

With regard to the closing of shops, so many classes of trade have taken advantage of the provision to fix their own closing-hours that the hours of all shops might now well be fixed by statute. Subsection (5) of section 25 removes aliens from the operation of the whole section. This requires amending so as to simply exclude them from the power of voting *re* any requisition, as was evidently intended. There are now no less than twenty-two requisitions in force, and the closing-hour varies from 5 to 11.30 o'clock. This will indicate the amount of work involved in the surveillance. I would recommend that 8 o'clock be fixed as a general closing-hour on ordinary nights, and 10 o'clock on the long night for all shops excepting bakers, confectioners, and fruiterers, which may practically be taken as being the only shops not governed by a requisition, and which keep open later than the hours suggested. If any want to close earlier they could do so, but it is clear the time is ripe for such a law.

Warrants for overtime were issued to 893 shop-assistants, who worked 17,245 hours. This is a slight increase on the overtime worked in the previous year.

In hotels and restaurants 57 assistants were recorded as having worked 672 hours' overtime.

The provision *re* accumulated holidays—section 7 of the Amendment Act—was fully taken advantage of, 78 notices of such arrangement being recorded.

Consent for employment of assistants in hotels on the half-holiday (section 8) was given in 20 cases.

*Prosecutions.*—There was a considerable increase in the number of prosecutions, 49 cases being taken as against 17 in the previous year. Convictions were secured in 48 cases and 1 case was dismissed. The large number of prosecutions was mainly due to the persistency of the Chinese shopkeepers employing assistants after the prescribed time, and some of these occupiers were heavily fined on a third conviction within a short period.

Two cases were taken for test purposes—one as to the proper construction to put upon the half-hour's grace (sections 3 (1) and 37); the other in order to ascertain whether an award of the Arbitration Court was inconsistent in narrowing or limiting the provisions of the statute. Decisions are given on another page.

In the settlement of disputes *re* wages due under the Act a sum of £6 17s. 1d. was recovered and disbursed to payees.

#### SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES.

During the year 4 original licenses were issued, and 6 renewed. No complaints were made, and complete inspection of all offices showed that the provisions of the Act were understood and adhered to. I am submitting a table showing the fees charged by licensees to (1) the employers, and (2) the servants. In a total number of 3,492 engagements, £601 12s. 2d. was paid by 3,306 workers, whilst the sum of £455 7s. 6d. was paid by 1,486 employers. When it is considered that the maximum fee payable by the employer is double that payable by the worker it will be seen that approximately but 33½ per cent. of the fees payable is recovered from the employer, and no less than 95 per cent. from the servant.

#### SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION, ETC., ACT.

Following the complete inspection made in the previous year, it was found necessary this year to visit only two shearing-sheds respecting intended improvements. No complaints were received during the year.

#### WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT.

In addition to cases of accidents in factories, advice has been given to a number of other claimants as to their position under the Act. The provisions of the Amendment Act *re* agreements of settlement being first approved by a Magistrate or an Inspector of Factories will no doubt prove of benefit to claimants. At the time of writing several proposed agreements have been so submitted for approval where but for this new measure claimants would probably have had to pay for legal advice.

No provision is made under the Second Schedule for the total loss of part of the thumb of the left hand. A case came under my notice, and settlement was made by the insurance company paying the ratio fixed for the loss of a joint of a finger—*i.e.*, 5 per cent. I think the compensation should be fixed at 10 per cent.

In conclusion, I desire to thank the District Health Officer and the City Engineer for their co-operation in dealing with matters requiring our joint supervision.

I have, &c.,

E. LE CREN,

Inspector of Factories.

The Secretary of Labour and Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Wellington, 15th April, 1912.

I have to report as follows on the administration of awards, &c., in the Wellington District under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act for the year ending 31st March, 1912.

The cases calling for special mention were the strike of officers on coastal steamers and the strike of tramwaymen. In the first-mentioned case the trouble was in regard to wages, overtime, &c. The matter had been before the Court, and the award rate fixed was not considered satisfactory, with the result that 25 men left their ships, forcing 556 others out of employment,