

I visited the shearing-sheds in the district previous to shearing, and found the sleeping-accommodation for the shearers fairly comfortable. I visited them again when shearing was going on, but received no complaints.

Reported three accidents during the year. Two ended fatally, one being killed by a train while in motion, and the other killed by a horse which he was riding. In no case was the employer to blame.

I have caused improvements to be made in factories which were in accordance with the Act.

THE SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

This Act works fairly well in this district. There was two prosecutions under this Act, in which the defendants were punished in a nominal fine and costs, with the result that there has been no signs of a repetition of the same offence.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

There are three persons holding renewed licenses. The Act in itself is giving general satisfaction. There were no prosecutions.

UNSKILLED LABOUR.

Unskilled labour is the principal occupation in this district. I am pleased to say they are all fairly well employed, and earning good wages. There are very few men idle, and fewer still on the roads. There are several works in hand at the present time, draining principally, and some earthworks. The worst feature connected with the drainage works is that when the wet weather sets in the contractors will be forced to stop until the dry season sets in again, with the result that several men will be out of employment during the winter months. Nine men were sent to the co-operative works, eight sent to private employment, twelve were assisted to different parts where they had friends and hopes of employment, one man being assisted to Auckland, where he was in hopes of a permanent situation.

I am pleased to state that things in general are looking much better than they were in the year 1896.

I have, &c.,

E. Tregear, Esq., Wellington.

T. BREEN, Inspector of Factories.

PAHIATUA.

SIR,—

Labour Department, Pahiatua, 30th April, 1897.

I have the honour to submit my annual labour report for the year ended 31st March, 1897.

Up to date I have registered thirty factories, where ninety-three persons are employed, and out of that number seven are females. The Factory Act is cheerfully obeyed by all persons registered, and no complaints have been made.

The Shops- and Shop-assistants Act is well observed, and seems to give to all whom it affects general satisfaction. I took charge of the district in August, 1896. At that time there were several local men out of work, but as soon as the railway-works commenced nearly all found ready employment. I found also that the co-operative works were regarded by many persons as a political machine, but I am pleased to say that delusion was soon dispelled. When the Hon. the Premier visited Pahiatua in November last he spoke to me about the co-operative labour generally. I then told him in what light many regarded it. He gave me emphatic instructions that, as a Labour Agent, I was not to countenance it—that when men applied for work every one was to be treated alike, and no favour shown to any one. Since then I am pleased to say the delusion has in a very great measure been dispelled.

There is yet another thing which, as far as possible, should be put down—that is, where men apply for work, and they do not at once get it, or maybe the work offered does not suit them, they at once write to members of the House of Representatives, or to the Under-Secretaries of departments, complaining of not being able to get work. Then the correspondence comes along, and in nearly every case the applicants have never applied for work, thereby putting the member for the district and others in a false position by not putting the facts fully before them.

As Labour Agent here, I have, in a very great measure, to deal with the Engineers in charge of the railway-works—Messrs. Louch and Hay—and I must say that I consider the satisfactory manner the co-operative work in this district has been carried out during the past year has been through the very courteous and kind way in which these gentlemen have always dealt with any very urgent or deserving cases for work; and at all times when any imaginary grievance has cropped up with the men they have at once done their utmost to settle the matter, and in every case in a manner satisfactory to all parties.

All branches of trade and commerce throughout the district seem in a very satisfactory state. There has been during the past year comparatively few swaggers on the road, or, at least, they have not come this way, and I attribute it in a great measure to the fact that the local bodies here do not offer any premium to these men; they cannot get board and lodgings here from either the Borough or County Council. As a rule, it is found that the men who travel from one township to another are not a desirable class of men; they are generally hotel-loafers and hangers-on. I think, if the system of giving men assistance in the way it is now done by the local bodies was totally abolished, it would have the effect of making the men more careful of their money, and they would not spend it so freely. I do not think, if men were careful, there would be any necessity for them to pauperise themselves in the way they now do.

The railway from Wellington to Pahiatua will be opened on the 3rd May, and no doubt before another year it will be opened up to Woodville.

I am, &c.,

E. Tregear, Esq.

CHARLES BOWDEN, Labour Agent, Pahiatua.