

GISBORNE.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Gisborne, 2nd April, 1912.

I have the honour to report on the working of the Department in Gisborne during the year ending 31st March, 1912.

The period has been one of great activity in all industries, and the excellent prices obtained for our main products have made the place prosperous. There has been fresh country cleared in all directions, thus increasing the sheep-bearing area, and great activity has been displayed in cultivating and improving that already in use. At Tokomaru Bay a temporary stoppage of the works was caused through a shortage of water at the meat-works, but an ample supply has now been provided, and, as the dry season affected only the immediate coast-line, the amount of export for the district will not be materially affected. At Tolaga Bay a dairying company has been formed, and a sufficient supply of milk guaranteed to insure successful operations. There is a large area of splendid land suitable for dairying near the town, and there is no doubt this town will make great progress in the near future. Taking the building trade as an indication of the prosperity of the district, I would mention that last year was a very busy one, but nearly all the work was outside the borough; while this year builders are just as busy in the outlying districts, and, in addition, a large amount of building is being done in the town. Permits for buildings in the borough last year valued £85,246, and this year £92,187, showing an increase of £6,941 over last year.

THE FACTORIES ACT.

During the year 249 factories have been registered, giving employment to 1,296 people; and overtime warrants were issued to 113 women and boys under sixteen years to work 3,549 hours. Permits have been issued to 21 young persons to work in factories, and 64 accidents were reported, none of which were of such a nature as to cause serious permanent disablement. All factory occupiers have their hands insured.

Sixteen cases were taken against one occupier for working females on the Sovereign's birthday, and a total fine of £1 and 7s. costs was inflicted.

The factories are all well conducted, and where any fault is pointed out the occupiers are quite willing to remedy the defect.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

Two hundred and twenty-five shops have been registered during the year, including 18 hotels, employing 306 males and 217 females; and warrants have been issued to work 3,060 hours' overtime during the year. The Shops and Offices Act is well observed, and only 1 case has been taken to Court—viz., for failing to close at the time fixed by requisition of the shopkeepers; a fine of 10s. and 7s. costs was inflicted. A special inspection of all shops handling food was made in company with the Sanitary Inspector, and a few necessary alterations were made on request. Back wages were collected and paid to the workers amounting to £11 3s. 6d.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

There have been 3 fresh awards made during the period affecting this district, one of which (Shearers and Shed Hands) has increased the work of the Inspector very much, there being over 300 parties scattered over the district, and some of them residing in places very difficult to visit. On my travels during the shearing season I found no cases of the employers paying less than the award rate of wages; but it has been difficult to convince the sheep-farmers that a proper wages and time book has to be kept, and that the old tally-book will not do. Generally the Act and awards are well observed. I have had to take 10 cases to Court for enforcement; in 8 of these fines were inflicted amounting to £22 in all; the other 2 cases were dismissed, and an appeal was lodged in one case against the Magistrate's decision. The Waterside Workers took one case to the Magistrate's Court for enforcement of award. The case was dismissed, and the union lodged an appeal. Nine cases were settled out of Court, and the sum of £19 4s. 2d. arrears of wages was collected and paid to the workers. Up to the last month of the year there was practically no unrest amongst the workers, but on the 26th March 25 shop-butchers struck work. The employers and men had agreed upon the wages, hours, and other conditions, but the employers subsequently refused to sign the agreement, giving as a reason that they objected to the men belonging to the Auckland union, as they feared if trouble should occur at Auckland the men in Gisborne would be drawn in; the men, who are already members of the Auckland union, refuse to sever their connection and form a separate union in Gisborne.

SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION, ETC., ACT.

During the year 66 shearing-stations have been visited, and the accommodation inspected. I found that 10 owners had erected or improved accommodation in accordance with the notices served previous to June, 1911. I have served notices to 24 station-owners to erect accommodation or make improvements this year. Most of these notices were served on settlers who have taken up fresh stations, or have increased the number of shearers, so that the accommodation already provided is not sufficient. In some cases I have found that females (Natives) are employed, and where this is so separate accommodation is ordered. During the year I have taken one case to the Magistrate's Court, and obtained an order to improve the accommodation; expenses and costs were allowed. The constantly increasing number of sheep-stations taken up in the backblocks and the bad roads make the inspection a very arduous task.