

Thirty-three actions were taken for breaches of the various awards, in 27 of which convictions were recorded, and 6 cases were dismissed (for full particulars see "Book of Awards"). Penalties were inflicted amounting to £40, and costs £9 3s. Of this amount, £6 10s. is still outstanding, of which £2 is in the case of a defendant since deceased.

It is pleasing to note that several disputes have been settled without the intervention of the Court, and £52 3s. 1d. has been recovered for employees through the Department in this way.

WAGE-BOOKS.

May I again express the hope that occupiers of shops will soon be placed in the same position as the occupiers of factories in regard to wage-books. In fact, I am of opinion that it would be to advantage if every employer of labour was compelled to keep a wage and time book.

CERTIFICATES OF FITNESS.

The question of employment of young persons under sixteen in both shop and factory is, I think, worthy of consideration. The Factories Act makes it necessary that boys and girls under sixteen shall obtain a certificate of fitness before being permitted to work in a factory. Frequently the same sanitary and other conditions apply to both shop and factory, only that in the shop longer hours are worked, and sometimes there is not that period of rest (sitting down) which is possible in a factory; and occasionally I have found that where a certificate has been refused for a child to work in a factory, he or she has been sent to work in a shop under the more strenuous conditions referred to, so that the intentions of the Act have been altogether evaded. I suggest that in regard to this matter shops and factories should be placed on the same footing.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

There are 4 servants' registry offices licensed, against 10 in 1908-9.

The offices generally observe the conditions of the Servants' Registry Offices Act, but I have still the same complaint to make as last year—namely, that in many instances the seeker after work, who has just sufficient to pay his fare, frequently pays that amount to the registry-office keeper, and then comes to the Department for assistance in the shape of his railway-ticket. There has been a good deal of trouble, too, in another direction: a man applies to the registry office, and is sent to an employer at some distance, by whom he expects to be employed. In some instances the man pays the office fee and his own fare; in others he gives an order upon his intended employer for the fare and the fee; but this order is accepted by me only where the billet is assured. In several instances the men have paid the fee and the fare, and have gone to the place only to find that there were no billets for them. Some of them, no doubt, having got so far away, have gone further still, leaving the registry-office keeper the richer for the fee thus obtained. Others again have come back, and asked the licensee for a refund of the fee, railway-fare, and travelling-expenses. In some cases, no doubt, the employer is responsible for the error; but I think that the blame generally belongs to the registry-office keeper. In not a few cases the Department has been approached, and we have been successful in persuading the keeper of the registry office to refund the amount claimed; but they seem to be under the impression that once they take the fee their responsibility ceases, and the applicant who fails to get the expected work has really no recourse against them, as they are simply agents for the employer. The difficulty a man would have in attempting to prove a case against an employer in such cases is patent, and something should be done so that workers may easily obtain redress from the party responsible for the error made.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

The alteration in this Act making it possible to bring cases before the Magistrate instead of the Arbitration Court has proved to be of advantage. There is not the element of uncertainty which formerly existed, and cases can now be settled before the evidence is forgotten and the witnesses have disappeared, which was impossible in many instances in the past. Again, the employers seem to realise more fully that the Department is determined that the Act must be observed, and during the past year I have found that most of them have shown their readiness to observe the conditions of the law by the repeated visits and communications I have received from them asking for information.

CONCLUSION.

During the past year I have visited Shannon, Levin, Feilding, Ashhurst, Manakau, Woodville, Rongotea, Foxton, Bull's, and Kimbolton. To the police officers in charge of these various districts I have to express my gratitude for the very willing and able assistance they have given me at all times in carrying out my duties as Inspector.

At Palmerston North itself I have paid regular visits to the factories and shops, and also to many of the other employers of labour working under awards, and at all times have been treated with every courtesy and consideration. I also desire to record the valuable assistance rendered, and especially in the work of settling matters without recourse to the Court, and in arriving at a satisfactory decision in various points at issue in connection with the various awards, by Messrs. W. McKenzie, local secretary of the Employers' Association; J. Robertson, secretary of several workers' unions; and P. T. Robinson, secretary of the Flax-mill Employees' Union.

I have, &c.,

W. J. CULVER,

Inspector of Factories.

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