

There has been only a small increase of workrooms this year—262, as against 454 for the previous year. For the first time since the inception of the Department there has been a decrease in the number of workers, the figures for the current year being 1,042 less than the totals for last year. This decrease is not entirely due to dulness of trade. Although some of the industries, notably the engineering and building trades, were especially dull, many of the larger manufacturing industries, such as dressmaking, tailoring, and clothing-manufacturing, were quite unable to get suitable workers, and there is no doubt that had more workers been available the figures for the year, instead of showing a decrease, would have, as heretofore, shown an upward tendency.

The following return shows the number of factories in the four chief cities of the Dominion, classified according to the number of hands employed :—

	Factories Employing												Total Factories.
	30 Hands and under.	31 to 50.	51 to 100.	101 to 150.	151 to 200.	201 to 250.	251 to 300.	301 to 350.	351 to 400.	401 to 450.	451 to 500.	Over 500.	
Auckland ..	1,450	51	27	6	3	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	1,539
Wellington ..	999	24	18	3	..	1	1	..	1	..	..	..	1,047
Christchurch ..	1,251	22	20	8	3	1	1	..	2	..	2	..	1,310
Dunedin ..	1,117	20	20	10	2	1	2	..	..	..	..	2	1,174
	4,817	117	85	27	8	4	5	..	3	..	2	2	5,070

The cases taken before the Court for enforcement of the provisions of the Act show a decided decrease. A total of 113 cases were taken, as against last year's total of 150. Out of these 113 cases, only 2 were dismissed. This, I submit, is a splendid record, and shows the care exercised by our various Inspectors in that no cases are taken before the Court unless the offence can be readily proved. The principal offences for which cases were taken are shown in the list in the following analysis :—

Nature of Offence.	Number of Cases taken.
Failing to pay wages within the time allowed by the Act	27
Failing to grant statutory holidays (King's Birthday and Labour Day) ..	26
Failing to post Form E (showing working-hours, &c.) on wall of factory ..	10
Failing to keep time and wage book	9
Employing persons under sixteen years of age without permits ..	8
Employing assistants overtime without permits	7
Failing to keep register of employment	7
Failing to allow weekly half-holiday	6
Failing to report accidents within forty-eight hours	5
Miscellaneous offences	8

I would mention that in all cases the breaches were wilful.

The two cases dismissed consisted of one at Auckland against a dairy-implement manufacturer for failing to guard a machine which was being used by a boy; the boy was injured. The Magistrate held that the Factories Act did not prohibit boys from being put to work on such machines, and that therefore no breach of section 39 (c) had been committed. In the second case a Chinese laundry-keeper was proceeded against for failing to pay wages to an employee, and for failing to keep proper books as provided by the Act. A deed of partnership was produced in defence, but it was admitted that the employee had worked for a period of twenty weeks before he became entitled to any share in the partnership. It was submitted that the deed of partnership had evidently been drawn up for no other purpose than to evade the Act. The Magistrate, however, held that, in his opinion, the deed was a legal one, and made the employee a partner; the case was accordingly dismissed. For details of the principal cases see "Important Legal Decisions."

During the year there were 735 accidents reported in factories, as against 803 last year. This is a decrease of 68, and the majority of the accidents (407) were very slight, and necessitated only a very short absence from work. In 232 cases they were moderately serious—i.e., they prevented the worker from following his or her employment for a period exceeding fourteen days, but without causing loss of limb or permanent injury; and in 89 cases the injuries were of a serious nature, involving loss of limb or eyesight, or otherwise permanently injuring the worker and affecting his industrial efficiency. The fatal cases numbered 7. Two employees in sawmills were killed by being crushed by logs, and two quarrymen by falls of earth; two employees in engineering factories were caught in cog-wheels, and one worker in chrome-leather met his death by his apron catching in belting. All accidents are promptly inquired into by our various Inspectors, and if anything can be done to prevent similar