

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

There has been 408 shops—nine more than last year—registered. In these, 862 males and 371 females (1,233 employees in all) were employed. The wages paid amounted to over £72,011. Overtime was worked in 21 shops by 163 shop-assistants, who worked 1,520 hours.

The shops throughout the district have been in a very satisfactory sanitary condition, and the books have been generally well kept, and up to date. With the shops I include the hotels, the occupiers of which have given very little trouble in this connection.

YOUNG PERSONS UNDER SIXTEEN WORKING IN SHOPS.

Again I would draw attention to the anomaly between the Factories and Shops and Offices Act in that there is no restriction as to the age at which boys and girls may be employed in shops.

TIME OF PAYMENT OF WAGES.

Another matter which is frequently referred to the Department is the question as to when wages should be paid. Under the Factories Act wages must be paid at not longer than fortnightly intervals, but the penalty can only be inflicted if the employer is seven days in arrears (total, 21 days). Under the Shops and Offices Act wages must be paid within the same period, but action can only be taken if the employer is fourteen days in arrears (total, 28 days).

LIMIT OF TIME IN WHICH CASES MAY BE TAKEN INTO COURT.

Another and I think more serious anomaly is the limit of time during which cases can be taken into Court. Under the Factories and Shops and Offices Acts prosecution in most instances must be commenced within one month of the offence being committed. It would be an advantage if these Acts were brought into line with the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, in which six months is allowed for this purpose.

PROSECUTIONS UNDER FACTORIES, SHOPS AND OFFICES, INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION, AND OTHER ACTS, AND CASES SETTLED OUT OF COURT. •

Many warnings have been given during the year, and I am satisfied that those who have received them have endeavoured to comply with the laws, and to prevent a repetition of the offence for which they were warned. Prosecutions have not been entered upon without first giving those concerned every opportunity and facility for keeping their premises in order.

Of the cases taken into Court 21 were under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act for breaches of awards. In every case a breach was recorded, and penalties and costs amounting to £29 10s. were inflicted. Nineteen cases were also taken under the Shops and Offices and Factories Act, in which the defendants were convicted and fined, the penalties and costs totalling £16 2s.

A large number of other offences and breaches were inquired into, and in many cases the complaints were found to be either of a trivial nature or unsubstantiated. In these instances no action was taken. In others again the employers were warned, and the disputes settled amicably by the payment, through the Department, of any arrears of wages owing or moneys wrongfully deducted. In this connection £175 7s. 1d. was recovered by this office and handed over to the workers.

I am glad to say there has been very little friction in dealing with these matters, and, generally speaking, there has been harmony between employer and employed throughout this district.

WORKERS' DWELLINGS.

During this year 6 workers' dwellings have been erected in Palmerston North. There were originally 14 applications for houses, but owing to the delay in completing arrangements connected with sewerage, water, and road-making, 8 of the applications were withdrawn.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

There are 4 licensed registry offices in Palmerston North, and there have been no complaints concerning them during the year.

CONCLUSION.

During the year I have visited many of the towns and settlements within the Manawatu district, and have received every help from the constables in charge and local Inspectors. To these I desire to record my thanks. I also desire to thank the employers of labour and the occupiers of the shops and factories I have visited within the district for the kindly consideration and courtesy which at all times has been extended towards me.

I have, &c.,

W. J. CULVER,

Inspector of Factories and Awards.

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