

re hours of work to employés that is desirable, and that some of the sections are unworkable. In particular I would call your attention to the fact that it does not give the necessary protection to workers against night-work, and also to the dissatisfaction of the employers who wish to avoid this kind of work. Clerks have very little protection, while warehousemen and restaurant-workers have none. I venture to say that no class of the community stands so much in need of restrictive laws re hours of work. Ten charges were preferred against eight owners. Seven convictions were recorded, and three cases dismissed.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICE ACT.

Under this Act there are twenty-three offices registered—an increase on last year of seven. I may say there have been few or no complaints with regard to the working of this Act; still, I do not think it is fulfilling the principle that was intended. For instance, there is an inclination to let the employer off without paying his fee, for the purpose of bringing trade. Now, this opens up a source of injustice which this Act was intended to prevent. An employer can change his hands on any excuse weekly or daily, and as he does not pay a fee it costs him nothing, while, on the other hand, it throws extra work into the hands of registry-office keepers, who can make a good thing by sending a constant supply to an employer, who could always have a vacancy. You will see the possibility of a conspiracy of this kind; in fact, I received hints that there was a suspicion of something of the sort prior to the passing of the present Act. If the fees are high enough to make it payable for only the servant to pay they could be lowered, or a clause inserted so that both must be charged alike. I would also call your attention to the necessity of having section 5 amended so as to give an Inspector some option in the renewal of licenses.

I have, &c.,

H. FERGUSON, Inspector of Factories.

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

WELLINGTON.

SIR,—

Wellington, 31st March, 1901.

I beg to submit my report for the year 1900–1901.

The year just ended has proved a most satisfactory one. Factories have been kept going busily all the year, and all branches of trade in this district have undoubtedly improved on previous years.

There has been very little trouble during the year between the factory-occupiers and the Department, which indicates that there have been few, if any, abuses that could be redressed. The complaint most frequently made is that when an employé loses time during the week the amount of time lost is increased by the addition of the Saturday half-holiday; for example, an employé loses two days in the week—say, Monday and Tuesday—and is paid for only three and a half instead of four days. There is no doubt that this is being done, and I have tried to stop it by persuasion, but as the law stands at present we are powerless. It is to be hoped that should a new Factories Bill be passed this coming session the defects of the present Act will be remedied by giving the necessary power to enforce its provisions.

The overtime evil is increasing, notwithstanding that I do everything I can to check it. Employers claim that they would prefer not to work overtime, but that they are compelled to do so owing to the difficulty they experience in getting sufficient and capable persons to do the work in the ordinary time. That may be so to some extent; yet I still hold the opinion that if the number of days on which persons may work overtime were reduced such action would cause the merchant to distribute his orders more regularly. The same amount of work would be done, and more people employed without working overtime. During the year ending the 31st December permits have been issued to 1,955 persons to work 52,465 hours overtime, including 319 persons who worked 1,712 hours on Saturday afternoons, showing an increase of 593 persons who worked 12,847 hours over last year. The following are the trades, together with the hours of overtime worked:—

					Persons.	Hours.
Tailoring (factories) ...	...	...	...	...	527	23,973
" (order) ...	...	...	...	...	173	4,521
Dressmakers ...	...	...	...	...	494	6,662
Laundries ...	...	...	...	...	247	3,718
Printing and bookbinding ...	...	...	...	...	104	2,590
Waterproof clothing ...	...	...	...	...	38	3,985
Woollen-milling ...	...	...	...	...	83	2,268
Shirt-making ...	...	...	...	...	54	1,732
Bootmaking ...	...	...	...	...	78	1,152
Saddlery ...	...	...	...	...	12	416
Tea-packing ...	...	...	...	...	18	264
Brush-making ...	...	...	...	...	9	449
Vestas ...	...	...	...	...	24	150
Condiments, jam, &c. ...	...	...	...	...	76	408
Six small trades ...	...	...	...	...	18	177

It is necessary to note that the increase of overtime in tailoring-factories was due in a great measure to the strain put on them to equip the several contingents that left here for South Africa during the year; but that does not explain the increase in dressmakers' overtime—viz., 494 persons working 6,662 hours, as against 276 persons working 3,696 hours last year. It is to be remembered that the overtime worked refers only to women, girls, and to boys under sixteen-years of age, who alone require a permit to work overtime.