

transit for the men who have to refund the price of passages advanced. The Manawatu Railway Company, the Union Steamship Company, and the Northern Steamship Company may be especially mentioned for the liberal manner in which they cheapened fares to help the workmen in going to places where work could be obtained. It is to be regretted that the Railway Commissioners, although repeatedly applied to, and urged to grant a general reduction or concession, refused to do so, and still make no remission whatever from the full charge.

The swelling of the influx of men to New Zealand during the last few months is chiefly owing, no doubt, to the unparalleled industrial and financial collapse which has taken place in the Australian Colonies, and the sharp contrast it affords to our marked prosperity. The outflow from the depressed colonies goes in several directions, and, amongst others, to New Zealand; but there is nothing at present to justify alarm as to our being unable to absorb those who have hitherto arrived.

Influx of men from the Australian Colonies.

It has been found in administering the Factories Act that the factory half-holiday is well observed. But it is quite impossible to properly supervise the carrying-out of the Shops and Shop-assistants Act in its present form. For the Inspectors to ascertain the treatment received by each one of a multitude of shop-assistants where there is no uniform half-holiday is an impossible task. That the law should fix the day on which the weekly closing-day for shops and half-holiday for assistants must be kept appears to be the only proper course to be taken with fairness.

Shops and Shop-assistants Act cannot be properly supervised.

The Factories Act was administered with great success during the year, there being few cases in which the directions of the Inspectors were disregarded, and in which it was found necessary to enforce the regulations by appeal to Courts of law. The fees received during the year from factories came to £1,302. The total number of persons found to be employed was 25,022.

Factories Act.

Before the department can do thorough work in the collection of industrial statistics, its powers need enlargement in the direction of granting legal authority to the Factory Inspectors to compel answers to questions. The system of inquiry by circulars and of relying upon voluntary replies is not sufficiently exact to form a basis on which to compile statistics of trade and labour.

Collection of statistics requires legal authority.

#### POSTAL AND TELEGRAPH BUSINESS.

The progress of the colony has not been without its effect on the business of the Post and Telegraph Department. The increases in some respects have been, I may say, almost phenomenal, and are quite unprecedented. The endeavour of the Government has been to extend postal and telegraph facilities wherever possible. As far as our means would admit, close attention has been given to the requirements of places removed from main centres. Although the expenditure has increased, the new revenue will be largely in excess of the additional cost.

Increase of postal and telegraph business phenomenal.

#### THE CHEVIOT ESTATE.

I have now to ask the attention of the Committee to the taking-over of the Cheviot Estate. This property, which formerly belonged to the estate of the late Hon. William Robinson, has an area of 84,222 acres, and was assessed at a value of £304,826, the improvements being valued at £54,300, with an unimproved value of £250,526. It was returned by the owners at £260,220. They objected to the assessed value, and the Commissioner of Taxes disallowed the objection, and referred it to the Board of Reviewers, who upheld the Assessors' value. On the 10th October the Commissioner received from the trustees in the estate a letter calling upon him to reduce the valuation to the owners' value, £260,220, or else to take the land in terms of the Land and Income Assessment Act at that price. The Commissioner declined to make any reduction, and recommended that the land be acquired by the Government. After special valuations had been made and submitted for the consideration of the Government it was determined to acquire the property, and, on the 29th December, 1892, an Order in Council was passed giving effect to the same. The transaction was completed on the 19th April, when the conveyance

Purchase of the Cheviot Estate.