

TIMARU.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Timaru, 12th April, 1909.

I have the honour to submit, for your information, my annual report on the working of this branch of the Department for the year ending 31st March, 1909.

GENERAL.

The year just concluded has been a prosperous one for both skilled and unskilled labour. Except in the building trade during the latter part of the year, it can safely be said that no man willing to work has had cause to complain of non-employment as far as the South Canterbury district is concerned. Especially has this been the case with regard to ploughmen and farm labourers, and, owing to the high price of wheat prevailing this year, farmers are putting in a much larger area than in previous years, and, in consequence, they have been much harassed by the scarcity of labour.

The number of building permits issued by the Borough Council during the year was 117, and the amount spent in buildings within the Town Belt amounted to the sum of £51,756, besides a very large sum spent on buildings in the suburbs. During the latter months of the year a "slump" in the building trade took place, and is likely to continue for some time, as it is thought this town is somewhat overbuilt.

FACTORIES.

The number of factories registered for the year was 245, an increase of 15 on last year. The underground drainage scheme is being pushed ahead, another contract for 18 miles has recently been let, and so far a good number of factories have been connected; and I hope by the end of another year that all will be, which ought to make this one of the most healthy and sanitary towns in the Dominion.

The number of persons employed in factories was 1,298—namely, 984 males and 314 females—a small increase on last year.

Fifty-seven certificates of fitness to work in factories have been issued to 39 boys and 18 girls under sixteen years of age.

The amount of overtime worked in factories during the year was—152 adult males, 15,252 hours; 209 boys under sixteen and females, 4,393 hours: making a total of 19,645 hours. This shows a large decrease in the amount of overtime worked as compared with last year.

There were 32 accidents reported during the year. Inquiries were made, and, where necessary, instructions given to guard machinery. I regret having to report that one of these accidents terminated fatally. The others were principally of a slight character, chiefly to slaughtermen who had either a finger or a hand cut, but who were able to return to work in the course of a few days, and in no case can any of these accidents be said to be due to the negligence on the part of the factory-occupiers.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

During the year 233 shops were entered on the register, employing 509 persons.

This Act is working smoothly; the half-holiday is rigidly observed, and the same applies in regard to assistants finishing punctually at 9 p.m. on Saturday nights.

During the year warrants were issued to 186 shop-assistants, who worked 2,081 hours overtime.

There were 7 cases under this Act brought before the Court, and convictions secured in all cases.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

There are only three of these offices in the district, the same number as last year, and I am pleased to report they are all well conducted and satisfactorily carrying out the requirements of the Act.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

Nothing of any great importance has arisen in respect to the administration of this Act. The amount of friction caused by the awards is gradually dying out, owing, no doubt, to the employers making themselves better acquainted with the awards they are working under.

The new Act which came into force on the first of January of this year is a very great saving of time, in that we can now take cases before the Stipendiary Magistrates in place of waiting for the Arbitration Court.

During the year 15 cases, enforcements of awards, were taken before the Courts. Out of this number 7 fines were inflicted, 5 breaches were recorded, 1 case adjourned, 1 withdrawn, and 1 dismissed.

UNSKILLED LABOUR.

During the year 220 persons applied for employment, of whom 104 were placed on co-operative works and sent to private employers. Employment generally has been fairly plentiful during the year, with a great scarcity of good ploughmen and farm hands.

As anticipated, South Canterbury has enjoyed another good year, and with a good price offering for wheat, and wool on the up grade, the current year should be a good one.

SHIPPING.

I have again to report that the Port of Timaru has had an exceptionally busy year, although it was generally conceded in the early part of the year that the trade and revenue would be detrimentally affected by the unfavourable dry season; yet, allowing for this, it has come third on the list for exports in frozen mutton. The following returns show the principal exports for the year: Wool, 44,869 bales; skins, 150 bales; frozen mutton, 598,667 carcasses; wheat, 144,505 sacks; oats, 122,022