

The influence of section 16, which allows for the plea of "excusable breach," is calculated to give dissatisfaction. Cases are frequently defended by counsel who admit the offence, but plead the "excusable breach," with the result that the cases are dismissed. I think the said section should be repealed, seeing that the Magistrate can in any case give costs against the claimant if his case is so frivolous that he should not have taken it.

There have been 13 cases brought before the Court for breach of section 58, for failing to keep a wages and overtime book, and a conviction has been secured in each case.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, I have to thank the officers of the Public Health Department for the ready manner in which they have rendered assistance in connection with sanitary matters when their services have been called into requisition.

I have to thank all the members of the staff for the willing manner in which they attend to all their duties.

I have, &c.,

JAMES SHANAGHAN,

Inspector of Factories.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

WELLINGTON.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Wellington, 20th April, 1910.

In submitting my annual report for the year ending 31st March, 1910, I beg to state that trade generally during the year, although not quite up to the usual standard of previous years, can be said to have been fairly good, with a decided improvement towards the latter part of the year. Many trades show a very marked improvement, with every possibility of a still further improvement. Other trades, although showing little or no improvement, have not decreased, and employers are hopeful for the future.

The building trades have been fairly good in the city, but in the suburbs little or nothing has been done. The building of the Governor's new residence, the commencement of the large Post Office contract, and the Mental Asylum alterations at Porirua, together with other important undertakings, have considerably helped these trades, and in consequence there have been fewer unemployed during the year than during the previous year.

The painting and paperhanging trades, although slack during the early part of the year, have latterly considerably livened up, and can now be said to be fairly good.

The bootmaking trade has been exceedingly good. Factories have been working full time, and difficulty has again been experienced in getting enough competent operatives.

Clothing trades, especially dressmaking, have also been very busy, and many leading factories have been unable to get orders out by reason of the shortness of female labour.

On the other hand, the furniture, engineering, and range-making trades have been extremely quiet, with little or nothing doing. In the former trade, factories have had to shorten hands, and those that were kept on were employed chiefly on stock and jobbing work. An improvement is, however, now being experienced. The dullness may be accounted for by the slackness in the residential building trades, which has also affected the range-making trade to a large extent. However, tradespeople are now considerably more hopeful.

The weather conditions have been so favourable to farmers and stock-raisers that fat stock has been plentiful, good prices have been realised, and good wages have been earned by factory employees engaged in dealing with such stock. Good prices have also been realised by farmers for their wool, and this, although not immediately felt, is sure in the near future to have a very beneficial effect on the state of trade generally.

FACTORIES ACT.

Factory-occupiers are well acquainted with the provisions of this Act, and very little difficulty is being experienced in connection therewith.

Every factory in the district was visited during the year, and matters requiring attention were seen to, special attention being paid to sanitary arrangements, ventilation, and fire-escapes. The factories generally are in good order and well ventilated, and occupiers have, in most cases, taken special care to see that the comfort of workers is attended to, it being found that the better the workers are treated the better are the results of their work.

The number of factories carrying on in old buildings is rapidly diminishing, and in their places new and modern structures are being erected, saving Inspectors the continual worry caused through the defects in the old and obsolete buildings. Plans of buildings for factories are generally submitted to me, and any suggestions made by me to meet the requirements of the Act are invariably complied with.

There were 1,047 factories registered during the year—an increase of 20 on the previous year—employing 8,728 persons—viz., 5,237 males, 2,424 females, and 1,067 working occupiers. The total wages paid was £800,357.

Certificates of fitness to young persons under sixteen to work in factories were issued to 286 persons—106 boys and 180 girls.

During the year, 42,622 hours' overtime were worked by 1,824 boys and women.

There were 63 accidents reported during the year, 14 of which were of a serious nature, resulting in the loss of limbs, &c. The others were only slight injuries. In every case full inquiries were made into the cause of the accident. The machinery (if any) causing such accident was inspected, and, where possible, guarding was ordered to prevent further accident. It was, however, usually found that the accident was caused through the carelessness or inadvertence on the part of the person injured, and not through any defective machinery.