

It will be noticed that there has been considerably less overtime worked in factories this year than last; this is accounted for by the fact that orders have come to hand more regularly, and, in consequence, more work was made up during ordinary working-hours. Manufacturers report that the volume of business done has been quite up to former years, and in some cases considerably above.

Due regard has been paid to the careful inspection of the factories and shops in respect of wages paid, sanitation, &c.; and visits of inspection have been made at Kaikoura, Amberley, Rangiora, Oxford, Cheviot, Ashburton, Akaroa, Rakaia, and other smaller towns, to see that the various awards and labour laws have been complied with.

Special precautions have been taken also in regard to means of exit from workrooms situated above the ground-floor.

There is still a shortage of boy and female labour for factories and domestic service.

The wet summer delayed operations in the freezing-works, for, although there was plenty of feed, it had not the fattening tendency of drier grass, and fat stock came to hand later in the season in consequence. The weather also delayed the harvest operations; on the heavier lands cereals ripened very slowly, and the summer was nearly over before the harvest was garnered.

The building trades have had a good season, work in nearly every branch of the trade has been plentiful, and there has been no outcry of unemployment. This is partly accounted for by the fact that considerable numbers of carpenters, bricklayers, and others have left the district for other centres, thereby insuring more continuous work for those remaining.

SHEARERS AND AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT.

This Act has been very beneficial to the farm workers, as it enabled Inspectors of the Department to make many investigations into complaints of insufficient or unsatisfactory accommodation on farms and stations, and, as a result, many improvements have been effected at the instance of the Department. All complaints lodged by the secretary of the union or others were inquired into; in many cases the complaints were justified, whilst many others were greatly exaggerated by the worker reporting to his union. Most of the complaints coming to hand during the last few months have been in regard to accommodation for workers employed by threshing-mill owners, and it was found that the accommodation in some instances was unsatisfactory. Employers have generally, on the representation of the Department, carried out the necessary improvements to bring the accommodation up to the requirements of the Act.

MEN'S EMPLOYMENT BUREAU.

No difficulty has been experienced in dealing with the large number of unskilled labourers that have applied to the Department for employment; indeed, the Department has on many occasions been unable to fill the orders for labourers. The late harvest and the variable weather experienced during harvesting operations delayed the work considerably, and while in former years a large number of workers have applied for employment on the completion of the harvest, this year very few found their way to this Department. This is accountable for by the fact that the work extended over a longer period, and the employees were discharged in smaller batches. During the year 842 persons were assisted, 647 being single and 195 married, with 529 dependants.

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT BUREAU.

This Department has done good work, and has placed all suitable applicants for employment. The same difficulty in regard to the scarcity of domestics and other female workers has been experienced, and, although the number of immigrants has been considerable, there is still a big shortage. A detailed summary is furnished in a separate report by Mrs. Mitchell, the officer in charge of the branch.

FACTORIES ACT.

This Act has been so long on the statute-book that nearly all employers and employees have a good knowledge of its main provisions, and this naturally reduces the work of inspection considerably. An effort has been made to visit all factories in this district, which includes Lyttelton, Kaiapoi, Sumner, New Brighton, Woolston, Spreydon, Heathcote, and the Waimairi. The inspection of factories, however, entails considerably more work now than in years before the inception of the Arbitration Court awards, as at the present time all wages and time books have to be checked to see that the various awards have been complied with.

A number of breaches of the Act have been detected, and in some cases it was thought necessary to take proceedings, whilst there were also some in which an error of judgment, or a wrong reading of the law, had caused the offence, and in these a warning only was given.

The total amount of arrears of wages, &c., collected by the Department was £38 1s. 9d.

Twenty-one 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 £10 6s., with costs added.

The following is a detailed list of offences under the Factories Act in which prosecutions were taken: Employing a female worker on a statutory holiday, 1; occupying an unregistered factory, 1; failing to pay wages in full at not longer than fortnightly intervals, 12; employing a boy on statutory half-holiday, 1; employing female workers on the statutory half-holiday, 6: total, 21.

During the year 1,322 factories were registered under the Act; 11,865 persons were employed—viz., 8,026 males and 3,839 females (including employers personally engaged).

Permits of fitness to work in factories were issued to 418 young persons under the age of sixteen years—viz., 180 to males and 238 to females.

During the year 2,766 males under the age of sixteen years and females worked 96,305 hours.