

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

The provisions of this Act are very well observed, and there is not much evasion practised. If there is, it is done so very carefully that it is difficult to detect. There are some weak points in the Act, no doubt, but the weakest is the want of a general closing-hour. The restrictions variously placed on shopkeepers should have a general application—they should be treated alike, with no exceptions. If large establishments which carry on their business by paid assistants have to close at a given hour, so should those that have no assistants, and are under practically no expense.

Subsection (8) of section 25 is also unsatisfactory; there is no provision to remove tobacco, &c., out of the shop, or lock it up after 9 p.m., the hour fixed by the Auckland tobacconists' requisition for closing tobacconists' shops, and there is a feeling that shops that sell tobacco as a side line only, and are therefore privileged to keep open, do sell tobacco after 9 p.m.. I can only say that neither my Inspectors nor myself have been able to catch any one in the act of selling tobacco after the tobacconists' closing-hours, and we have spent much time in trying to "bag such game" legitimately, but without avail. We are told it is done, but we cannot detect it.

During the year 2,115 shops were registered—viz., 633, employing 3,759 assistants—2,278 males and 1,481 women; 1,482, wherein no assistants are employed; this total includes 54 hotels, employing 430 assistants—viz., 195 males and 235 females.

Overtime was worked by 518 males, 9,548 hours, and 517 females, 4,421 hours.

There were 142 cases investigated; 64 were of a trifling nature, and 78 were taken before the Court; 76 convictions, with £79 5s. penalties and £34 19s. 4d. costs, were secured; and the sum of £6 13s., arrears of wages, was paid to assistants through the Department. Two cases were dismissed.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICE ACT.

In the administration of this Act there has been very little trouble, due, no doubt, in a measure to the fact that the offices have not been very busy during the year. Four complaints have been investigated, and in each case a prosecution followed. Convictions, with £6 penalties and costs £3 2s., were ordered. There were 25 offices registered.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

The administration of this Act caused a considerable amount of work during the early part of the year; but towards the close there appeared to be a greater tendency on the part of all concerned to endeavour to observe the terms of their awards or industrial agreements. During the year inquiries had to be made into several serious offences, amongst which I would mention the following: (1.) The Inspector of Awards found that an hotelkeeper had made a false entry in a wages and overtime book; in this case proceedings were taken, and the employer was fined £30 and costs. (2.) Inquiries have been made in five alleged breaches of the amended Act, 1908, *re* strikes, and in two cases the Department decided to take proceedings against the unions, which cases are now awaiting the pleasure of the Court.

During the year 669 complaints were inquired into, most of which were lodged by secretaries of unions. In 366 cases it was found that no offence had been committed; in 81 cases the offence was met by warnings being given, or settled by arrears of wages being paid to the workers: 222 cases were referred to the Court, and of these 151 were against employers and 71 against workers; 5 cases were withdrawn; in 2 cases the Inspector was non-suited, 13 cases were dismissed, and in the remaining 202 cases judgment was entered for the Inspector, with penalties amounting to £312 4s., with costs £52 17s. 3d.

The local trade-unions filed 20 cases before the Court, and judgment was given in 14 cases, with fines amounting to £13 6s., and costs £9 6s.

The Department has given great attention to section 58 of the amended Act of 1908, *re* the proper keeping of wages and overtime books. One hundred and eight complaints have been inquired into; in 43 cases warnings were given; in 2 cases no offence was disclosed; while 63 cases were referred to the Magistrate's Court. Convictions were recorded in all cases, with fines amounting to £166 10s., and costs £34 9s. 2d.

£316 2s. 0½d. was paid through the Department by employers as arrears of wages due to workers, and in due course was handed to the workers concerned.

Permits have been issued to 63 persons to work under rate under the following awards—viz., 35 males and 28 females: Men—Rattan, 1; engineers, 1; moulders, 1; carpenters, 8; general labourers, 4; blacksmiths, 1; bookmakers, 6; bricklayers, 2; butchers, 1; furniture trade, 4; boilermakers, 1; soap and candle workers, 1; fellmongers, 1; sheet-metal workers, 1; painters, 1. Women—New Zealand Federated Tailoresses, 18; shop tailoresses, 9; boot trade, 1.

WORKERS' DWELLINGS ACT, 1910.

This Act has taken up a considerable amount of my time in attending on the large number of persons who called to examine plans and get what information they required with regard to the working of the scheme.

I think we can claim that the scheme has been very successful in this district, as a first batch of some 23 houses is nearing completion, and a further large number of persons (some 35) applied for and have been approved as suitable applicants for houses, which will no doubt soon be tendered for. In fact, the trouble is now to get enough sections at the land set apart for the purpose at Ellerslie and Otahuhu.