

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES.

This Act has worked well during the year ; usually I have found office-keepers' books well kept, and in order.

I have, &c.,

M. S. HAWTHORNE,

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

Inspector of Factories, &c.

CHRISTCHURCH.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Christchurch, 20th April, 1908.

I have the honour to submit herewith my report on the work of the Department in the Christchurch District for the year ending the 31st day of March, 1908.

The year under review has been an unprecedented one so far as the general prosperity of the workers and the various industries are concerned, and there is every reason for congratulation.

The building trade has had a very busy year, and many fine factories and shops have been erected, or substantial alterations made, and it is very noticeable that care and thought have been bestowed upon the worker by many of the employers when making improvements to their buildings by providing the necessary conveniences for them, especially in respect to sanitary matters and ventilation. Slowly but surely the old buildings that have been used in the past as factories and shops are giving way to more pretentious buildings, and employers are realising that it pays to be solicitous for the welfare of the worker, who, when employed in a well-lighted and ventilated workroom, is better able to show good results for his labour.

During the latter part of the year we have had several very serious conflagrations, and some fine business premises have been burnt down ; but, fortunately, other factory and shop premises were obtainable, and very little time was lost. Plans and specifications are in preparation for the re-erection of some of the premises destroyed, and the general trend seems to be to erect something better than the building destroyed. This large amount of work coming out immediately insures a continuance of prosperity for the whole year in the building trade.

The woollen-milling and the clothing trade have had another very busy year, their only complaint being their inability to obtain suitable female machinists, weavers, knitters, &c.

The occupiers of boot-factories are very optimistic of the result of the new tariff, and predict an increased volume of trade. The general complaint is the scarcity of good female machinists and other workers.

Agricultural-implement making still continues a stable industry in this district, and, notwithstanding the gloomy prognostications of early disaster on account of the competition of the large importing firms, such predictions did not materialise, and, by the process of specialising adopted here, there is every reason to believe that the trade will continue to develop.

The brushworking trade, in consequence of the improved tariff, has made great strides, and much of the latest machinery has been introduced, and all employees have been fully employed during the year. This is another trade where difficulty has been experienced in getting suitable female workers. On account of the tariff a new departure is being made in the manufacture in the Dominion of paint-brushes.

Saddle, harness, and leather-bag making trades have been quite up to the normal, full time having been worked by most firms. The latter trade is a growing one, and there has been demand for suitable workers.

The tendency of those desiring power for manufacturing purposes seems to lean to gas or oil engines, on account of cleanliness. There are also many motors installed in factories, the power being supplied by private firms and by the Corporation ; and there is every indication that this power will be more extensively used in the future, when better facilities are provided for supplying the same. The City Council, have, however, recognised the urgent necessity for making provision, and have decided to submit proposals to the ratepayers for an additional plant to be erected ; and as this branch of the Municipal service is a paying one, there seems very little likelihood of the loan being opposed.

Another noticeable change in the matter of power is the introduction and manufacture locally of gas suction plants, quite a number of which have been installed around this district, the users speaking well of their utility and cheapness.

EMPLOYMENT BUREAU.

This branch of the Department has, on account of the improved conditions and increase of work in this district, been rather slacker than in former years. 320 persons have been assisted to employment. Of these, 217 were single, and 103 married with 284 dependants. 197 were sent to private employment, and 123 to Government employment. Those assisted comprised tailors, cooks, blacksmiths, farm hands, gardeners, plumbers, printers, carpenters, and general labourers. The majority of those assisted hailed from the South Island, and the next largest number were from Great Britain, and then Australia.

It is noticeable the small number sent to Government works in this district during the year, on account of the shortening of hands on the Waipara-Cheviot and Midland Railway works ; but fortunately there was a scarcity of labour in the country and town for private employers, who readily engaged those discharged, and at the present time the duplication-works (Christchurch-Rolleston) is employing many of those who returned from harvesting operations.