

at any time during the fortnight ending on the day on which the holiday occurs. This provision was previously in operation in respect of only five holidays—viz., Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day, Good Friday, and Easter Monday—the remaining three holidays being required to be paid for only where the worker had been employed in the factory for four days during the week ended on the day on which the holiday occurred.

The section also excluded from the holiday provisions of the Act casual workers employed merely for the purpose of baking or preparing for baking any article of food required for sale for human consumption to meet a public demand resulting from the observance of any of the eight specified holidays.

Under the powers contained in section 47 of the Finance Act, 1938, an order was issued adding sugar-of-milk factories to the list of industries exempt from the statutory limits of working-hours and at the same time modifying in respect of this class of factory the sections in the 1936 Amendment Act relating to payment for time worked on holidays and Sundays.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

The Department has no accurate record as to the number of shops and the number of assistants employed therein, but from the information available it is estimated that there were during the year 29,881 shops throughout New Zealand, of which 15,146 (approximately one-half) were carried on without assistants. In the shops with assistants it is estimated there were employed 26,734 males and 25,215 females.

During the year visits of inspection to the number of 21,533 were made.

Prosecutions numbered 427; convictions were obtained in 396 cases. A number of cases were withdrawn; fines totalled £400 3s. Of the prosecutions, 252 were for offences regarding the closing-hours of shops in the evenings or on the statutory half-holiday.

Complaints were received respecting 887 alleged breaches of the Act, resulting in 133 prosecutions and 423 warnings. In 265 cases investigations showed that no breach had been committed, while in the remaining cases no action was considered necessary. Two hundred and ninety-four prosecutions were instituted for breaches which were discovered by Inspectors, and warnings were given in other cases, being either first offences or of a minor nature.

One hundred and ninety-nine requisitions were served on occupiers of shops to comply with various requirements of the Act, such as for sanitary conveniences, heating-appliances, lunch-room, seating or rest-room accommodation, lighting, ventilation, cleanliness, and partitions, including separate entrances.

UNIVERSAL HALF-HOLIDAY.

In view of the agitation in many quarters for the fixing by statute of a universal statutory closing-day for shops it is interesting to note the changes in the half-holidays fixed by local authorities and by poll of electors during the past year or two. The changes in half-holiday effected by the local authorities were as follows: In January, 1937, twenty-seven districts changed to Saturday; in January, 1938, four districts changed to Saturday, and one district changed from Saturday to a mid-week day, while in January, 1939, eleven districts changed to Saturday. Of the forty-two districts which changed to Saturday twenty-one were counties, while one town district changed from Saturday to a mid-week day. At the last poll of electors to determine the half-holiday held in May, 1938, fourteen boroughs and town districts (including the town district which in January, 1938, changed from Saturday to a mid-week day) changed to the Saturday half-holiday, while there were no changes from Saturday to a mid-week day.

A summary of the present position for the whole of New Zealand is as follows:—

Half-holiday fixed by Poll.

	Saturday.	Day other than Saturday.
*Cities and combined districts	11	1
Boroughs	42	21
Town districts	7	2
Totals	60	24

Half-holiday fixed by Local Authority or by Minister.

	Saturday.	Day other than Saturday.
Combined districts		1
Boroughs	22	11
Town districts	22	16
Road districts	6	6
Counties	45	83
Totals	95	117

* Although Wednesday is fixed as the statutory closing-day in Palmerston North, Saturday is generally observed.

In other words, 155 districts (with an estimated total population of 1,111,048) observe Saturday, while 141 districts (with an estimated total population of 433,227) observe a day other than Saturday.

It will be noted that the majority of the districts that observe the half-holiday on a day other than Saturday are counties, which, of course, comprise the rural areas, but the figures given above for the three years 1937, 1938, and 1939, show that there is an increasing tendency towards the adoption of the Saturday half-holiday in the country districts, while the four large centres and the great majority of the other urban areas already observe the Saturday half-holiday.