

In conclusion I am pleased to record my thanks to the general public, and all with whom my work has brought me in contact, for the kind courtesy and assistance I have received, which rendered pleasant what might otherwise at times have been somewhat irksome, especially the Health Department and the City Council, whose officers were always ready and willing to render good assistance; also union officials, whose support at all times was consistent and available, and I must not exclude my office staff, who met and overcame increasing work by cheerful energy and industry.

I have, &c.,

H. FERGUSON,

Inspector of Factories.

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

WELLINGTON.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Wellington, 13th April, 1906.

I have the honour to submit my annual report for the year ending the 31st March, 1906.

During the year just ended trade in Wellington has been in a very prosperous condition. One evidence of this prosperity is the greatly increased Customs revenue. The activity of the building trade has been very great, and the buildings being erected are large and substantial structures. In many cases they have taken the place of the old wooden erections that were found to be totally inadequate to meet the ever and rapidly increasing business demands.

In consequence of the enhanced value of land in the city, it has been found profitable for owners of large sections of land in the suburbs to cut them up for residential sites. These sites have been rapidly taken up and built upon. These facts with the largely extended tramway service, encourage a steady flow of population from the city to the suburbs.

FACTORIES.

Factory-owners appear to be satisfied with the business done during the year, but I am sorry to find that in many cases the owners show great indifference as to the sanitary conditions of their premises. Sanitation and ventilation are much neglected. I have given much time and attention to the improvement of workrooms. Many employers do not seem to recognise that the lack of ventilation and sanitation hinders them from getting the best results from their workers. Lassitude, illness, and consequent inability on the part of the workers to perform their duties are the results of the want of good ventilation. Where new factories are being erected care has been taken to provide the best possible conditions for the workers. The improvement of old workrooms is often a difficult matter owing to their position and lack of space. Whilst employers are generally slow to grasp the importance of good ventilation, it is conceded that when once convinced, they readily comply with my suggestions, and having done so admit the marked improvement for all concerned. The increase of factories for the period has been very satisfactory, there being 940 registered for the year; this shows an increase of 146 over last year, employing 8,232 persons—viz., 5,981 males and 2,251 females. This shows an increase of 202 persons for the period.

During the year 313 certificates of fitness to young persons have been issued—viz., 135 boys and 178 girls. Of the boys, 42 passed the Fourth Standard, 46 the Fifth, 40 the Sixth, 7 the Seventh. Of the girls, 47 passed the Fourth Standard, 67 the Fifth, 46 the Sixth, and 18 the Seventh.

This Act is giving general satisfaction to employers and employees; both admit the great benefits derived therefrom.

During the period a case was brought against a factory-owner under subsection (2) of section 41 of the Act for not providing sufficient separate privy accommodation for the sexes, so as to secure privacy. The information was dismissed, although it was shown that the health of several females suffered through being unable to approach the convenience provided, it being situate in an open yard. If this decision is owing to any defect in the Act, I trust it will be so amended as to give better protection, and to prevent grave dangers, especially to women workers.

100,760 hours of overtime have been worked in the various trades as shown in return on page .

There have been eleven prosecutions under this Act during the year; ten convictions have been secured, and one dismissed.

ACCIDENTS.

There have been eighty-three accidents reported during the period; eighteen were of a serious nature, and sixty-five were of a less serious nature, incidental to factory-work.

In every case I have visited the factory where the accident occurred, and made the necessary inquiries. The greatest care has been taken to see that all machinery, belting, &c., are properly guarded. Where I have found it necessary to make suggestions for the protection of workers, employers promptly had my instructions carried out.

"THE SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT, 1904," AND ITS AMENDMENT OF 1905.

As was anticipated, section 3 of the principal caused much dissatisfaction, principally among the smaller shopkeepers in the suburbs, but the amended Act of 1905 has had the effect of pouring oil on the troubled waters. It is noticeable that since the passing of this amendment many shopkeepers in the different trades have by requisition agreed to close their business places at an earlier hour than that provided for employees in the Schedule attached to the said Act.