

County Council would send us a list of their requirements, we could send just the number of men required. Men certainly will not leave town on a wild-goose chase, and I am sure we cannot blame them, seeing that they have no money to risk.

For the year just ended 222 persons, with 77 dependents, have applied at this office for employment, and work has been found with private employers for 124, with 73 dependents; and 10, with 4 dependents, have been sent to Government works. 118 reduced fares, of a total value of £32 4s. 5d., have been issued to unemployed persons seeking work, and I am pleased that of this amount only £4 13s. 7d. is still outstanding, and most of this is guaranteed.

During the past year the Borough Council has spent in wages £14,525, made up as follows: Tarring of footpaths, £899; beautifying the Square, £364; repairs to streets, culverts, and tree-planting, £1,791; carting, £994; bridges, tramways, river-protection, £1,741; waterworks, £1,022; sanitation and sewers, £2,384; reserves, esplanade, and cemetery, £485; new sewerage, £2,474; new streets, &c., £2,371: total, £14,525.

During the year the official opening of the new waterworks took place. The total cost of the works, including new concrete dam, was £26,000. This year also saw the completion of the sewerage system, which altogether necessitated an expenditure of some £56,000.

The total number of building permits issued for the year was 243; the total value, £46,310. Of these new buildings 58 were in brick.

The outlook for the current year is also promising, as already 44 building permits have been issued for work, amounting in value to £12,568. The recent fires will also necessitate the erection of one hotel and several shops, which means more work for the workers.

FACTORIES.

There have been 249 factories registered at Palmerston North during the year, and 6 factories have enlarged their staff, so that re-registration became necessary. This is an increase of 25 factories over last year. The number employed has been 905 males and 234 females over sixteen, 35 males and 53 females under sixteen, or a total of 1,227. The amount paid in wages exceeds £93,000.

Certificates of fitness have been issued to 53 young persons under sixteen years of age—namely, 24 males and 29 females.

Overtime warrants have been issued to 28 workrooms for 151 females and boys under sixteen, to work 2,499 hours; 411 adult males have worked in 64 factories 18,352 hours. The total number of hours worked overtime was 20,851.

There were 17 prosecutions under the Factories Act during the year, and convictions were recorded in each case, the fines inflicted amounting to £8 and costs £5 5s. In several other cases matters have been settled out of Court, and the sum of £153 4s. 3d. has been paid to employees through this Department.

There have been 21 accidents reported during the year, but most of them were not at all serious, and in no case can the accident be said to have been due to negligence on the part of a factory-occupier or to any neglect of the provisions of the Act.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

This Act has worked very smoothly during the year, and there has been no dissatisfaction. Still, it has been found necessary to prosecute several occupiers who have been somewhat careless, and 71 cases were taken before the Stipendiary Magistrate, convictions being recorded in each case, and a total amount of £13 fines, with £6 1s. costs, being inflicted.

Overtime has been worked by 70 males and 51 females, a total number of hours as follows: males, 829; females, 293: total, 1,122.

There are 217 shops now on the register at Palmerston North.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

There are 10 servants' registry-offices licensed here, 3 of which have commenced doing business during the past year.

Generally speaking, the offices are well conducted, and I can only report in favourable terms of the licensees. In two cases, however, I have had to strongly warn the occupiers for breaches of the Act in charging more than the legal fees. I have also had on more than one occasion to complain of one of them taking fees from applicants, and sending the men perhaps miles into the country, only to find the situations filled, or that the instructions given to the registry-office keeper had not been carried out, and the wrong class of man—in one case a man instead of a boy—had been sent. In each case I have compelled the registry-office keeper to refund the fee paid, together with the cost of travelling, and to pay the men for the time lost in going to and from the places to which they had been sent.

There is one point about registry-offices to which I should like to draw your special attention. A man seeking work has possibly his last shilling or two left. He goes to the registry-office, and by payment of a fee he obtains a situation. The fee being paid, he has nothing left wherewith to get a meal or to pay his fare to the situation. He is then frequently sent to this Department, in the hopes that he will get a railway pass. If we are not satisfied as to his *bona fides*, he has to either get a guarantee for the fare required, or else do the best he can, in which latter case he perhaps does nothing at all, and the registry-office keeper receives the benefit of the fee paid, and probably sends a second man after obtaining a second fee. In other instances the licensee guarantees his fare, at the same time taking an order upon the employer from the man, so that this Department not only helps the applicant for work, but is also of value to the registry-office.