

INSPECTIONS, ETC.

During the year visits of inspection to the number of 8,000 were made. Complaints were received respecting 1,434 alleged breaches of the Act, resulting in 80 prosecutions and 768 warnings. In 454 cases investigation showed that no breach had been committed, while in the remaining cases no action was considered necessary. Fifty-nine prosecutions were instituted for breaches which were discovered by Inspectors, and warnings were given in other cases, being either first offences or of a minor nature. Convictions were secured in 124 of the 139 prosecutions, the fines totalled £151 5s. No case calls for comment.

There were 380 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; spray booths in duco work; first-aid appliances; and dining-rooms in the case of establishments employing over six women and girls and boys under sixteen; also provision of drinking-water.

FACTORY HYGIENE AND WELFARE WORK.

Attention has been given generally to welfare conditions for workers, while in respect of female workers the women Inspectors of Factories in the four chief centres have devoted special time to this work.

There is increasing evidence that employers generally are endeavouring to keep working-conditions as congenial as possible, the existence of libraries, thrift clubs, recreation-rooms, and inter-house sports activities tending to increase.

BOYS AND GIRLS IN FACTORIES.

Certificates of Fitness issued to Boys and Girls under Sixteen Years of Age to Work in Factories.

Year.	Boys.	Girls.	Total.	Year.	Boys.	Girls.	Total.
1916-17	1,158	1,251	2,409	1931-32	420	843	1,263
1926-27	1,199	1,547	2,746	1932-33	509	1,067	1,576
1927-28	1,030	1,614	2,644	1933-34	510	1,283	1,793
1928-29	981	1,603	2,584	1934-35	791	2,011	2,802
1929-30	1,077	1,746	2,823	1935-36	1,026	1,964	2,990
1930-31	655	1,059	1,714	1936-37	1,890	2,572	4,462

In my last report attention was drawn to the increased number of certificates issued. This figure has been eclipsed by that for 1936-37. During the "depression years" fewer young persons were absorbed into factories, with the result that a return to more prosperous times found a leeway to be made up, hence the considerable increases in the last few years. Reference should be made to the section relating to apprentices for particulars of the effort being made to facilitate the entry into skilled trades of those young persons who, as a result of the depression, were deprived of their opportunity to take up a skilled occupation.

THE FACTORIES AMENDMENT ACT, 1936.

This Act came into operation on 1st July, 1936, except in respect of the reduced working-hours, which operated from 1st September, 1936.

The amendment restricts the hours of work in factories to forty a week, eight a day, and four hours and a quarter continuously without an interval of at least three-quarters of an hour for a meal. Women and boys under sixteen are not to be employed on any Sunday, holiday or half-holiday, nor between the hours of 6 p.m. and 8 a.m. A worker over eighteen may be employed beyond the prescribed hours in getting up steam for machinery or making preparation for the work of the factory for not more than one hour per day, for which he is to be paid at ordinary rates.

The Court of Arbitration is given power to fix longer hours than those prescribed by the Act in the case of any factory if, in the opinion of the Court, it would be impracticable to carry on efficiently the work of the factory under the forty-hour week, but any extension granted by the Court may not be beyond forty-four hours.

After 1st July, 1936, no worker shall be employed in a dairy factory or creamery on more than six days in any one week, but exemption is granted to factories and creameries in which not more than two workers are regularly employed, special holiday provision being made in such cases, or payment in lieu thereof.

Wages are not to be reduced, nor is any person to be dismissed merely by reason of any reduction or alteration of working-hours in pursuance of the provisions of this measure. If the wages of any person are reduced or if any person is dismissed after the commencement of the Act the onus is placed on the employer of proving that such reduction or dismissal is not contrary to this provision.

The rates of pay for overtime prescribed by section 21 of the principal Act are increased from time and a quarter to time and a half, while the minimum rate is now fixed at 1s. 6d. per hour.

The meal-allowance of 1s. prescribed by section 23 of the principal Act is increased to 1s. 6d.

An employee shall be entitled to payment for overtime even where such employee has been employed during extended hours in breach of the provisions of the Act.

Section 21 of the principal Act prohibited the working of overtime by women and boys on any holiday or half-holiday, and such prohibition has been extended to Sundays.