

The figures as to the number of factories and workers employed therein do not purport to coincide with those of the Government Statistician (annual statistics of factory production) as his returns, which are drawn up purely for statistical purposes, do not cover various small establishments that are included as factories under the Factories Act.

It might be explained that the above figures are those ascertained at registration-time (April in each year), except that in order to include factories in seasonal industries which might be closed in April any new establishments opened during the year are added. The figures shown for 1935–36, therefore, chiefly represent the numbers in April, 1935.

Mention has been made in the last two years' reports of the improvement noticeable in several industries—viz., clothing and white working, boot-manufacturing, and sawmilling and other trades associated with the building industry; the increase in the number of factories registered during the year—viz., 534—is the greatest since 1925–26.

Registration fees received during 1935–36 reflected the increases above noted, being about 7 per cent. greater than in the preceding year. In respect to the 1936–37 year the revenue received during the first quarter indicates that a further increase both in factories registered and in factory workers may be anticipated this year.

The records of overtime retained by the Department refer only to extended hours in the case of women and boys, the prior approval of the Inspector being necessary. From such records it is ascertained that a considerable amount of overtime has again been worked, particularly in the clothing trades. The law limits the amount of overtime that may be worked to ninety hours in any year, with an additional thirty hours in special cases. Many clothing-factories worked the full limit of overtime allowed.

ACCIDENTS.

In order that the accident statistics may be comparable with the statistics of other countries, as urged by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 1923, the figures cover the calendar year instead of the financial year.

The total number of reported accidents to workers in factories is 2,636 (2,472 males and 164 females). Of the total number, 78 of the accidents occurred to workers under sixteen years of age, 610 to those between sixteen and twenty, and the remaining 1,948 to those above that age. Of the three fatal accidents one was caused by or was due to machinery. Of the total accidents, 486 were caused by or were due to machinery. The other principal causes of accidents were found to be as follows: Falls of persons (from stairs, ladders, platforms, &c.), 281; stepping on or striking against fixed objects, 109; faulty handling of tools, 705; handling of other objects—viz., objects dropped or tipped over, objects falling, or strain due to handling—754; handling of poisonous, hot, and corrosive substances, 114; others (miscellaneous), 187; total, 2,636. Disability caused: Temporary disability, 2,537; permanent partial disability, 96. Fatalities, 3.

Information in respect of time lost in 2,511 cases shows that a total of 49,677 days were lost, or an average of 19·8 days for each worker.

The total amount of compensation paid in the 2,603 cases in respect of which the details have been secured was £31,823 18s. 6d.

The following particulars are given of the fatal accidents that occurred during the year:—

A probationer apprentice in the electrical trade was lighting a blow-lamp in the repair shop when a small tin of methylated spirits in close proximity ignited causing severe burns which later proved fatal.

Two employees at a brickworks were pushing a trolley on which was a large retort weighing approximately 8 cwt. when, owing to an unevenness in the surface of the ground, the trolley stopped and the retort over-balanced and fell back on one of the men inflicting fatal head injuries.

A gas company employee who operated a conveyer electrically operated on an elevated track was leaning over the machine carrying out adjustments when he apparently struck his hand accidentally against the controller lever. The machine ran back and his head was struck against an overhanging girder causing fatal injuries.

INSPECTIONS, ETC.

During the year visits of inspection to the number of 9,263 were made, and where possible wages-books were examined to see that the provisions of the Unemployment Act, 1930, and its amendments had been complied with in respect of the deduction of the emergency unemployment charge.

Prosecutions numbered 59, in 52 of which convictions were obtained; the fines totalled £70. No case calls for comment.