

Mention was made in last year's report of the improvement then noticeable in several industries—viz., clothing and white working, boot-manufacturing, and sawmilling and other trades associated with the building industry, and the figures for this year confirm the prediction made in the last report that the improved tone of factory employment would be more than maintained. The increases noted are attributable in some cases to the exchange-rate which operated to foster several local manufacturing trades and in other cases to the effect of the schemes introduced in connection with relief of unemployment, notably in the granting of building subsidies. Registration fees received during 1934–35 reflected the increases above noted being about 8 per cent. greater than in the preceding year. In respect to the 1935–36 year the revenue received during the first quarter exceeds that for the whole of 1934–35. It can be assumed, therefore, that a further increase both in factories registered and in factory workers will be disclosed this year.

The records of overtime retained by the Department refer only to extended hours in the case of women and boys, the prior approval of the Inspector being necessary. From such records it is ascertained that a considerable amount of overtime has again been worked, particularly in the clothing trades. The law limits the amount of overtime that may be worked to ninety hours in any year, with an additional thirty hours in special cases. Many clothing factories worked the full limit of overtime allowed.

During the year several additional factories adopted the five-day working-week. Thirty-eight factories with approximately nine hundred employees are now working under this system. The industries concerned include clothing and white-goods manufacturing, brush-manufacturing, woollen-goods and hosiery manufacturing, biscuit-making, box-manufacturing, printing, tobacco-manufacturing, and patent-medicines manufacturing.

ACCIDENTS.

In order that the accident statistics may be comparable with the statistics of other countries, as urged by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 1923, the figures cover the calendar year instead of the financial year.

The total number of reported accidents to workers in factories is 2,170 (2,030 males and 140 females). Of the total number, 49 of the accidents occurred to workers under sixteen years of age, 481 to those between sixteen and twenty, and the remaining 1,640 to those above that age. Of the 4 fatal accidents 2 were caused by or were due to machinery. Of the total accidents, 359 were caused by or were due to machinery. The other principal causes of accidents were found to be as follows: Falls of persons (from stairs, ladders, platforms, &c.), 215; stepping on or striking against fixed objects, 74; faulty handling of tools, 677; handling of other objects—viz., objects dropped or tipped over, objects falling, or strain due to handling, 607; handling of poisonous, hot, and corrosive substances, 70; others (miscellaneous), 168: total 2,170. Disability caused: Temporary disability, 2,084; permanent partial disability, 82. Fatalities, 4.

The cases in respect of which time lost is available—viz., 2,078—show that a total of 39,897 days were lost, or an average of 19.2 days for each worker.

In cases where the amount of compensation paid is known—viz., in 2,157 out of the total of 2,170—the total amount paid is £27,995 Is. 9d.

The following particulars are given of the fatal accidents that occurred during the year:—

A patternmaker was turning a wooden pattern when the two sections of the pattern flew off the lathe, one section striking him on the back of the head, causing fatal injuries. There was no defect in machinery.

A mechanic and a labourer were engaged repairing the valves on the gas-mains at a gasworks when they were overcome by the fumes, the latter worker succumbing as the result of gas poisoning. The mechanic, who was in charge of the work, subsequently recovered.

To facilitate the inspection of a marine boiler used as a storage tank for oxygen two workers were placing sacks about the inside. One worker, who was down at the bottom of the boiler, apparently struck a match to see where to place the sacks, when his clothing caught fire and he received fatal burns.

A boy was killed as the result of being caught in a goods-lift, his head being severely crushed between the floor of the lift and the building. There was no evidence as to how the accident occurred, but the boy had been warned only the previous day not to touch the lift and notices were displayed at the lift-entrance prohibiting riding in the lift.

The following fatal accidents to persons other than "workers" within the meaning of that term as defined by the Workers' Compensation Act, 1922, were reported:—

The occupier of a factory was fatally burned when securing supplies from an unventilated paint-store. The accident occurred at night, and as the store was unlighted it is presumed that deceased lighted a match, and his clothing, which was probably impregnated with inflammable material, caught fire.

An attempt was made by a sawmill-owner to move belting while the machinery was in motion. His clothes became entangled in the shafting and he was whirled round the shaft, receiving fatal injuries.

INSPECTIONS, ETC.

During the year visits of inspection to the number of 7,390 were made, in the course of which wage-books were examined to see that the provisions of the Unemployment Act, 1930, and its amendments had been complied with in respect of the deduction of the emergency unemployment charge.

Prosecutions numbered 49, in 42 of which convictions were obtained; the fines totalled £42. No case calls for comment.