken.
Failing to close in terms of requisitions by which the hours are fixed by a majority of the shopkeepers concerned ... ..	53
Failing to close on statutory half-holiday ... ..	39
Failing to grant weekly half-holiday to assistants ... ..	32
Failing to pay wages fortnightly ... ..	2
Employing assistants after hours prescribed for assistants ... ..	40
Employing assistants more than the prescribed number of hours... ..	36
Employing assistants overtime without permission ... ..	5
Failing to pay overtime to assistants ... ..	3
Failing to keep holiday-book in hotels, &c. ... ..	41
Failing to keep wages and time book ... ..	47

Two hundred and ninety-eight cases were taken against shopkeepers, compared with 200 during the previous year. The increase is mainly accounted for by hotels and restaurants having been brought under the provisions of the Act. The breaches under the last two headings in the above list were committed by hotel or restaurant proprietors. Out of the 298 cases taken, six were dismissed. These six cases are summarized as follows:—

Two against restaurant-keepers for failing to close on the statutory half-holiday, they having sold cigarettes and tobacco. It was found that restaurants, even though selling goods other than meals, were exempted, in error, by the 1910 amendment relating to hotels and restaurants. Another dismissed case was for employing an assistant after the hours prescribed for assistants. In this case it was proved that the assistant was waiting to go away with his employer, and served some goods without the employer's knowledge. Two other cases for employing assistants more than the prescribed number of hours were dismissed owing to conflicting evidence. The remaining case, for failing to keep a wages and time book, was dismissed on the grounds that there was insufficient evidence to convict.

A subject giving considerable trouble to the Department and to its Inspectors is the matter of enforcing the closing of shops in accordance with the different requisitions from a majority of the shopkeepers in the various trades fixing their own closing-hours. In the large towns these requisitions fix varying closing-hours from half past 5 to nearly midnight. This entails a large amount of work upon Inspectors, whilst considerable confusion is caused to the general public. It is suggested that in the large towns a general closing-hour for all shops, excepting those in a few exempted trades such as those exempted from closing on the weekly half-holiday, should be fixed at, say, 8 o'clock, leaving shopkeepers in any particular trades who desire to close at an earlier hour to have a "requisition" accordingly.

In regard to the 1910 amendment to the Shops and Offices Act bringing all hotel employees under the Act, fixing a limit to the number of hours of work, providing for weekly holidays, &c., considerable difficulty has been experienced by the Department with respect to those private hotels which, on account of the fact that they do not cater for the general public in the same way as is done by ordinary licensed hotels, restaurants, &c., have been ruled by the Supreme Court to be excluded from the provisions of the Act. A number of complaints on the part of hotel and restaurant employees have been made at this decision, owing to the fact that many of the workers are engaged in the private hotels referred to, and they consider they should be placed on the same footing as employees in other establishments which are under the Act. It has been suggested that the difficulty might be got over by including such private hotels as are above mentioned which employ more than three assistants. The matter is one that should receive the consideration of the Government.