

paid as bonuses are frequently put forward by employers as having been paid in order to cover overtime, while the employees have been under the impression that the bonuses were payable for their work during ordinary working-hours. This difficulty could to some extent be got over by means of wage and time book similar to that required for factories, when particulars as to the hours worked and how overtime is computed would be required.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

As far as the inquiries I have made throughout New Zealand go, this Act has worked quite smoothly during the year. Office-keepers are now well versed in its provisions, and there is little difficulty in seeing that the Act is well observed.

I have, &c.,

M. HAWTHORNE,

Inspector of Factories.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Department of Labour, Wellington.

CHRISTCHURCH.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Christchurch, 5th April, 1909.

I herewith respectfully submit my report on the work of the Department in the Christchurch District for the year ending 31st March, 1909.

The period under review has been a fairly prosperous one, and, notwithstanding a general stringency in the money-market during the latter part of the year, a fair volume of trade has been done. The tightness of money has, perhaps, affected the building trade more than any other, and in consequence a number of building-trade operatives have been out of employment, or have only succeeded in getting intermittent employment; but, taking the year through, a fair average wage has been earned. There is every indication, however, of a general improvement of trade, and the effect of the splendid harvest, and the recovery in the price of wool, must soon bring about a more buoyant feeling.

There have been no labour troubles during the year, employers and workers showing a more conciliatory spirit in settling any dispute that has arisen, both parties realising that no good could be gained by opposing every suggestion that emanates from the opposite side.

Except in a few industries, the want of additional female and boy labour has not been quite as acute as in former years.

The woollen-milling industry is still flourishing, and appears to be on a very solid foundation. Orders have not fluctuated so much as in former years, and in consequence employment has been more regular during the period, and very little overtime has been necessary.

The clothing trade has made big strides, one firm having erected a large factory in which the whole of their business of tailoring, costume-making, shirtmaking, hat and cap making, and denim-making is done. In the past these various departments were situated in buildings in different parts of the town. Opinions have been freely expressed by those in a position to judge that this factory is the most up-to-date and complete establishment of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere.

In the boot and shoe trade there is also a tendency on the part of occupiers to specialise more with a view to reducing the cost of production. This trade during the past few months has been languishing for want of orders, probably on account of the lateness of the season and the very fine weather, which does not conduce to good business in the boot trade.

The confectionery and biscuit-making industry is steadily growing in importance, it being necessary for frequent additions to be made to these factories. The shortness of female and boy labour has necessitated a large amount of overtime being worked in this industry during the year.

The local freezing-works are in full swing, and everything points to the present being a record season.

The number of Chinese laundries is steadily increasing, and although these men compete with the poorer class of working-women, they have not the advantages that obtain in other cities in respect to cheap labour, as nearly all of them are the sole occupiers of the premises. There is one evil, however, that must be guarded against. I refer to the employment of females in Chinese laundries. A case came under my notice a few weeks back of a Chinaman advertising for a young girl to work in his laundry. As is well known, the premises usually occupied by the Chinese are very small, old, and rotten, and are used as a dwellinghouse and factory. Although the interior is usually kept fairly clean, the general environment is bad, inasmuch as a Chinaman often has visits from his countrymen during the day.

EMPLOYMENT BUREAU.

The year has been a fairly busy one in this branch, and everything has worked smoothly. During July there was an excessive rush, caused through an agitation, but on investigation it was found that the conditions were quite misrepresented. At that time we were fortunate in having a large order on hand for the Midland Railway works, so were able to offer all of the men employment. A good many communications were received from farmers for hands, and in most cases they asked for new arrivals. Every endeavour was made to fill these positions. A lack of consideration is sometimes shown by farmers, inasmuch as they fill positions and do not take the trouble to notify the Department. This causes confusion, so before sending men on I have been compelled to make inquiries by wire or telephone to ascertain whether the place is still open. This, however, causes delay in some cases, as the farmers are often a good distance away from the telegraph office. Very few fares are lost to this office, which shows that we have, on the whole, a very good class of men here. Of course, we have