

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

The work entailed in the administration of this Act has considerably increased during the year.

Although the number of complaints received has been much larger than in previous years, in only 4 cases was it found necessary to apply to the Court for enforcement. Most of the complaints received are the outcome of misunderstanding, and in many cases a little explanation has obviated the necessity of going to Court. In many of the cases where breaches occur much ill feeling would be obviated if the parties concerned would consult one another, and so remove misunderstanding before taking extreme measures. One "strike" occurred during the year, owing to the dispute at Otira Tunnel, when 260 men ceased work because their employer would not accede to the request of their union to discuss conditions of employment through the union's representative. Inquiries were made into the "strike," but it was found that the case was not one in which proceedings should be taken. The "strike" itself was settled in two or three days by the employer agreeing to meet the men through their representative.

CONCLUSION.

During the year I have officially visited Westport, Reefton, Hokitika, Kumara, and Ross, and made a general inspection of factories, shops, &c., in each town. I find that, considering the limited amount of time at their disposal, the local police acting as Inspectors of Factories carry out their duties very well, and I have to express my thanks for the able and willing assistance extended to me by them at all times in carrying out my duties.

I desire also to acknowledge the kindly courtesy that I have invariably received at the hands of both employers and employees.

I have, &c.,

HENRY E. MOSTON,

Inspector of Factories.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

TIMARU.

SIR.—

Department of Labour, Timaru, 26th April, 1911.

I have the honour to submit, for your consideration, my annual report for the year ending 31st March, 1911.

This period has been on the whole a prosperous one for South Canterbury, and as the district depends mainly upon agricultural and pastoral pursuits, rather than manufacturing industries, it is pleasing to note that, generally, the farmers have had a good season, notwithstanding the prolonged dry weather experienced during the summer.

The wool-clip was a fairly heavy one, although fewer bales were sold at the Timaru sales than last year, and the prices realized were not quite so high as then, but a very fair average was maintained.

The grain harvest has proved much better than was expected in the early part of the summer, as rain came in most cases in time to save the wheat and late oats, but rather too late to save the early oat crop. The prices of cereals are rather lower now than they have been for some time past, but as far as I can gather they are sufficiently good to be profitable.

The local freezing-works had a record season last year, and this year is likely to be even better, as, owing to the shortage of feed, it is necessary for owners to diminish their flocks. For some time past the two local works have been killing from ten to twelve thousand sheep and lambs daily. One firm had its premises improved and enlarged during the off season, and is now feeling the advantage of the increased space and convenience for dealing with the by-products of the industry.

The building trade has maintained a very good average during the year, the number of building permits issued by the Borough Council being 237, and the estimated cost of the erection of these buildings £87,742 17s. 6d. There has been sufficient employment to keep all local men employed during the year except in the painting branch, which was rather quiet for a short time, but in the other branches—bricklaying, masonry, and carpentry—it has been necessary to obtain men from other parts of the Dominion to cope with the work.

The clothing trades have been very busy indeed, and there is hardly a workroom in the town that has had to shorten hands or work "short time." The tailoring branches have had perhaps the busiest time. There is an undoubted shortage of labour, both male and female, and many of the best firms have had to refuse work because of their inability to get workpeople to do it. Some of this shortage arises from the limitation of the apprentices by the award governing the industry, and it applies principally in the case of female apprentices, as it is found that a large proportion of the girls leave to get married just as they are beginning to be useful to their employers, and whilst this is perhaps good for the country as a whole, it is rather harassing for those carrying on the industry.

The retail trades have also been fairly prosperous, although several traders complain of a shortage of ready money.

The port of Timaru has again had a very good year (ending the 31st December, 1910), although total exports and imports are lower by about 800 tons. The total value of the foreign and intercolonial trade has increased by £115,000 over last year.

The imports for 1910 amounted to 84,786 tons, while there were 87,536 tons exported, making a total of 172,322 tons.