

appliances, &c., that should be provided for the protection of factory employees. This work necessitates reference to fire-prevention and health experts, and will therefore take some time to complete. It is proposed that some of these regulations should also be made under the Shops and Offices Act.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

It was found necessary in 128 instances to institute proceedings for breaches of the Act, as against 152 during the previous year; and in 124 instances convictions were entered, as against 148 last year.

The Shops and Offices Amendment Act, 1917, which came into force on the 27th October, 1917, relating to the restriction of the hours of employment of women and girls in restaurants, has on the whole been well observed throughout the Dominion. Warnings have been given in about twelve cases, and on only two occasions has failure to comply with the provisions of the amendment rendered prosecution necessary. Where overtime has been worked employers have, in obtaining permits, satisfied the Inspectors that they have made proper provision for the safe conduct of the female assistants to their homes.

Reports from the various centres show that, as a general rule, restaurants and marble-bars are now closed before 10.30, the hour fixed by the Act after which female assistants may not be employed without a permit. In only four districts out of fifteen from which reports were received were permits applied for. In most of the other districts where the premises were kept open after 10.30 no assistants were employed after that hour, the proprietors themselves attending to the wants of the public.

Regulations.

Proposed regulations relating to heating, sanitation, &c.—see remarks *ante*, *re* regulations under the Factories Act.

ARREARS OF WAGES RECEIVED FOR WORKERS UNDER VARIOUS ACTS.

Arrears of wages amounting to £1,496 8s. were collected from employers through the agency of the Department, and handed over to the workers concerned.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

Notwithstanding the reduction in the staff caused by the war, the work entailed in the investigation of alleged breaches of awards and agreements has increased, the number of complaints being larger than during the previous year.

As the following figures show, the number of disputes filed for investigation by Conciliation Councils and the Arbitration Court has decreased :—

	1917-18.	1916-17.
Industrial agreements (inclusive of those made between parties without reference to a Conciliation Commissioner or Council)	45	63
Recommendations of Councils of Conciliation	123	159
Awards of Arbitration Court	114	168
Magistrates' Courts—		
Enforcements of awards, &c.	288	191

Of the 288 prosecutions, convictions were obtained in 245 cases.

The awards and agreements actually in force as at the 31st March last totalled 541.

Work performed by Commissioners and Councils of Conciliation during the Year.

	Industrial Districts.			Totals.
	Northern and Taranaki. (Commissioner Harle Giles.)	Wellington, Marlborough, Nelson, and Westland. (Commissioners Hagger and Newton.)	Canterbury, and Otago and Southland. (Commissioners Triggs and Hagger.)	
Number of industrial agreements arrived at and filed with Clerk of Awards—				
Through Councils (<i>i.e.</i> , without reference to Arbitration Court)	1	2	2	5
Through Commissioners	10	..	..	10
Number of recommendations of Conciliation Councils fully accepted and forwarded to Court to be made into awards	24	27	34	85
Number of recommendations substantially accepted and forwarded to Court to be made into awards	10	7	6	23
Number of other disputes referred to Court (in which no recommendation was made, &c.)	9	3	6	123 18
Totals	54	39	48	141

It will be seen that out of a total of 141 disputes, 123 (equal to 87 per cent.) were settled or substantially settled by the Commissioners and Councils of Conciliation.