

Overtime.—Permits have been granted to 2,149 boys and women to work 62,449 hours overtime; this is a considerable decrease as compared with the overtime worked last year. Most of the overtime was worked in the following trades: Tailoring and clothing, 850 persons worked 27,670 hours; laundry-work, 195 persons worked 6,775 hours; dressmaking and millinery, 465 persons worked 6,698 hours; printing and bookbinding, 176 persons worked 4,864 hours; sail and tent making, 60 persons worked 3,123½ hours; biscuit and confectionery, 44 persons worked 2,140½ hours.

Accidents in Factories.—A total of 329 accidents in factories has been reported. Of these, 1 was fatal, and 58 were moderately serious—viz., loss of eye, leg amputated, loss of thumb, fingers, &c., caused chiefly whilst using circular saws, planing-machines, &c. In this connection I may say that when guards to machinery are provided it is often very difficult to get the workmen to take the trouble to use or adjust same, and many accidents are the result of this neglect. The trades in which most of the accidents occurred were—Sawmilling, 100; engineering, 40; joinery, 16; bottling, 15; confectionery-manufacturing, 12; cabinetmaking, 11; coachbuilding, 11; pottery-manufacturing, 11; and saddlery-making, 10. The fatal accident occurred to a man whilst oiling the bearings of a coke-elevator. It was the practice to stop the machinery during certain periods each day, and the man's duty was to oil the bearings of the elevator before the machinery was restarted. On the day the accident happened the man had not finished, and became entangled in the gear. Instructions were given that in future a signal shall be given before restarting the machinery. In all cases careful inquiries were made as to the causes of the accidents, and in many instances it was found that the principal cause was a want of care on the part of the worker. This is often the case, even with the most experienced workmen.

Prosecutions.—It has been found necessary to prosecute employers in 28 cases; 23 have been decided, and there are 5 cases yet to be heard. In all the cases heard convictions have been obtained and penalties amounting to £23 10s. imposed, with £10 4s. costs and £3 2s. Inspector's expenses. Of the above cases, 12 were taken in Auckland City and suburbs, and 11 in the country districts. Particulars of the cases are: Employing workers in laundry after 7 p.m. without permit, 7 cases; failing to keep wages and overtime book, 6 cases; failing to affix labels to garments made in an unregistered factory, 2 cases; failing to report accidents, 3 cases; failing to keep record of garments made outside factory, 1 case; employing boys under sixteen without certificate of fitness, 1 case; failing to allow three-quarters of an hour for meal, 1 case; employing female worker after 6 p.m. without permit, 1 case; failing to pay overtime rates, 1 case.

In addition to the above, a number of slight breaches was discovered and adjusted. Arrears of wages amounting to £173 19s. 8½d. were obtained and paid over to workers; this course has been followed where investigations clearly indicated that the employers had inadvertently committed the breaches. I may say that practically all employers have used their best endeavour to comply with the provisions of the Act, and have assisted the Department by their willingness to carry out any alterations that were deemed necessary.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

There were 2,221 shops registered, an increase of 106 over those of the previous year. The number of hands employed was 2,561 males and 1,294 females.

In the inspection of shops particular attention has been given to ventilation, air-space, light, sitting-accommodation, and sanitation, especially where the two sexes were employed. Owing to the increased number of females now being taken into shops and offices, some difficulty has been experienced in providing the necessary accommodation in the old buildings, but new buildings are being fitted to meet the requirements of the Act in this respect.

The amendment to the Act requiring all shops to be registered in the name of one person only is now working smoothly, and has been the means of inducing many shopkeepers to close at the hour at which the assistants leave.

The provisions of the Act relating to hotels and restaurants have received careful consideration. The working-hours have been adjusted to suit the businesses, and little difficulty has been experienced. In some cases, however, where the hours are arranged in short shifts of a few hours each, the assistants are required to be available for duty, with short intervals between, for fifteen or sixteen hours daily; and there seems to be no remedy for this, as the assistants must be in attendance at the busy hours of the day. The keeping of the holiday-book has caused some trouble, owing to the difficulty of fixing the half-holiday for each employee concerned, and, in some instances, owing to the failure of assistants to sign the book.

Shopkeepers who employ assistants have now complied with the provision of the Act requiring them to keep a wages and time book, and this provision has tended to check irregularities in the payment of wages. The majority of the shopkeepers express approval of the regulation form of book to be kept, as it has been found to be helpful in other ways relating to the businesses of shops.

Requisitions, by which the majority of the shopkeepers in a trade may fix the closing-hours for the trade, are in force in 7 trades in the city district—namely, boot and shoe retailers, bicycle-dealers, chemists, furnishers and house-furnishers, grocers, hairdressers and tobacconists; also in several other trades in the country districts. The closing-hours have been well observed, and very few attempts have been made to evade the law. During the Christmas holidays an attempt was made to defy the Act, and 4 shopkeepers were prosecuted and fined.

A considerable amount of overtime at stock-taking and special work has been worked in shops, showing an increase of 2,591 hours over last year. Permits were granted for 1,017 persons, who worked 16,560 hours—12,236 by males and 4,324 by females.

Arrears of wages due to assistants amounting to £30 3s. 10s. have been collected and paid to them.