

observe their obligations. The breaches committed by employees are not now so numerous, and I find that the workers generally are endeavouring to obtain the benefits they are entitled to under the Court's awards. The persistency of workers in working for less than the minimum wage, so noticeable a couple of years ago, has now, with the exception of a few instances, almost entirely disappeared. Some difficulty is still experienced with respect to the enforcing of the preference clause of the different awards and agreements. Many employers will not trouble to consult the union's employment-book to ascertain what union-men are out of employment, but simply engage the first man who comes along; whether he is a unionist or not does not apparently concern them. On investigation of such cases the usual reply is that the employer was unaware it was necessary to engage a unionist so long as the wage's clause of the award is being complied with. It is almost incredible that so many employers will make this excuse, when at each sitting of the Court in Wellington a number of employers have been fined for failing to give preference. There can be no excuse for such ignorance.

The drivers' award, under which there were so many breaches last year, is now causing little trouble, and both employers and employees are working smoothly enough under it. Very few complaints reach us concerning the observance of this award.

Breaches under the bakers' award, which last year were so numerous, are now practically speaking nil. Very few complaints are received.

The same difficulty is still experienced through the long delay in hearing cases that have been filed for hearing by the Court. Many cases are filed, and are not heard for six or eight months afterwards. The witnesses by that time may have left the district; the particulars which were fresh in my memory at time of investigation have been forgotten, and it is difficult after such a lapse of time to prove such cases before the Arbitration Court. Then there is this drawback: that an employer who is cited for a breach, in many instances goes on committing the breach until the sitting of the Court, and perhaps reaps a considerable benefit in the saving of wages by so doing. It would be a boon to the Department, and also to the various parties concerned, if the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act were so amended as to provide for a tribunal to deal with breaches, say, within fourteen days from the date of filing.

I have, &c.,

C. E. ALDRIDGE,

Inspector of Awards.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Wellington, 20th April, 1907.

I have the honour to submit for your consideration my report for the year ending the 31st March, 1907.

During the period I have visited the factories and workrooms of Wellington, Auckland, and surrounding districts, and am pleased to state that I find them generally in a satisfactory condition. Where instructions have had to be given for cleaning up, &c., it has been of quite a minor nature compared with that of former years.

Owing to so many new buildings having gone up of late the quality of structure which is now being used for factory purposes is very good and a great improvement on that formerly used. Every attention has been given to the providing of good lighting, ventilation, and sanitation of these places, and employers show the greatest willingness to comply with any suggestions made in the direction of improvement in these matters. Also the most careful attention has been given to the question of increases of wages to persons coming under section 31 of "The Factories Act, 1901," and its amendments of 1902 and 1905. A further amendment is still required in the direction of fixing a minimum for persons starting a trade after the age of twenty years. As the law stands at present, employers may pay these persons what they like until the worker has worked four years, when she must receive 17s., and five years, £1.

Great complaints have been made as to the difficulty in enforcing a week's notice or week's wages being paid to workers whose services have been summarily dispensed with. The only remedy seems to be civil proceedings, and in many cases, especially among women and young persons, they have not the means to prosecute their claim. Something should be done in the way of amending one of the Labour Acts to make the process a simple one. It would also be of great service to employers as well as workers.

All trades in which women are employed have been kept fully busy during the year, and in most cases every possible hour which could be allowed as overtime has been worked up.

In trades where awards of the Arbitration Court are in force I must say these awards are working well and much to the advantage of the workers concerned. My only regret is that all trades in which women are employed are not working under awards of the Court. In almost every trade there is a constant demand for more workers.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

This Act is working well. In previous reports I have had necessity to speak of the hours of waitresses, &c., coming under the provisions of this Act. I have no longer the necessity to speak of this so far as Wellington is concerned, as these workers now come under the provisions of the cooks and waiters' agreement which has improved their working-conditions very considerably.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

This Act has worked smoothly throughout the year, chiefly owing to the fact, I believe, that servants have it all their own way, and office-keepers have to act straight to do any business at all.

I have, &c.,

M. S. HAWTHORNE,

Inspector of Factories.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.