

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

The administration of this Act appears to be giving satisfaction to both occupiers of shops and their employees, and except in a few trades very little difficulty is experienced in enforcing its provisions. The trades referred to are those that come under clause 15 of the Act, which exempts them from closing on any day. The assistants in these shops are entitled to a half-holiday on one day of the week, and an Inspector has to visit these shops, that are scattered all over the town, every day of the week to ascertain if holidays have been granted to their assistants. The same difficulty applies to assistants in hotel-bars in section 20. I think it would be better if the Act was so amended as to make it compulsory for occupiers of shops who are exempt from compulsory closing to notify the Inspector in writing of the days of the week on which their shop-assistants are to be allowed their half-holiday. No provision is made making it compulsory for occupiers of shops to keep an extra-time book. This is apparently an omission, as subsections (2) and (3) of section 27 of the Shops and Offices Act provides that occupiers of offices shall keep a record-book called the "extra-time book."

Section 21, *re* closing by requisition, has only been taken advantage of by four trades—viz., cycle-shops, boot-shops, jewellers, and chemists. These, from present appearances, have no intention of reverting back to old conditions.

BREACHES.

Twenty-four cases were brought before the Court, convictions being obtained in 15 cases; 9 being dismissed, 8 of the latter (really one case) being in the cycle trade for occupiers failing to close their shops on Easter Saturday, as required by the requisition under section 21 of the Act. The Magistrate ruled that the Act gave no power to any one to enforce the closing of any shop on any whole day. A considerable amount of overtime has been worked during the year: 467 males worked 7,335 hours, and 353 females worked 2,854 hours, making a total of 820 workers working 10,189 hours.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

This Act is working smoothly, and very few complaints have been made by those obtaining employment through the agency of the registry-office keepers. In one instance a fee had been charged for a billet at Timaru, and on the young man proceeding thither he found that some one else had secured the employment. The keeper of the registry office, on representation being made, refunded the fee charged and also paid the costs of the railway journey.

There are seventeen licensed registry-office keepers in this district.

THE INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

This has been rather an eventful year in the history of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, on account of the strike of workers in the slaughtering trade, and the consequent prosecutions, &c.

Over two hundred complaints of various breaches of awards were investigated; in many cases there was no foundation for the inquiry, a number being very trivial, while some were serious enough to warrant application for enforcements being laid.

Two hundred and twelve applications for enforcement of awards and agreements were adjudicated upon, convictions being obtained in 207 cases, and 5 being dismissed; fines amounted to £995. These include the recent cases against slaughtermen strikers. Sixteen cases are now waiting to be heard by the Court.

A more conciliatory spirit has been shown during the past year; quite a number of agreements have been come to, which were afterwards referred to the Court of Arbitration to be made into awards in terms of agreement. The complaint of former years of delay in hearing of disputes and applications for enforcements have been fewer, and it is to be hoped that some arrangement can be made which will still further expedite the business of the Court.

The investigations into alleged breaches of awards and agreements cover the districts of Ashburton, Oxford, Rangiora, Cust, Kaiapoi, Belfast, Lyttelton, Sumner, and Christchurch.

The practice adopted by the Head Office of the Department of sending a copy of every award or industrial agreement to each employer bound by its provisions should have a very good effect, and the plea of ignorance of the law should be absent in future.

SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT.

Only one or two shearing-sheds come within the district. The accommodation provided is satisfactory. During the year I have made special visits of inspection to Mount White, Hororata, Coldstream, the Lakes, Waiau Gorge, and Waipara Downs Stations, and in some cases considerable alterations and additions will be needed to provide the necessary accommodation.

EMPLOYMENT BUREAU.

The year has been a satisfactory one, work being plentiful. All men able and willing to work obtained employment on the North Island Main Trunk Railway and other works. A number of tradesmen were also sent to private employment. Seven hundred and seventy-eight men were given employment during the year: 183 were married with 502 dependants, and 595 single. Six hundred and nine were sent to public works, and 169 to private employment.

Before concluding my report I must thank the city Inspectors for the very prompt manner in which they have inquired into any complaints reported. I have also to thank the members of my own staff for the very willing assistance given me during the busy season, when a lot of overtime was worked to endeavour to keep pace with the work.

I have, &c.,

W. H. HAGGER,

Inspector of Factories.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.