

Purdy is always ready to give advice, and, if necessary, to accompany me on short notice, or send one of his expert officers to assist me.

I have also to thank the members of my staff for the interest they all take in their work, and for the ready and cheerful manner in which they respond to my demands for assistance.

Yours, &c.,

JAMES SHANAGHAN,

Inspector of Factories.

Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

WELLINGTON.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Wellington, 20th May, 1908.

I beg to submit my annual report for the year ending the 31st March, 1908.

Reports from business people go to show that good trade has been done throughout the year, with an increase on previous years in almost every department. There have, of course, been fluctuations in some trades; but, generally speaking, a steady improvement has been shown. The amount of labour available has in many instances been insufficient to meet the demand, and in many cases orders have been turned away for this reason. In the dressmaking and tailoring trades employers have had great difficulty in coping with orders, owing to the shortage of hands, and some of the larger firms inform me that it has been absolutely impossible to get enough female employees.

The extension of the tramway service has opened up new suburbs, and this has given a great impetus to the building trades around the city. Building operations in the city have also been extensive, and, with the continued fine weather and the number of building contracts under way, these trades have altogether had a busy year. In these trades also the amount of labour available has not been equal to the demand, and employers have continually inquired at the Department's employment branch for men. This is more noticeable in respect to builders' labourers.

The boot and shoe trades have also been exceptionally busy, and operatives are still in demand. The leading factories have had to work a considerable amount of overtime during the year to keep up with the orders coming in. Factory-occupiers say that they have had a really good year.

Woollen-mills also report that a good trade has been done during the year, and great shortness of female labour has been experienced. A number of the machines in the leading factories here are idle, and have been so for months, owing to the inability of the employers to get hands to work them.

FACTORIES ACT.

Little difficulty has been experienced during the year in carrying out the provisions of this Act. Care and attention have been paid to the sanitation of all workrooms, and special note has been made as to the fire-escapes provided. No new factories have been passed until outside fire-escapes were provided. In this connection I must say that I have experienced little difficulty, occupiers being always willing to do what was required. Special attention has been paid to the comfort of the female workers, and Mrs. Hawthorne has been very persistent in her endeavours to have the requirements of the Act carried out in respect to these persons.

During the year 1,057 factories were registered, employing 6,663 males and 2,535 females.

Three hundred and fifteen permits to young persons to work in factories were issued—viz., 126 boys and 189 girls. Of the boys, 37 passed the Fourth Standard, 40 the Fifth, 44 the Sixth, and 5 the Seventh. Of the girls, 62 passed the Fourth Standard, 55 the Fifth, 68 the Sixth, and 4 the Seventh.

There were 14 convictions during the year, and one case was dismissed (see "Legal Decisions").

OVERTIME.

The amount of overtime worked during the year has been very great. This in most cases has been due to the shortage of labour. In the tailoring and dressmaking departments, where it was impossible to get hands, overtime had to be worked very extensively to cope with the amount of work in hand. Laundries have also worked a large amount of overtime. So also have denim and waterproof manufacturing, and care had to be taken to see that the amount of overtime allowed by section 22 of the Act was not exceeded.

5,228 persons have worked 188,722 hours overtime—viz., 2,837 males over sixteen years have worked 134,360 hours, and 2,391 boys and females have worked 54,362 hours.

ACCIDENTS.

There were 101 accidents reported during the year, one of which proved fatal. Twenty others were of a serious nature, resulting in most cases in the loss of fingers. The remainder were slight. In every case of accident the nature and cause were investigated, and where guarding of machinery was possible it was at once attended to. It was found in most cases the accident was caused through carelessness or neglect of the worker. Care had been taken to see that the employees were acquainted of the provisions of the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act in respect to all accidents reported.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

This Act, with few exceptions, gives general satisfaction, and, although we have to be continually on the alert to prevent evasions, it cannot be said that much difficulty has been experienced in enforcing its provisions. The greatest difficulty experienced has been in respect to section 21, providing for the closing of shops by requisition from the majority of the shopkeepers themselves. Great dissatisfaction has been frequently expressed by certain shopkeepers in this connection, the dissatisfied persons being those who have no desire to close their shops at an early hour, but who have had to do so by reason of the fact that a requisition signed by the majority compelled them to do so. Section 8 of the amending Act of last session, prohibiting the sale of tobacco, cigarettes, &c., by other shopkeepers after the hour fixed by requisition (where such exists) for the closing of tobacconists' shops, is a very necessary amend-