

For breach of the Wharf-labourers' award, a shipping company and its servant were separately cited for the same breach. The Court held that if the servant elected to take the responsibility, the charge against the employer could be withdrawn. This was done, and the servant was fined.

In the Painters' award it is provided that, "All journeymen shall become members of the union." Two workers were cited for so failing to join the union. The defence was urged that the Court had no power to enforce compulsory unionism. After argument by counsel the Court decided it had jurisdiction, and breaches were recorded against both respondents.

A firm was fined £5 for dismissing workers "merely because they were entitled to the benefit of an award" (see section 108 of Act).

Of the remaining cases, the main charge was for failing to give preference to unionists, and the remainder were for the usual failure to pay full wages, and comply with general conditions; none sufficiently serious to warrant any special comment.

Very much work is occasioned by workers after leaving their employment seeking the aid of the Department to recover arrears for alleged overtime worked. This is sometimes done in a spirit of vindictiveness to the employer, with whom the worker has, perhaps, quarrelled. I think it is desirable that when it is shown the worker has been a willing party to the default, by not claiming his overtime payment within a reasonable time, he should be debarred from so claiming.

I must record my thanks to secretaries of unions, and the Employers' Association and Federation for the ever ready and willing assistance given to me in my work; and also acknowledge the general courtesy extended to me by all parties concerned in awards whom I have had to approach.

I have, &c.,

E. LECREN,

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

Inspector of Awards.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Wellington, 4th April, 1908.

I have the honour to submit for your consideration my report for the year ending the 31st March, 1908.

During the period ending on that date I have visited factories and workrooms in the various districts from Auckland to Wellington, and am pleased to state that I found the condition of these places in general in a satisfactory condition. Careful attention has been given to the matter of light, ventilation, and general sanitation of each place visited, as has also the question of wages paid to employees.

I find that in most trades wages paid are usually much in excess of that provided by the Factories Act or award of the Arbitration Court; especially is this so in the smaller towns where workers are scarce.

All trades in which women are engaged have been kept very busy during the year; in fact, in many trades, such as the woollen-manufacturing, clothing-manufacturing, shirt-making, and the boot trade, employers complain of great difficulty in getting workers.

Both the Factories Act and awards of the Arbitration Court covering trades where women are employed have, on the whole, worked smoothly during the year, employers showing willingness to comply with the law.

I am pleased to state that there is very little done now in the way of letting out work to be made up in private houses. There are, however, still a few private houses registered where dressmaking is done, and where there are usually one or two apprentices employed; but these dressmakers get their work direct from the customers, and the evil of subletting is not so likely to creep in as in other trades; further, the hours to be worked and wages to be paid are fully controlled by the Factories Act, as also are the provisions as to sanitation, cleanliness, &c.

A great deal of overtime has been worked during the year. I cannot say, though, that I would advise an extension of the present regulations which limits the overtime which may be worked to thirty nights in the year. For a woman who is kept employed all the year round I consider thirty nights overtime is quite enough.

It is with much regret that I notice the gradual increase of Chinese into the laundry trade; hardly a month passes without fresh application for the registration of a new Chinese laundry. Now, these men compete with the very poorest of our working-women, and therefore this matter should receive earnest consideration. Usually the wash-house and ironing-rooms of these Chinese laundries are clean and in order, but their dwelling-places are frequently anything but clean. Many of them are, in my opinion, quite unfit for human habitation; and by the Chinese being allowed to live in this way they are enabled to compete unfairly with European workers. Another way in which they compete unfairly is by employing other Chinese to work for them at all hours and at any wage, and when called upon to show a return of wages or overtime worked they merely tell us that they are all partners. Inspectors should be empowered to demand deeds of partnership.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

This Act has worked very well during the year. Many businesses are now closing at hours fixed, under section 21 of the Act, by a majority of the shopkeepers themselves in their respective trades; also some businesses, such as grocers, are working under awards of the Arbitration Court, which award provides that women engaged in the trade must be paid equal wage with men. Last year's amendment to the Shops and Offices Act, clause 20 of which provides that a half-holiday must in each week be given to all hotel employees, has been a great boon to many of these workers, and is much appreciated by them.

The Wellington Cooks and Waiters' award, which includes all waitresses and kitchen hands in hotels, refreshment-rooms, oyster-saloons, &c., is a great benefit to these workers, as it regulates the hours worked, rates of wages that are to be paid, &c.