

goods were not compelled to close. Shortly after the amendment was passed a few cases were taken against Chinese for offending in this particular direction, but as the law became better known the breaches became fewer. To minimise the risk of committing offences, a notice worded as follows was sent to each storekeeper in cities and towns where a requisition had been gazetted affecting the sale of tobacco, cigars, &c. :—

Notice.

In pursuance of a requisition under section 21 of "The Shops and Offices Act, 1904," and of section 4, (8), of "The Shops and Offices Act Amendment Act, 1907," the sale of tobacco, cigars, and cigarettes after p.m. on , and p.m. on is prohibited.

J. LOMAS,
Chief Inspector of Factories.

A return showing the requisitions made under section 21 is printed in this report.

SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT.

A very general inspection was made of the quarters provided for shearers throughout the Dominion. Three Inspectors (Messrs. Carmody, Georgeson, and Lynch) were told off to attend to this work, and horses and equipment were purchased for their use. The work was started in October, Inspector Lynch commencing in the Auckland district, and Inspectors Carmody and Georgeson in the Gisborne and Hawke's Bay districts. Every effort was made to time the inspection so that the sheds were visited whilst shearing was in progress. Owing to the shortness of the season, it was found impossible for the special Inspectors to cover the whole of the ground, and the assistance of the local Inspectors had to be obtained in several places.

The result of the inspection is shown in detail in this report. I have no hesitation in saying that the whole standard of housing of these workers will be very much improved in consequence of these visits, and those employed will find an enormous improvement effected over the conditions ruling a few years ago. The Poverty Bay district proved to be rather behind other parts of the Dominion in the class of accommodation provided. The shearing there is mainly done by Maoris, and neither cooking, sleeping, nor dining quarters were thought necessary by some of the station-holders. In many cases the shearers slept in the loft of the woolshed, whilst on the floor of the shed itself the sheep were housed for the night; the condition of the atmosphere can be imagined. In several instances station-holders were informed by their shearers that unless the accommodation was improved they would not return next season. The Department's requirements, however, were promised prompt attention, and, as I have stated, great improvements should be made by next season.

Summarised, the sheds visited total 1,133; of this number, 749 were passed as satisfactory in all respects; eighty-five required slight improvements; 169 extensive improvements; and ninety-three required entirely new accommodation.

Notice to effect improvements, rebuilding, &c., was given in writing to each station-holder concerned, and a definite date was given to complete requirements—viz., by the 31st July, 1908. This was done in order to enable the local Inspectors to see that the requirements are complied with on or before the commencement of next season. Where no information has been received as to action having been taken a local Inspector will be directed to visit and report further to me.

THE INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

During the year seventeen unions of employers and forty-seven unions of workers were registered, having a membership of 263 and 1,661 respectively, or a total of sixty-four unions with 1,924 members. The total number of unions registered as at the 31st December was—Employers, 121; membership, 3,630; workers, 310; membership, 45,614. Eighteen complete amendments and thirty-two partial amendments to rules were registered during the year.

The number of cases conducted by Inspectors of Awards was 754, as against 406 last year. This number taken in the various centres is as follows: Auckland, 119; Wellington, 250; Christchurch, 107; Dunedin, 109. It will be seen that Wellington again heads the list. Most of the breaches in Wellington were reported by union secretaries, and of the total of 250 cases taken no less than 131 were filed under the Cooks and Waiters' industrial agreement, which was afterwards held by the Court to be invalid. The new Cooks and Waiters' award has removed many of the difficulties which existed in the old agreement, and it is expected that there will be a very marked decrease in the breaches during the coming year.

During the period under consideration 117 cases of breaches of awards and industrial agreements were dealt with by the Department without reference to the Court, and the difficulties were adjusted by arrangement with the employers and the unions affected. By this means £831 13s. 10d. arrears of wages due was paid to the workers concerned, the result being most satisfactory to all the parties interested.