

WESTPORT.

SIR,—

Police-station, Westport, 2nd April, 1904.

I have the honour to inform you that during the year forty-five factories were registered in the Westport district. One factory gave up business, and two new ones took its place.

The Factories Act and Shops and Shop-assistants Act are working very smoothly, not the slightest hitch occurring between employers and employees. The Inspector is not given any trouble—shops and factories are shut regularly and holidays observed.

I have, &c.,

FRANCIS CULLEN,

Inspector of Factories.

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

GREYMOUTH.

SIR,—

Greymouth, 7th April, 1904.

I have the honour to forward you my first annual report on the working of the Factories Act and the Shops and Shop-assistants Act in the Grey district for the year ending the 31st March, 1904.

FACTORIES.

During the year there were 100 factories registered, an increase of 38 on the previous year. These factories employed 606 persons—viz., 473 males and 133 females—an increase of 173 persons on the preceding year. Of the above number, 19 were females under sixteen years of age and 114 over sixteen, and 26 males were under sixteen and 447 over sixteen.

Permits.

For the same period 45 permits were issued for young persons—26 boys and 19 girls. Of the former, 3 had passed the Fourth Standard, 6 the Fifth, 15 the Sixth, and 2 the Seventh; and of the latter, 1 had passed the Fourth Standard, 6 the Fifth, 9 the Sixth, and 3 the Seventh.

Overtime.

Overtime warrants were issued for 160 persons—100 males who worked 3,559 hours, and 60 females who worked 2,650½ hours; total hours worked, 6,209½. The following table shows the trades in which overtime was worked :—

Trades.	Males.		Females.	
	Number.	Hours.	Number.	Hours.
Blacksmiths	13	132	...	...
Boilermakers	18	498	...	...
Dressmakers	...	...	6	270
Fitters and turners	21	995½	...	...
Labourers	8	198	...	...
Moulders	13	890	...	...
Patternmakers	15	27	...	...
Tailoring	12	818½	54	2,380½
	100	3,559	60	2,650½

As a rule, employers discourage the practice of working overtime; they find it more profitable to employ an extra hand or two than to work young persons longer hours.

No prosecutions took place during the year, and no serious disputes occurred between employers and their assistants. A few complaints by employees were made, but they were easily and amicably adjusted to the satisfaction of both parties.

Accidents.

Several accidents occurred, one proving fatal; some were serious, such as fractured limbs, &c.; the others were of a trivial nature. Factory-owners have been very lax in the matter of reporting accidents.

The Act has been fairly well observed by occupiers during the year considering that it was new to many of them, and where breaches did occur it was through want of knowledge of the Act rather than defiance of it.

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

Although of a more complex nature than the Factories Act, this Act is working fairly satisfactorily. It might be worked more smoothly if there was less latitude allowed in the manner of observing the half-holiday. At present, while the majority of the shopkeepers close on Wednesday, there are some (small shopkeepers) who have chosen Thursday, Friday, or Saturday to close. Then, again, another day may be observed (very imperfectly, though) by request of the Mayor, and as a rule there is no unanimous desire to comply with such request; the consequence is that no strict half-holiday is kept at all that week. The indiscriminate choice of a day for closing interferes with the perfect administration of the Act. There should be a uniform hour for closing also, and permits for young persons should be issued as under the Factories Act.