

Range and grate making has been very steady, and employment regular.

The boot trade has been much better than it was during the previous year; employment has been regular, and there was very little, if any, lost time through slackness of trade.

Coach, carriage, and wagon building has been very busy, and a considerable amount of overtime was made.

Furniture-factories have also been very busy; a good deal of overtime was made, and there was a demand for men in all branches.

Sash, door, and joinery factories have been full-handed, and employment has been very regular.

Tailoring, dressmaking, and millinery were exceptionally busy.

The amount of overtime worked in these trades was considerably in excess of the amount worked in previous years.

Bush sawmills: The men in these mills have been fully employed, in fact there has been an almost continuous demand for men.

The flax-milling industry continues to provide employment for a large number of men and boys, although the greater number of these mills close down for eight or nine weeks during the winter months, and the conditions under which many of the hands have to live are very rough. There does not appear to be nearly so much trouble to get men for this kind of work as is the case with farm-work. There are now very few of these mills in my immediate district; as they cut out their beds of flax they move further into the country, and are then registered in the various police districts; this also applies to sawmills, several of which have cut out lately.

#### EMPLOYMENT BUREAU.

During the year 115 men were assisted to employment; of these 73 were single and 42 married, having 120 persons depending on them. Sixty-seven were sent to private employment and 48 to Government co-operative works. Private employment could have been found for fully four times the number of men had they been available.

#### FACTORIES ACT.

There are 261 factories and workrooms registered here, employing 2,003 persons—viz., 1,600 males and 403 females. These figures are practically the same as last year's return.

Permits were issued, under section 26, to 23 boys and 17 girls. The amount of overtime worked by males over sixteen years of age was 11,258 hours, and by females and boys under sixteen years of age 10,604 hours. This is a considerable increase in the amount of overtime worked by both sexes compared with any previous year's returns.

The Act is working well, and there were no prosecutions in this district. One charge was laid at Gore for obstruction, but was dismissed on a legal technicality.

#### SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

This Act is working well, though continual vigilance is required to see that the regulations gazetted under section 21 are properly observed; however, it has not yet been necessary to lay a charge for breach of the regulations. A few months ago a section of the drapers and clothiers attempted to get the regulations fixing the closing-hours of their shops altered so as to allow them to keep open till 10 o'clock on Saturday nights, but there was not much sympathy with the movement and it fell through.

The number of shops from which returns were collected under the Labour Department Act is 262, employing 586 males and 219 females. There was a good deal of difficulty in collecting these returns, especially from the smaller shops.

#### INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

Inspection under the various awards and agreements entails a considerable amount of work and requires much care. I find the greatest number of breaches are committed in the trades where the unionists are in the minority.

I investigated 23 complaints, and did a considerable amount of inspecting outside these complaints. Ten charges were laid for breaches of awards. Eight were won and 2 were dismissed. Of these two charges, one was laid against an employer for failing to pay award rate of wages, and one against his man for working for a lesser rate of wages than the award provided. The Court held that the man should be indentured, and dismissed the charges.

#### SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

There are 6 of these offices in this town, 2 less than last year. One office gave me a considerable amount of trouble, and I refused to renew the license. I think the system of charging the worker for obtaining him the situation and making no charge on the employer for obtaining him the man is responsible for most of the abuses that take place. Employers do not appear to be as careful when ordering men as they would be if they had to pay a fee for each man they order. The result is that men often pay their fee for a job and go to the place only to find they are not required. I have got several men compensation for this kind of thing. I think an amendment of this Act is necessary to give Inspectors power to prosecute the employer or registry-office keeper for practices of this sort, as the workers rarely have the means of prosecuting on their own behalf.

I have, &c.,

L. D. BROWETT,

Inspector of Factories.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.