

As a result of the absence at the war of large numbers of the younger and middle-aged men, it is anticipated that the number of boys and girls leaving school and available for employment will considerably diminish in the years 1930–33.

INSPECTIONS, ETC.

Inspectors paid 16,654 visits of inspection to factories during the year (previous year 15,750). Prosecutions numbered 37, in 34 of which convictions were obtained. The fines totalled £67. No case calls for comment.

Complaints were received respecting 146 alleged breaches of the Act, resulting in 6 prosecutions and 76 warnings; while 1,259 other breaches were discovered by the Inspectors themselves, for which 31 prosecutions were instituted and 980 warnings were given, the latter breaches being either first offences or of a minor nature. No action was considered necessary in the remaining cases.

There were 990 requisitions served to comply with various requirements of the Act, such as for lime-washing; safeguards for workers employed on machinery, &c.; sanitary conveniences; fire escapes; renovations and structural alterations; heating-appliances; ventilation; lighting; first-aid appliances; washing-water; and dining-rooms in the case of establishments employing over six women and girls, and boys under sixteen. In two cases occupiers were required to provide entirely new premises.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

The records show 23,827 shops throughout New Zealand, of which 11,424 (approximately one-half) were carried on without assistants. In the shops with assistants there were employed 20,205 males and 18,745 females.

Visits of inspection to the number of 20,283 were made during the year (previous year, 19,044). Prosecutions numbered 352, in which 314 convictions were obtained; fines, £578.

Complaints were received respecting 457 alleged breaches of the Act, resulting in 89 prosecutions and 193 warnings; while 1,482 other breaches were discovered by the Inspectors themselves, for which 263 prosecutions were instituted and 1,101 warnings were given, the latter breaches being of a minor nature or first offences. No action was considered necessary in the remaining cases.

One hundred and nineteen requisitions were served on occupiers of shops to comply with various requirements of the Act, such as for sanitary conveniences, heating-appliances, sitting-accommodation for females, lighting, ventilation, and drinking-water.

AMENDMENT OF ACT.

The principal Act was amended last session in several respects, the principal of which are as follows :—

Section 3: The hour of 9.30 p.m., after which female assistants and boys may not be employed in shops other than restaurants (for which the hour of 10.30 is fixed), was extended to 10.30 in those cases where a business is carried on in conjunction with that of a restaurant, provided that the employment of the assistants concerned is restricted to the latter class of business.

Section 6 provides, as in the Factories Act, that in shops in which six or more persons are employed, other than those living near by, a suitable dining and cloak room shall be provided.

Sections 17–20: The most important provision of the amendment is contained in these sections which deal with the power of the Court of Arbitration, when making an award relating to shop-assistants in any industry or industries, to fix the closing hours of all shops in the industry or industries, including the competitors' shops in which no assistants are employed. Jurisdiction in this direction was given to the Court of Arbitration in 1920 on account of complaints regarding competition made by shopkeepers who employed assistants and who found it necessary to close their shops in order to release their assistants at the hours fixed by the awards. This jurisdiction has now been limited to the principal towns of the Dominion whose population exceeds 5,000. The Court shall, before making an order, have regard to the convenience of the public in each district, and every shopkeeper to whom such order would apply is now entitled to be notified of the proposal and to be given an opportunity of being heard.

The provisions of the Act relating to the closing-hours of shops are now as follow :—

The weekly half-holiday must be observed throughout the whole of the Dominion, except in certain exempted trades.

In regard to the other days of the week, all shops in those centres whose population exceeds 5,000, except in certain exempted trades, must be closed at 6 p.m. on four days and 9 p.m. on the late night. As above stated, the Court of Arbitration may, however, in an award which prescribes an earlier hour for shop-assistants in those centres also fix earlier closing-hours of all shops in the industry or industries in the locality. If no such award is made, earlier hours of closing in the evening may be fixed by the shopkeepers themselves in the respective trades by "requisition" of the majority. In the smaller towns the closing-hours in the evening may also be fixed by "requisition" of the majority.

Last year's amendment, however, provides that partial or total exemption from any of the closing provisions other than those relating to the weekly half-holiday may be granted by local Magistrates. (Formerly a modified jurisdiction was exercised partly by Magistrates and partly by the Court of Arbitration itself.) In dealing with applications for exemption each Magistrate is required to take into consideration the question of competition and also the public interest.

In order to meet the difficulty that frequently arises on account of the overlapping of trades, the principal Act has also provided that a majority of the shopkeepers whose principal business is the carrying-on of a particular trade, and whose closing-hours are fixed under any of the provisions of the