

class of workers and also by those employers who were placed at a disadvantage through rivals in trade working longer hours and paying less wages. There are a few clauses that could be beneficially amended, but I think you are already aware of them. This year 986 factories have been registered in this district, employing 9,193 hands—viz., 6,443 males and 2,750 females. 561 permits to work have been issued to young persons under the age of sixteen years—boys, 266; girls, 295.

For overtime worked see separate return.

Although a good deal of overtime is worked, I have not heard of any objections, as the payment is fairly satisfactory and is rather liked by workers. If it could be possibly avoided I am certain employers would not work any.

There have been 50 accidents reported; 1 proved fatal—in a country sawmill, where deceased got entangled with belting he was arranging. There were a few others rather serious, such as loss of finger, &c. Where accidents happened through machinery, if I saw the necessity I ordered further safeguarding, and for this purpose visited a number of sawmills in country districts. The majority of the accidents were trifling, and almost unavoidable where numbers are at work, and are generally caused through some unforeseen circumstance.

Nineteen charges were preferred against 6 employers. There were 15 convictions, 3 dismissals, and 1 charge was withdrawn.

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

Like the Factories Act, this Act is now settled down, and there is comparatively little difficulty in carrying out the present provisions, which on the whole are very well accepted and appreciated by all concerned. If the Act had been consolidated and amended as proposed last session, it would no doubt have disposed of some existing anomalies.

During the year 8 charges were preferred against 6 shopkeepers for breaches of the Act. There were 7 convictions and 1 dismissal.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

I have had no complaints worthy of note of any extortion by licensees, but I think it would be very desirable that employers should be charged fees in the same way as employees. Perhaps the only way to get at this would be to reduce the scale, so as to make it necessary for a licensee to charge both parties. Twenty-five licenses were granted during the year.

I am, &c.,

H. FERGUSON,
Inspector of Factories, Auckland.

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

WELLINGTON.

Department of Labour, Wellington, 7th April, 1902.

SIR,—

I beg to submit my report for the period ending the 31st March, 1902, and I am pleased to state that factory matters are in a very satisfactory condition. There has been very little friction between employers and myself during the period dealt with, and very few complaints have reached me from employees; so that I safely conclude that there are very few abuses of a tangible form, or I should soon hear of them. Of course, both the employers and employees are dissatisfied with certain provisions of the Factories Act of 1901, notably section 31. Section 22 of the present Act is not working satisfactorily, as there is no provision made for factory-owners obtaining permits to work overtime; and the only means an Inspector has of checking overtime is by roaming the streets each night to see who are working, and then at the end of each month examining the overtime-book to see what time has been entered. Fortunately the factory-owners in most cases still apply for permits for women and boys to work overtime, but there is no obligation on them to do so. I think the necessity for obtaining a permit a very useful provision, and think it should be extended to all if we are to keep a record of overtime worked by men, and I should be pleased to see the obligation for permit restored.

You will notice an increase in the overtime worked this year by women and boys of 2,356 hours over last year, whilst there are 88 persons less employed; but when you consider that this return covers a period of fifteen months—viz., from the 1st January, 1901, to the 31st March, 1902—I think you will admit that we have not increased beyond a reasonable limit. 1,867 women, &c., have worked 54,811 hours' overtime, including 1,866 hours worked on Saturday afternoons. Of course, no overtime has been worked on Saturday afternoons by women or boys since the coming