

Men's Employment Branch.—In this branch a busy year has been experienced. Last winter, which was predicted to be a serious one for the unemployed, was successfully negotiated owing to the Department's having a standing order for men to be employed on the public works at Cass and Otira, and later on for men at Lake Coleridge.

DUNEDIN.

The Officer in Charge (Mr. L. D. Browett) reports:—

General.—The building trade, which is usually a good criterion of the condition of trade generally, has not been so busy as during the previous year, and at various periods numbers of carpenters have been reported as idle. The iron trades were, as a whole, quiet; there were, however, occasional busy periods. Woollen-milling has been very busy throughout the year, and apparently not seriously affected by the strike of waterside workers and others. Clothing-manufacturing has been satisfactory, though not as brisk as during the foregoing year, when orders for military uniforms were being executed. Boot and shoe manufacturing has been quieter than during the previous year, and employment in some factories less constant. Trade has, however, considerably improved lately, and is now fairly brisk.

Factories Act.—This Act has been well observed. There have, of course, been some irregularities, but most of them were capable of adjustment without recourse to the Court. Six prosecutions were undertaken, in all of which convictions and penalties were obtained. Compared with the previous years there is a slight decrease in the number of registered factories, and also a decrease of about two hundred in the number of females employed; the latter decrease is probably due to a temporary slackness at the time of the registration in some of the industries in which females are principally employed.

Less overtime was worked than during the preceding year. This decrease may to some extent be attributed to the strike, as in previous years overtime has been general in the clothing and other trades from October to December.

The number of accidents reported and inquired into was 163, one of which resulted fatally (due to a fall from a ladder).

Shops and Offices Act.—This Act has worked well, and there has been comparatively little friction in its administration. Thirty-five breaches of the Act were, however, discovered; fifteen prosecutions were taken, out of which one charge was dismissed.

The greatest difficulty that Inspectors have to contend with in administering this Act is in regard to the hours worked by carters. Being shop-assistants within the meaning of the Act they are not allowed to work more than one night per week after 6 p.m., but as the employer has the right to say which night shall be the late night it means that the Inspector must see the carter being employed after hours on at least two of the six nights of the week before he can interfere. Carters are difficult to detect, and after having been warned once the difficulty of detecting them again in the same week is greater. This trouble would be removed if the Act provided that the late night for all assistants should be the night on which the shop is kept open late for trade.

Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act.—The number of alleged breaches of awards and industrial agreements reported to this office during the year was 319—a decrease on last year's returns. Thorough investigation was made into each complaint received, besides which inquiries were made by Inspectors in the ordinary course of inspection at a large number of places of which no complaint had been received. In all some 151 breaches were found to have existed. Applications for enforcements were made in thirty-three cases, in twenty-six of which penalties and costs were imposed. Five charges were dismissed; in one the Department was nonsuited, and one was withdrawn.

Servants' Registry Offices Act.—There are thirteen licensed registry-offices in this district. These offices all appear to be in good hands, as they give little cause for complaint.

Shearers' and Agricultural Labourers' Accommodation Act.—There are very few sheep-stations in the immediately surrounding district, but on account of complaints received Inspectors from this office visited seven stations in various parts of the Otago Central District. These stations are separated by very long distances, and in some instances were difficult of access. With two exceptions the complaints mentioned were groundless. In the other two, notices were served on the occupiers to provide accommodation in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

Men's Employment Branch.—The great majority of those making application for employment and obtaining it through this office were unskilled labourers, although a fair number of men were engaged for farm-work.

GISBORNE.

The Inspector (Mr. W. H. Westbrooke) reports:—

General.—The year has been one of prosperity, and the wage-earner generally has received constant employment, in some instances at a higher rate of pay than during last year. The recent strike, which had such disastrous effects on trade in other centres of the Dominion, was only indirectly felt in Gisborne. All trades have been exceedingly active during the year, more especially the building trade, and at present there appear no signs of decreasing activity.

Factories Act.—The factories have been well conducted, and it has been necessary to take only one case to Court.

There were ninety accidents reported during the year. All of these, with one exception, were slight. The practice of using a running shaft as a hoist is a fruitful source of accidents and one difficult of detection. I think the practice should be made illegal under the Act.