

Retail trades: The general observations gathered each month went to show that the retail trades have, on the whole, had a successful year. Once or twice there appeared a little tightness of ready cash, but this is inevitable in a community where, to a large extent, the spending-powers are somewhat influenced by the price of frozen meat and wool.

Meat-freezing trades: The output from the various freezing-works has been equal to that of the previous year, and Hawke's Bay still maintains a good position in exports. The wool sales were also successful, and should help to give trade and commerce an impetus.

The question of unemployment has not been felt to any extent in this district, and up till March the demand was greater than the supply; but since commencing the Napier-Gisborne Railway more men have migrated from other districts than were required, and of necessity this has caused a surplus in labour, in most instances unskilled.

The shearing season was very successful, and good cheques were made by the employees, whilst, on the other hand, farmers realized a good price at the local sales.

FACTORIES ACT.

The administration of this Act is not of a very arduous nature. Employers realize that to become conversant with its provisions is in their own interests. The factories visited were, on the whole, up to the standard required by the Act. There were 278 factories registered during the year, a decrease of 26 factories. This decrease is accounted for by the fact that several firms, having three or four branches, registered these branches last year as separate factories. The advantages of the 1910 amendment to the Factories Act—viz., addition to section 32 (aa)—has not acted, in my opinion, in the best interests of those directly concerned, as, in order to overcome the responsibilities cast upon them by the Legislature, some employers simply give their employees a week's notice of termination of employment prior to the holiday season, and thus evade the Act.

There have been 36 certificates of fitness issued to 15 boys and 21 girls.

During the year 7,169 hours' overtime were worked by females and boys under sixteen years of age, an increase of 2,446 hours over the previous year. The total is made up as follows:—

Trade.	Hours Worked.	Number of Persons.
Tailoring	5,483	100
Dressmaking	1,582	91
Cycle trade	39	1
Cap-making	32	4
Laundry	16	3
Jewellery-manufacturing	16	1
Boot-repairing	1	2
	7,169	202

The amendment of 1910, allowing slightly extended overtime, has worked entirely satisfactorily. The shortage of female labour has, no doubt, resulted in the extra overtime being worked.

The number of accidents reported was 62, and I am sorry to record that two were of a rather serious nature. In each instance employees suffered the loss of an arm. No time was lost in making inquiries into the cause, and in both cases no defect was found in the appliances, the accidents being purely misadventure. Each person injured was also informed of the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act. In this connection the annotated work by W. Jolliffe—viz., Workers' Compensation Act, 1908—was of great value.

There were 12 prosecutions under the Act. Convictions were recorded in 11 cases, and 1 case was withdrawn, owing to the serious illness of the husband of the person who was charged with failing to register her premises. The fines amounted to £6 10s., and costs £3 6s. The prosecutions were made up as follow: Three for working boys on Saturday afternoon; 3 for failing to register work-rooms; 1 for employing a young person without a permit; 5 for failing to pay wages at not more than fortnightly intervals.

The sum of £16 17s. 1d. was collected from various employers, being amounts inadvertently deducted from employees. The Amendment Act, 1910, the purpose of which was to restrict the long hours worked in Chinese laundries, has not had the effect anticipated. The legal interpretation in the Auckland case places the Chinese laundries in somewhat the same position as hitherto.

It has been necessary to send 128 letters of warning to occupiers of factories, and in each case I am pleased to state that my request has met with a ready response, and the matters complained of were remedied without the necessity of recourse to the Court.

The question of fire-escapes has received attention, and in cases where the work-rooms were situated upstairs and the stairways of wood, ropes were ordered to be securely affixed, so as to provide an additional means of escape should a fire break out.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

Matters appertaining to the administration of the Act have worked satisfactorily. There are 378 shops registered this year, an increase of 74 over the previous. As the registration was conducted by personal visits, many shops which had hitherto escaped registration were brought into line. During this inspection, I ascertained that in the majority of shops throughout the district the employees worked the "half-hour's grace" allowed after the ordinary hour of ceasing work, irrespective of whether fifty-two hours had been worked or not; but in each case the occupier speedily remedied the error, due entirely through misinterpretation.