

As the law does not provide for payment of overtime, I do my best to keep it down in the interest of those who would otherwise be brought back unnecessarily to do work that can very easily be done during the ordinary working-day.

There were five prosecutions during the year, convictions being obtained in each case.

“THE SERVANTS REGISTRY OFFICES ACT, 1895.”

This Act is working very satisfactorily. There are no complaints of abuses, which is a sure sign that there is no cause for complaint.

In conclusion I have to thank all with whom my duties have brought me into contact for their uniform courtesy and consideration.

Yours, &c.

JAMES SHANAGHAN,
Inspector of Factories.

Edward Tregear, Esq., Chief Inspector of Factories.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Wellington, 6th June, 1903.

I have the honour to submit my report for the year ending the 31st March, 1903.

During that time I have visited a large number of factories and workrooms where women and girls are employed, and am pleased to state that I found them generally in a very satisfactory condition. The number of new buildings which have gone up recently and which are being used as factories has improved matters very considerably, and there are still in the course of erection several new buildings for factory purposes, which will still further improve matters, for they are being fitted up with every modern convenience for the comfort of those to be employed therein. The necessity for plenty of light, good ventilation, clean floors and walls, is constantly being impressed on employers, and I must say that in most instances I find them quite willing to comply with any reasonable suggestion. I have visited some factories where the buildings are old, and it is difficult to keep them in order to the satisfaction of Inspectors, but I have the assurance of employers that they are doing the best they can to get out of these places. Many of them I know will be vacated before the end of this year for entirely new and up-to-date premises.

The question of dining-rooms is one which requires a good deal of attention. It is sometimes difficult to get employers to provide these rooms, and it is often just as difficult to get the workers to make use of them. I think a little more frequent visiting of these places by local inspectors during the lunch-hours would help to get over this trouble. If workers are allowed to remain in the workroom from 8 or 8.30 in the morning until 5 or 5.30 in the evening the object of section 24 of the Act is entirely lost—viz., the thorough airing and ventilating of the workrooms. Moreover, if workers are left sitting in the workrooms during the lunch-hour it opens up to them the temptation to do work during that hour, which in itself is a distinct breach of subsection (2) of section 24. Many factory-owners have not the space for these dining-rooms on their own premises, but they have rented rooms in other buildings, and they are beautifully kept. I have visited dining-rooms, both North and South, where pianos are provided by employers for the entertainment of their workers, and I know of one instance where a substantial hot dinner is provided in the middle of the day. This meal is provided on six days of the week, and the cost to the worker runs from 1s. per week to 2s. 6d. per week, according to the rate of wages. In the laundries usually the employer provides a cup of tea and a piece of cake or bread-and-butter about 11 o'clock in the morning for the workers, and again about 3 in the afternoon.

Most workers thoroughly appreciate the fact that they cannot now be called upon to work overtime on the afternoon of their half-holiday.

In regard to certificates of fitness, section 26 of the Act, subsections (1) and (2) are portions of the law which need to be kept constantly before employers. It seems almost impossible to impress employers with the fact of how important it is that children should have these certificates before entering factories. In my opinion, this portion of the law is of great benefit to the employer; for instance, a while ago a girl over fourteen years of age came to me for a certificate to go to work in a lolly and confectionery factory, but I had to refuse the certificate for the reason that the child was in such a dirty state that it would not do to allow her to go to work in such a place. Some employers hold the opinion that a child should spend a couple of weeks at the particular trade before a certificate is asked for, for the purpose of seeing whether the child will suit and whether it will care to remain at the trade, &c. Now, this I claim to be a mistake, for more often than not the child remains, and after it has been a couple of weeks at the trade both the child and the employer forget all about the matter of a certificate, and if the Inspector should find out that the child is not possessed of the necessary qualifications it becomes very hard on the Inspector to have to carry out his duty and have the child discharged.

Re payment of 5s. per week to boys and girls: I have come across a few breaches of this section, but in every case I found it to be the fault of the foreman or forewoman, and when the employer heard of the matter he at once had all back money paid up and continued to pay them at the rate of 5s. per week.

With regard to improvement or alterations to factory premises: It is highly desirable that the Act should be amended so as to enable Inspectors to call on the owners of property to effect improvements. In many instances where such improvements are required it is neither fair nor reasonable that the occupier, who very often has only a short lease, or may be only a weekly or monthly tenant, should be compelled to do it; still, in the interest of public health the improvement has to be done, and as the law stands at present the Inspector has no power to deal with any one but the occupier.

Almost every line of trade in which women are engaged has been kept very busy all the year round. In fact, many manufacturers are much hampered for want of more workers to enable them to cope with the increased demands of trade.