

no industries in this district which employ a large amount of labour: there are only the ordinary trades necessary for the requirements of the district; consequently, the state of trade in other parts seldom affects the district.

There is one feature which may be worth mentioning—*i.e.*, the number of men travelling ostensibly in search of work has very much diminished in the last few years, especially so during the past three years. Then numbers of men were daily met with on the road, some willing and able to work, others not so. This is now altered. But few men are now met with, and those principally old men, or men whose usual trade or calling is not required in the district. I am of opinion that something ought to be done to relieve those old men; they are not fit to compete in the labour-market with young men, of whom there is an abundance. Those old men are to be pitied, especially in winter time, having to travel wet roads, with no certainty of a night's shelter. There is one of two reasons responsible for the number of men on the roads decreasing during the period named—either they have sought employment in other parts or the fact of the station-owners refusing them food and accommodation has driven them away. The activity on the goldfields up north took many of them; but some who for years have obtained their living on the stations have been compelled to seek fresh fields, and live by their own exertions, as also others—able-bodied men who obtained a permanent living travelling from one station to another, and depended upon it as a means of living. I am of opinion that where station-owners deprived them of that means they conferred a benefit on those men.

As regards the working of the Factories and Shops and Shop-assistants Acts there are no complaints. The working of those Acts is now established, and the employers and employés have settled down to the new order of things which those Acts have brought about. There have been no prosecutions under those Acts in this district.

I have, &c.,

D. BROSNAHAN, Inspector of Factories.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

#### STRATFORD.

SIR,—

Labour Department, Stratford, 9th April, 1898.

I respectfully report that during the past quarter, since I have been in charge of the Stratford district, matters in connection with factories have worked smoothly.

I find the practice here has been the same as at Inglewood, where I came from—to call upon the factory-manager or to send papers by post to be filled up. I find my time on this station very limited, especially during the months of January, February, and March, when factory business requires most attention, and I have had to write as many as three letters to some managers who register at a cost of 1s. I also notice that where this has been the practice, and the Inspector has issued a summons, the factory-managers say they have been very harshly dealt with, as they were expecting the Inspector to call as usual or send papers. I beg to suggest that for the year 1899 notice should be inserted in the local newspapers that all factory-managers would be prosecuted who failed to register. The number of factories registered in 1897 was thirty, and for 1898 there are twenty-seven. The difference is accounted for by several sawmills being destroyed by the late bush-fires. One co-operative dairy factory, on the Pembroke Road, has ceased work, and suppliers bring their milk into Stratford Dairy Factory.

Although the settlers in this district lost heavily through bush-fires, the general trade of the district is good. The building trade is very busy. There are no carpenters or bricklayers idle. Blacksmiths are kept fully employed, and, as previously stated, the general retail trade is very good.

There has been a good deal of roadwork done this summer, and several contracts are not yet finished. The bushfelling will start soon, and employ those who are thrown out of work on these contracts.

There have been a few swaggers on the roads during the past fortnight. There are a few unskilled labourers about Stratford out of work. The travelling swagger often finds it difficult to get employment, as the local contractors know where to get good workmen amongst the small farmers here without trusting to casual labour. I have asked several swaggers if they could milk, and they seemed rather disgusted at being asked the question, saying they did not, and would take good care they did not learn, as the screw was not good enough. I think this is to be regretted, because when they are travelling "hard up" they could often get a job to get a few shillings to start on the road again. Boys often suddenly leave their employers, and good wages could be got for a couple of weeks by any swagger who came along and could milk.

I have, &c.,

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

W. H. RYAN, Inspector of Factories.

#### HAWERA.

SIR,—

Police-station, Hawera, 14th April, 1898.

I have the honour to report that the Factories Act and the Shops and Shop-assistants Act have worked very smoothly in this locality since my arrival here, in the early part of January last.

There has been some delay in registering the factories, partly caused by misapprehension as to the method of effecting registration; but in only one case has there been any attempt to evade registration when directed by me to register. A report of the circumstances of that case is enclosed herewith. Shortly, it may be stated that the occupier of the factory in question considered that the premises in which he carried on his business did not come within the meaning of the term "factory." An informal reference, by consent, to the Stipendiary Magistrate resulted in the decision that the premises was a factory, and has accordingly been registered as such.