

ment to the Act compelling all shops (other than confectioners and the like) to close at a specified hour would be welcomed.

The feeling in favour of observing Saturday afternoon as the half-holiday is growing, but I am not sure that a majority of shopkeepers are as yet favourable to it.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

The number of alleged breaches of awards reported to this office during the year was 391, an increase of 56 on the number reported last year. Thorough investigation was made into each complaint, and in 154 instances breaches were found to exist, but were mainly of a trivial nature, or due to oversight. In 45 cases applications for enforcements were made, and in 35 of these penalties and costs totalling £48 15s. 4d. were imposed. In 3 cases breaches were recorded merely without penalty, and in 3 the Department was nonsuited, while 4 cases were dismissed. In several cases the Department was not successful owing to the ambiguous wording of the awards in question, and were more in the nature of applications for interpretations, or in order to settle vexatious points arising in the administration of the awards than with a view to obtaining penalties. In 49 instances it was discovered that the full award rate of wages was not being paid. This was mainly due to the copies of the new awards not coming to hand in good time, or to awards being made to operate retrospectively.

A total of £244 14s. 8d., back wages, was recovered and paid to the workers concerned. The principal amounts were under: Coal-miners' award, £11 4s.; Drivers' award, £14 12s. 1d.; Engine-drivers' award, £11 9s.; Hotel-employees' award, £14 6s. 6d.; Woollen-milling award, £135 18s. 6d.; also sundry amounts in 10 miscellaneous trades.

Two charges were laid under the Act for failing to keep overtime and wages book, and in both cases penalties and costs, amounting to £4 2s., were imposed.

Under-rate workers' permits were issued to 24 persons, including 6 issued by unions.

There is no doubt that the work in connection with the awards made under this Act is steadily growing; at times the office is inundated with complaints, and each person is anxious that his complaint should have immediate attention. In quite a large number of these cases it is found that there is no actual ground for complaint, and it would be a saving of expense to the Department, also of some annoyance to employers, if a little more care were used before alleged breaches were referred to the Department.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

There are 14 licensed registry offices in this district, two having obtained their licenses this year, the others having been in business for some time. One license-holder was prosecuted for keeping servants as lodgers, and a penalty of 10s., with 7s. costs, was imposed. Several complaints were made to this office against license-holders, but inquiries went to show that there was not any cause for them.

WORKERS' DWELLINGS ACT.

This Act has not been so largely availed of as has been the case in other centres. The reason I assign for this is that a large proportion of the skilled workers already own their dwellings, and therefore the demand for cottages is not so acute as would otherwise be the case. Two applications have been received, and cottages are in course of erection for the applicants. The cottages already built have been well occupied throughout the year. They have been thoroughly renovated, and the hot-water system and a sewer-drainage system installed. The whole of this work, and also the erection of new dwellings, has been successfully carried out under the supervision of the Inspector of Scaffolding.

SHEARERS' AND AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT.

There are only a few sheep-stations within this district. Two sheep-stations and 1 farm were, however, visited by Inspectors from this office. In 2 instances these inspections were made in consequence of complaints received stating that the accommodation for shearers and agricultural labourers was not in accordance with the Act, but in both instances it was found that the complaints were not justified.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT.

This Act is working satisfactorily, and has been of great benefit to many workers who have had the misfortune to meet with accidents. In all cases where accidents in factories and on buildings were reported to this office the cause of each was inquired into, and information was given to the injured as to the amount of compensation and medical expenses to which they were entitled. There was also a number of accidents that happened to persons who were not employed in factories or on buildings, and many of these people called at this office for information and advice.

EMPLOYMENT BUREAUX.

Women's Branch.—See separate report by the officer in charge, page 44.

Men's Branch.—The number of men assisted to employment for the year was 893. Of these, 564 were single and 329 were married, with 1,150 dependants. For the most part those seeking employment and who obtained it through this office were of the unskilled-labour class. 476 were placed with private employers and 417 on Government works.

I have, &c.,

L. D. BROWETT,

Inspector of Factories.

The Secretary of Labour and Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.