

FACTORIES ACT.

During the year 239 factories were registered, which is an increase of 6 over the previous year. 1,538 persons were employed, comprising 1,190 males, 348 females.

Forty-nine certificates of fitness to work in factories have been issued to 23 boys and 26 girls under sixteen years of age.

There has been a decrease in the amount of overtime worked by boys and female workers, which is shown as follows: Number of workers, 1912, 185; 1913, 276; overtime worked, 10,666 hours and 8,276 hours respectively.

Seventy-five accidents were reported, nearly all of which were of a slight nature; the most serious was one in which a worker's arm was almost cut off with a circular saw, but, thanks to modern surgery, the arm has been saved, and it is likely that the man will be able to use it again very shortly.

There were 3 prosecutions (2 in Timaru and 1 in Geraldine) taken under this Act, and penalties were imposed in both cases. Several warnings have been given to employers to comply with the provisions of the Act.

I have again much pleasure in expressing satisfaction at the way in which factories were equipped and conducted, also for the readiness with which employers have complied with any alterations or improvements that I have suggested. All the town factories of any size have got their sanitary arrangements in good order, and connected with the new drainage system. In conjunction with the Health Inspector I have made a large number of inspections in connection with these arrangements in both Timaru and Waimate, where drainage schemes have been introduced.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

The total number of shops and hotels registered in Timaru and suburbs (including St. Andrew's) was 307, which is a substantial increase over last year; but of this number 14 have since been closed. This is not unusual with the smaller class of shops, which open for a short time and then close down again.

Overtime permits were issued for 273 assistants to work 3,947 hours.

The Act appeared to be well observed on the whole, although I had to prosecute in 16 instances; conviction with penalty and costs was entered in each case. Thirteen of them were for failing to close at the hours fixed by gazetted "requisitions," 2 for failing to close at 1 p.m. on statutory half-holiday, and 1 for not paying an assistant for overtime worked; 7 of the cases were taken at Timaru and 9 at Temuka.

The shops, on the whole, were well kept and stocked, and their appearance and cleanliness are a credit to the occupiers.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

There are 3 offices registered under this Act, and they are well conducted, although the practice of charging fees to workers only, which I previously reported, is still in vogue.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

Fourteen cases for enforcement of awards have been taken in the Stipendiary Magistrate's Court and 1 in the Court of Arbitration. The latter was taken to obtain an interpretation, and the Court recorded a breach. Of the cases taken in the Stipendiary Magistrate's Court, penalties were imposed in 10 instances, whilst 3 were dismissed, and in 1 a nonsuit was entered. In 2 of the cases dismissed the Stipendiary Magistrate stated a case for the Arbitration Court, and judgment was given for defendants on the Court's finding. Seven cases of breaches of awards were settled out of Court.

Proceedings were taken against 7 men for taking part in a strike; each of them was fined, the penalties and costs given amounting in all to £5 2s.

Two employers were proceeded against under the Act for failing to keep overtime and wages book, and each was convicted with penalty.

Fifteen permits to under-rate workers have been issued; the bulk of them were renewals of former permits to persons physically unfit.

In most cases employers and employees were working harmoniously, and, with the exception of the slaughtermen's strike, there has been little or no industrial difficulty.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT.

A good deal of advice has been asked for and given under this Act during the past year, and all cases referred to this office have been settled without legal proceedings being taken. There was, however, a practice in vogue to which I would call particular attention. Several insurance companies expected the injured worker to pay for medical certificates required by them when the worker was fit to resume work. Another matter that should, if possible, be attended to is that when an employer admits liability for compensation the payment of half-wages should be made every week, say, after the first fortnight. I found that in many cases no payment was made until the workers resumed employment, and some hardship was thereby experienced.

WORKERS' DWELLINGS ACT.

Eighteen houses have been built in Timaru and Temuka, and all have been taken up by the applicants, who have expressed great satisfaction for the benefits conferred by the Act. The houses are of four and five rooms, well built, conveniently designed, and situated at an easy distance from town. Enough land has been secured here for 9 or 10 more houses, and sufficient applications have already been received to fill the whole of this block; whilst I have little doubt that if more land were available it would be quickly taken up.