

I cannot conclude this report without extending my sincere thanks to Dr. de Lisle, District Health Officer, for his consideration and courteous co-operation in all matters in regard to sanitation.

I have also to thank the various persons with whom my duty has brought me in contact for the consideration and courtesy shown me while carrying out my duties.

I have, &c.,

ERNEST W. F. GÖHNS,

Inspector of Factories.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

NEW PLYMOUTH.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, New Plymouth, 20th April, 1909.

I have the honour to submit, for your consideration, the annual report of this office for the year ending 31st March, 1909.

RETAIL AND MANUFACTURING TRADES.

The year just ended has, with the exception of the building and for a portion of the year the boot-making trades, been very satisfactory. The volume of business done by the various retailers has been quite up to that of previous years, while the amount of money outstanding for goods supplied is certainly no greater than for the same period last year. This, I think, proves that, in spite of the generally acknowledged depression throughout the Dominion, the spending-power of the people of Taranaki, in so far as the necessities and comforts of life are concerned, has not been curtailed.

The various building trades, including carpentering, painting, and plumbing, have been very slack indeed. Employers have been compelled to dispense with a number of good tradesmen; most of these men, however, have shown a very commendable spirit by tackling bushfelling and general labouring-work in the country instead of hanging around the towns "waiting for something to turn up."

The boot-manufacturing trade was very quiet for a few months, but it revived considerably towards the end of the year.

The tailoring, dressmaking, and millinery trades have continued very busy throughout the year, the tailoring trade particularly having experienced great difficulty in obtaining sufficient female labour.

One feature in connection with the tailoring trade in this district is the increasing number of boy apprentices. The supply of journeymen tailors has been rapidly diminishing in proportion to the female labour employed. It is surprising that more parents do not apprentice their boys to this trade, as the wages are good, and the quantity of work required from year to year is rapidly increasing. The quantity of male labour offering is very much below the demand.

The freezing and canning works at both Waitara and Patea have had a very successful season. The canning and preserving portion of the business is growing rapidly, and extensive alterations are contemplated at Waitara. At present it is a difficult matter to keep pace with the demand, owing to want of room. When the present building was erected a little over twelve months ago it was thought that it would meet all requirements for some years, but so rapidly has the business grown that the proprietors contemplate increasing the building to twice its present size.

Taranaki's most important industry, cheese and butter making, has had a most satisfactory season, possibly the most satisfactory in the history of the industry. There has been only one dry spell of about six weeks—during February and March—and it did not seriously affect the milk-supply, which has been well maintained throughout the season. The quantity of milk supplied to the various factories is much in excess of the quantity supplied last season, and, as most of the companies sold their season's output at satisfactory prices at the beginning of the season, it is safe to assume that the operations of the various companies will prove very satisfactory to the shareholders.

Oil-boring operations are being steadily persevered with, but it is, of course, quite impossible to forecast the result. The shareholders in the various companies have the best wishes of all sections of the community as to the ultimate success of their venture, which it is fully acknowledged would prove of inestimable benefit to the whole community.

Although there is a concensus of opinion throughout the Dominion that the incoming year will prove very lean in comparison to the years of prosperity by which it has been preceded, I do not think there is any cause for anxiety as far as Taranaki is concerned. With the exception of the building trades, the amount of business doing and offering is quite up to the standard of previous years, and there is no apparent reason why it should not continue.

It is very gratifying to report that cordial relations exist between employers and employees in all trades, and there has been no dispute or dissension of any kind. Employers have on all occasions shown a readiness to do all they can for the comfort and convenience of their employees, and the employees have shown that they appreciate this consideration.

CASUAL LABOUR.

The number of applications for work in any capacity has been considerably in excess of the previous year. 128 applications were received from persons outside Taranaki, while 52 applications were received from applicants from England, Scotland, Ireland, and America. 132 men were assisted to Government works and private employment. Towards the end of the year the applications for work have been much in excess of the demand, although the amount of work being done throughout the district has been quite as great as in previous years; indeed, there has been a greater number of men employed than in some years past both upon Government and private works. The excess of applications has been due to new arrivals from other countries and men in search of work from other parts of the Dominion.