

male adults are concerned the working of overtime is rapidly on the increase, while some of the industries, to meet the increased trade demands, have adopted the system of double shifts.

Twenty-four accidents have been reported during the year. With few exceptions, these accidents have been mainly of a slight nature, and, considering the vast amount of machinery in use, there is fortunately an immunity from accidents of a serious kind, showing that the safeguards to life and limb are properly attended to.

The sanitary conditions of the various factories and workrooms have been well maintained, improvements being effected wherever it was possible to do so. One or two cases, however, have arisen where I was compelled to insist on material alterations being made, and had to withhold the issue of the annual certificate before the reforms were given effect to. One great drawback in this respect is the want of a proper drainage system, and until some such system is perfected the factories and workrooms in the low-lying portions of the city must of necessity be conducted under unsatisfactory sanitary conditions.

Considerable dissatisfaction prevails here, especially amongst the female workers, in connection with the inconsistency now existing in the number of hours to be worked per week. The Factories Act, as you are aware, permits the employer to work females and youths under sixteen years of age forty-eight hours per week, while a recent decision of the Arbitration Court has fixed the hours of one particular industry at forty-five per week. The effect of this award is to bring the daily working-hours into consonance with the Act of 1891, which Act laid down the principle of an eight-hours day and forty-five hours per week, while under present circumstances a section work forty-five hours and others forty-eight hours per week. A general feeling prevails that the Act should be amended to make the forty-five hours apply all round.

The differential conditions under which certain branches of the clothing trades are conducted in various parts of the colony lead to considerable dissatisfaction and dislocation of labour, and are, moreover, a cause of considerable inconvenience to employers. If it were possible to have one trade-log for the colony the result would be beneficial to both employer and employed.

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

There is little fresh to report in connection with this Act, except that the exemptions allowed by law continue to cause a considerable amount of irritation, and will continue to do so until all shopkeepers are brought under one regulation and uniformity of closing is established. Owing to the extremely long hours that fruit-shops and restaurants remain open, great difficulty is experienced in ascertaining whether or not the female assistants are worked more than the statutory hours, and it is quite possible for unprincipled persons to take undue advantage of their employés with a very remote chance of detection.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

There are now twenty of these offices in this city, the keepers of which generally realise the provisions of the Act and work in harmony with the same. Any irregularities which have occurred have been trivial, and were rectified without having recourse to the law.

I have, &c.,

H. MAXWELL, Inspector.

E. Tregear, Esq., Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Dunedin, 27th April, 1899.

I have the honour to forward my report for the year ending the 31st March, 1899.

The year's work has varied very little indeed from that of last year. Work in general has been more plentiful, and has somewhat lessened the number calling at this office for employment; but, notwithstanding this, the number who have found work through this office has increased.

During the year 219 men have been sent to Government work (three families removed), and forty-two to private employment, making a total of 261 adults, with 729 persons depending on them. The figures last year were twenty-five sent to private employment and 161 to Government works, with the removal of two families. The total of this increases the number sent away this year by seventy-five, while their dependents increase by ninety-one.

This year, I am happy to say, ends with a record, inasmuch as we have in Dunedin been entirely free from gatherings of unemployed. The last of them took place here about four years ago. Never in my experience in this colony has there been such a lull.

I have, &c.,

WM. FARNIE, Agent, Labour Department.

E. Tregear, Esq., Secretary, Department of Labour, Wellington.

NEW PLYMOUTH.

SIR,—

Police Office, New Plymouth, 6th June, 1899.

I have the honour to report that there are 107 factories and workrooms registered in my district this year, and I have heard no complaints from the employés or the employers. The Act seems to work well in this district, and the employers do not infringe its provisions.

During the month for registration a great deal of grumbling and dissatisfaction was caused owing to creameries being forced to register, but they have all since complied.

As to labour, local men have been fully employed during the year, and no complaints have been received.

I have, &c.,

MARTIN D. STAGPOOLE, Inspector of Factories.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.