

Prosecutions.—I am pleased to report that it has only been found necessary to take one case before the Court for a breach of this Act. In this case a conviction was obtained and a fine inflicted. There have been other breaches of a trivial character, in which a warning was considered to be sufficient. The sum of £8 11s., back wages, has been collected and paid to workers.

Accidents.—During the year there were 101 accidents reported and inquired into. Of these, 52 occurred in connection with engineering trades, and the remaining 49 were spread over the other trades. I regret to record two fatal accidents. One occurred at the Dunedin City Corporation's transforming-station, where the switchboard attendant lost his life; it is assumed that while he was engaged in removing globes from electric lamps he lost his balance, and came into contact with a live current. The other occurred at a biscuit and confectionery works, where, owing to the breaking of a rung, the worker fell off a ladder upon a hand-truck, which happened to be beneath the ladder. There were 21 accidents of a serious character, varying from the loss of an eye to the cutting-off of joints of fingers, &c. Sixty-eight accidents were of a slight nature, and call for no special comment. In no case were the accidents traceable to breaches of the provisions of the Act. In several instances, however, extra provisions to insure safety were suggested by this Department, and in each case were acted upon by employers. In making inquiries into these cases care has been taken to advise the workers as to their rights to compensation under the Workers' Compensation Act.

General.—I have again to express my appreciation for the assistance rendered in the administration of this Act to the officers of the Health Department, and also the sanitary department of the Dunedin City Corporation.

Considerable trouble has been occasioned during the year owing to the want of some definite provision in the Act as to notice when leaving or being dismissed from employment. Numerous complaints have been received from both employers and employed, and it would be of great benefit to all concerned if a clause could be inserted to cope with this difficulty.

In connection with the inspection of factories, great assistance has been rendered by Miss Hale, Inspector, as regards those factories where women are employed.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

During the year 1,325 shops have been registered, giving employment to 1,589 males and 1,044 females, a total of 2,633. This is an increase of 71 shops as compared with last year. Forty-two breaches of the Act were discovered, and prosecutions taken in 16 instances, resulting in 15 convictions, with penalties amounting to £26 1s. 10d. One case was dismissed owing to the worker, when in the witness-box, "going back" on statements previously made. In 24 cases the breach was either inadvertent or of such a nature that a warning sufficed. Arrears of wages amounting to £8 7s. 6d. were paid to assistants. It is a pleasure to be able to report that the majority of occupiers evince a desire to comply with the law. There are, however, numbers of complaints received from those who employ labour, and who are perforce compelled to close at the hour when assistants cease work against those occupiers who remain open for the sale of goods after 6 p.m. In these cases the occupier carries on business either alone or with the assistance of his wife attending to customers. The opinion is growing stronger, as time goes on, in favour of compulsory closing of all shops at a uniform hour. There is also a tendency amongst a number of shopkeepers to make Saturday afternoon the compulsory half-holiday for all shops.

The amendment to the Shops and Offices Act, 1910, providing that a proper time and wages book shall be kept, has been of great assistance in the administration of this Act.

Overtime.—492 workers worked 8,113 hours' overtime, an increase of more than 3,000 hours over last year.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

The number of complaints investigated in reference to alleged breaches of awards and agreements total 335. In 242 cases breaches of awards were discovered, and 31 prosecutions resulted. Penalties and costs totalling £30 19s. 4d. were imposed in 25 cases, whilst 6 were dismissed. Of the cases where breaches were disclosed, 56 were for breaches of the preference clause; 48 of these were adjusted by the workers joining the unions, while in 8 others action was taken against employers. In 47 instances it was found that less than award rates had been paid, and, as they were evidently breaches of an unintentional nature, matters were settled by the back wages being paid up, and warnings given that any future breaches would be followed by prosecution. £169 has been recovered as arrears of wages, and has been disbursed to workers. Twelve prosecutions were taken for failing to pay award rates of wages, and 1 against a worker for failing to claim award rates. Convictions were obtained in all cases excepting one. The remaining cases were breaches of minor importance, and do not call for comment. Four cases were taken against employers for failing to keep time and wages books as required by the Act, and penalties amounting to £4 10s. were inflicted.

Under-rate Permits.—There have been very few permits issued during the year, the full award rate being paid, unless owing to very exceptional circumstances. Seven permits have been issued in the following trades: Carpenters and joiners, 3; furniture trade, 2; bootmakers and canister-workers, 1 each.

The principal part of the work in connection with this Act has been carried out by Mr. Hollows, and I have again to report that he has given very careful attention to his work, and carried out his duties very satisfactorily.