

the Otago Central Railway, which is practically the largest public work in the South Island, has attracted men from all parts of the colony, which has necessarily swelled the numbers of assisted persons passing through this office to its present dimensions.

Generally speaking, the past year has been marked with a degree of prosperity that has seldom or never been equalled. The building trades have been exceptionally busy, which remark also applies to most of the skilled trades. The dredging industry in Otago and Southland continues to expand enormously. This has necessitated the erection of more buildings, and the importation of up-to-date mechanical plant, to enable engineers and ironfounders to overtake the large orders they have in hand. At the 31st March, 1900, there were no less than 266 dredging companies registered, with an approximate capital of £2,500,000. The outlay of a considerable portion of the money has given a great impetus to kindred industries, besides giving employment to those engaged in transit operations.

I have, &c.,

H. MAXWELL, Inspector of Factories.

E. Tregear, Esq., Chief Inspector of Factories.

GISBORNE.

SIR,—

Labour Department, Gisborne, 1st April, 1900.

I have the honour to report on the conditions of the labour-market in the Gisborne district during the year ending the 31st March, 1900.

A large area of bush has been felled, employing a considerable number of men. The local bodies have undertaken several important works. The Government has begun the Gisborne-Karaka Railway, which now employs seventy-five men; and the Survey Department has employed on various works eighty men through the department during the year.

Owing to the development of the frozen-meat industry, both the local freezing-works have been kept busy. The dairy industry is also well established in the district, and there has been considerable demand for pastoral land.

The building trade has been unusually brisk during the year.

I have, &c.,

E. Tregear, Esq., Chief Inspector of Factories.

H. MCKAY, Agent.

SIR,—

Police-station, Gisborne, 6th April, 1900.

I have the honour to submit my annual report for the year ending the 31st March, 1900.

I have up to date registered fifty factories, employing 381 males and forty-two females, being an increase of ten factories up to same date last year.

During the year I have granted to factories ninety-eight permits to work overtime, and fifty-four permits for overtime under the Shops and Shop-assistants Act. I have only granted four permits for young persons to work in factories.

There have been no complaints or prosecutions during the year, and the Act has been well observed by the factories and shops.

During the year I have made some suggestions to employers for alterations to premises for the comfort of the employés, and they were readily acted upon.

In reference to shearers' accommodation, see annual report forwarded by me to your department.

JAMES SMITH, Inspector of Factories.

E. Tregear, Esq., Chief Inspector of Factories.

NAPIER.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Napier, 10th April, 1900.

I have the honour to submit my report for the year ending 31st March, 1900.

LABOUR.

The labour-market has been fairly satisfactory, those engaged in the various factories and workrooms having had good steady employment throughout the year. The building trade, though not so brisk as last year, has been busy, but, with the exception of two shipping-stores and one retail shop, all the buildings erected are dwelling-houses.

Unskilled labour: The conditions that control this class of labour vary very little from year to year. The work comes in rushes, and is practically confined to seasons. As the winter approaches work in connection with the shipping and in the country districts becomes scarce, the freezing-works slacken down, and as a consequence the unemployed appear. However, I had comparatively little difficulty in dealing with the genuine unemployed, and those that really wanted work got it. Fifty-five men were sent to Government roadworks, and eighteen to private employment, making a total of seventy-three. Of this number, twenty-two were single and fifty-one married men, having 192 persons depending upon them for support, this being an increase of twelve men assisted as compared with the previous year. In selecting men for employment due regard is paid to Hastings and the country districts.

FACTORIES ACT.

This year 142 factories and workrooms have been registered, employing 1,011 persons—817 males and 194 females. This is an increase on the number registered last year of eleven factories and workrooms. The increase is accounted for by the inclusion of the Taradale district.