

sumption. Several alterations to bakehouses were ordered, and these have been satisfactorily attended to.

Prosecutions.—As previously stated, no cases were taken under the Act. I desire again, however, to bring under your notice that the limit of time during which an information must be laid under section 6 for offences against sections 32, 38, and 54 is too short for practical purposes. For instance, after becoming aware of a breach having been committed the offender may be found to have left the district, and therefore may be difficult to locate. By the time his whereabouts are discovered it is sometimes too late to lay the information. I suggest, therefore, that the limit should be extended to six months to prevent wrongdoers from escaping citation.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

The inspection of shops, including licensed and private hotels and restaurants, carried on throughout the year proved that on the whole employers had paid proper attention to the requirements of the Act. Very strict attention is given by the City Council Inspectors to the supervision of butchers' shops, dairies, restaurants, and similar places open for the sale of articles for human consumption. This inspection has had a good effect, and has removed some of the causes for complaint which hitherto existed as to the proper cleanliness and sanitation of these premises.

As has been pointed out in previous reports, the existence of so many requisitions fixing closing-hours in the various kinds of trades necessitates constant vigilance on the part of Inspectors. I am of opinion that the fixing of a general closing-hour of, say, 7 p.m. on ordinary nights and 10 p.m. on the late night would remove much of the difficulty of inspection which at present exists.

Overtime.—The amount of overtime worked by shop-assistants (8,766 hours) is just about half of what was worked last year.

Hotel and restaurant assistants to the number of 95 were granted permission to work overtime to the extent of 2,024 hours, a considerable increase over last year's total of 672 hours.

Employers continue to avail themselves of the opportunity afforded them by section 7 of the Amendment Act, 84 notices of arrangement with employees to allow accumulation of holidays having been received.

Permission to employ hotel assistants on the usual half-holiday was granted under special circumstances in 35 instances.

SERVANTS REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

There were 7 renewals of licenses and 4 original applications granted during the year. Regular inspection of the books and records of these offices revealed no breaches of the Act, but the practice of charging the engaged employee more than the suited employer still exists to a considerable extent.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT.

The provisions of the Amendment Act which require agreements of settlement to be approved by either a Magistrate or an Inspector of Factories have caused considerable additional work during the year. Every endeavour has been made to deal equitably between the parties concerned—namely, the insurance companies, the employers, and the workers. The amount of compensation involved in the agreements approved of by me totalled £3,050 19s. 8d.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

The period under review has been marked by four strikes of a more or less serious nature. In three of these the men concerned were ships' firemen and trimmers, whilst in the remaining one the slaughtermen at Petone and Ngahauranga were involved.

None of the strikes came within the provisions of the Act, and therefore no action was taken by the Department. In one instance a steamer engaged in the Wellington-Lyttelton ferry service was put out of commission for six days owing to the appearance of a paragraph in the Press which the men alleged reflected seriously on them.

The cause of the trouble in the two other cases, in which firemen were concerned, was that an insufficient number of hands was alleged to be employed in the stokehold, thus entailing an unreasonable amount of work on those who were then engaged. In these instances the two steamers concerned were idle for five and seven weeks respectively.

The slaughtermen's strike (which took place in other districts also) was the outcome of the freezing companies' refusal to grant the men's demand for an increase of 5s. per 100 on the ruling rate for killing. The factories were idle for some three weeks, when other men (non-unionists) were engaged in the strikers' places; work was gradually resumed, and the strike eventually "fizzled out."

The administration of the provisions of the Act and of the various awards and industrial agreements in force has entailed a considerable amount of work in the way of both general inspection and in the investigation of breaches or alleged breaches reported. During the year the number of complaints received was 331. In a considerable number of cases the Department had reasonable grounds for believing that the offences discovered were due to inadvertence, and these were settled by a letter of warning being sent or arrears of wages where due being paid. The amount of £82 12s. 6d. was recovered in this way and paid to the workers concerned.

Prosecutions.—It was found necessary to take 98 cases before the Court. Of these, 86 were for breaches of awards or agreements—viz., 71 against employers and 15 against workers. The majority of these cases were taken before the Magistrate, 84 having been dealt with in that Court, whilst 2 were taken before the Arbitration Court. Favourable judgments towards the Department were given in 77 cases, and penalties amounting to £67 5s. were imposed; 8 cases