

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

For the reasons given in last year's report—viz., the difficulty in obtaining useful data—no statistics showing the number of assistants employed in shops are now published.

This Act continues to work fairly smoothly. The provision of the amending Act of last year to the effect that suitable heating-appliances shall be provided to the satisfaction of the Inspector will no doubt be very much appreciated during the coming winter by the assistants concerned. Steps are already being taken to see that adequate attention is given to the matter. The sitting-accommodation in shops for female assistants as is now more particularly provided for in the same Act is also receiving attention, and officers of the Department have received special instructions to see that this provision of the Act is observed.

PROSECUTIONS.

The following statement shows the number and nature of the prosecutions under the Act during the year :—

Employing assistants overtime without permission	...	...	...	50
Failing to close in terms of requisitions by which the hours are fixed by a majority of shopkeepers concerned	...	...	...	48
Failing to grant weekly half-holiday to assistants	...	...	...	47
Failing to close on statutory half-holiday	...	...	...	45
Failing to keep wages and time book	...	...	...	36
Employing assistants more than the prescribed number of hours	...	...	...	9
Failing to pay overtime rates to assistants	...	...	...	2
Failing to keep holiday-book in hotels and restaurants	...	...	...	13
Failing to sign the holiday-book (by hotel employees)	...	...	...	2
Total	...	...	...	252

Altogether 252 cases were taken, as compared with 217 the previous year. Ten cases were dismissed; the reasons were as follow: Offences considered excusable; conflicting evidence; relationship of employer and worker not proved; evidence given that a driver who was delivering goods after the prescribed hour was doing so by contract and was therefore not an assistant; Magistrate took into consideration the fact that at the time of the offence the shop was very busy.

SHOPS AND OFFICES AMENDMENT ACT, 1913.

A consolidating and amending Bill was introduced before Parliament, and a great deal of evidence was taken in the Labour Bills Committee upon the same. Owing to shortness of time it was found necessary to hold over the consolidating Bill and to proceed with those amendments deemed most urgent. The following are the chief provisions of the Bill as passed :—

Section 3 was the outcome of a poll of the electors of the combined districts of Auckland and Christchurch, taken under section 17 of the principal Act, under which the day of the statutory half-holiday may be decided upon by a poll of the electors. In April, 1913, polls at the two cities mentioned were taken, which resulted in the day of the half-holiday being changed from Wednesday to Saturday; the change of day took effect as from the following 1st of June. In Auckland especially some unexpected difficulties arose, disclosing an anomaly in the Act. Under section 18 (b) of the principal Act it had been provided that in the event of Saturday being appointed as the closing-day, any butcher, hairdresser, tobacconist, or photographer might select some other day of the week, but this section did not restrict the privilege to those "exclusively" carrying on the trades indicated, with the result that a number of shopkeepers engaged in those trades but also selling other goods were able to gain an advantage over other shopkeepers who were compelled to close on Saturday afternoon. Section 3 of the amendment of 1913 inserts the word "exclusively," and at the same time has extended the provision to pork-butchers (as well as butchers). It was also as a result of the change of the day to Saturday in Auckland that section 2 of the amendment, adding the Eden Terrace Road District to the several boroughs composing the combined district, was inserted, the road district being adjacent to the combined district, and the day for same having hitherto been Wednesday.

Section 5 provides that heating-appliances to the satisfaction of the Inspector shall be provided. Upon the advice of the Health Department, the Department has fixed 60 degrees (Fahrenheit) as a general standard for the purpose of this section.

The most important section of the amendment is section 8, which makes certain provision by which, under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, a whole holiday of twenty-four hours per week shall be granted by the Court of Arbitration to hotel and restaurant assistants when an award affecting these workers is being made. The provision does not, however, apply to small establishments where less than five persons are ordinarily employed, nor to any