

There are also time and wages sheets, notices to occupiers of factories and shops, notices under the Scaffolding Inspection Act, industrial agreements and awards under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, issued to the parties to such awards, and agreements which run into a great many thousands annually, and are not included in the above table.

During the year there have been several changes in the staff. The Inspectors of Factories at Oamaru, Ashburton, and Greymouth were retired on three months' leave of absence on account of their reaching the age-limit, and other officers were appointed in their places. Two of the newly appointed Inspectors (those at Ashburton and Greymouth) having the requisite knowledge to perform the duties were also appointed Inspectors under the Scaffolding Inspection Act. By these appointments the Department should save a considerable sum in travelling-expenses, as previously the Scaffolding Inspector in Christchurch had to supervise the erection of scaffolding for the whole of North and South Canterbury, the Nelson Inspector taking in the Provinces of Nelson, Marlborough, and Westland; whereas South Canterbury will now be worked from Ashburton, and Westland from Greymouth.

Cadets have also been appointed in the secondary towns. This has been considered essential, as it relieves Inspectors of much of the clerical and routine office-work, and has also enabled them to devote more of their time to outside work and to visit outlying parts of their districts much more freely than heretofore.

#### THE FACTORIES ACT.

This Act is so comprehensive in its provisions that it is comparatively straightforward to administer.

A useful section of the Act is that making it necessary for employers to give a certificate to an employee on leaving, setting forth in correct terms the period during which such person has been so employed, and which has to be produced to any subsequent employer before the employee is entitled to wages set forth in section 32 of the Act. This provision, together with the Period of Employment Book, which is required to be kept, is equally beneficial to employer and employee, and makes it much easier for the Inspector to see that the statutory wages are paid.

The provision for the taking of a poll of electors in boroughs or town districts, for the fixing of the half-holiday for boys under eighteen and women, on the same day as observed for shops instead of on Saturday has been availed of in eighteen such districts this year, and there are now twenty-nine places in the Dominion where the shops and factories half-holiday is observed on the one day. The particulars showing the voting on the proposal are given in a return included in this report. I would respectfully suggest that this section of the Act be amended so as to take in counties and road districts, more especially as this legislation was intended for the convenience of country establishments where small manufacturing industries are carried on in the same premises and in connection with their retail businesses. Provision should also be made to enable occupiers of factories such as sash-and-door, boot and shoe, carriage, clothing, and other factories to retain Saturday, by giving to the Inspector written notice of their desire to do so, in the month of January in each year, as is done under the Shops and Offices Act.

It should also be compulsory for factory-owners to submit to the Inspectors plans of all new factory buildings before being erected. If this was done, many omissions and mistakes in respect to sanitary arrangements and fire-escapes would be averted and much unnecessary expenditure and inconvenience to factory-occupiers avoided.

There is still an urgent demand for women and boys in the following industries: Boot and shoe, clothing, and biscuit and confectionery trades, and in laundries. Most of these trades have had to work to the full limit of overtime allowed by the Act, and have still great difficulty in meeting the ordinary demands of their trade.

The statistics are given much on the same lines as in previous years, but in pursuance of instructions received from you the numbers of persons employed in each industry are shown in separate age-groups. It will be noted that three divisions have been made—(a) Showing total number, male and female, of employees between fourteen and seventeen; (b) between seventeen and twenty; and (c) over twenty-one years. Employers who are actually working at the trade are also shown in a special column as heretofore. It will now be possible to compare from year to year the proportion of young persons and adults employed in our manufacturing industries.

There has been an increase of 454 workrooms this year, with an increase of 223 workers. The small increase in the number of employees is due in no small measure to the dullness in many industries; factory-owners have had to reduce hands to bring their business into line with the diminished demand, which is partly owing to the limitation of the spending-power of many workers who have been thrown idle through the slump in the building and allied trades.