

## OAMARU.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Oamaru, 30th April, 1912.

I have the honour to submit my annual report for the year ending 31st March, 1912.

## GENERAL.

The year closed what might be described as a cycle of bad seasons for this district, due to drought, the extent of which has not been equalled in North Otago for many years back.

The harvest just reaped has placed many farmers in comfortable circumstances, who otherwise would have reached a point of serious difficulty. A land specialist who has visited most agricultural countries gives it as his opinion that the land of North Otago stands at the very top as regards crop-producing capabilities.

Last season everything that the farmer of this district touched was a failure, and this year all that he put his hand to turned out well.

North Otago only requires a fair amount of moisture to insure excellent returns, and the past past season yielded this in abundance.

Considering the tightness of money, trade in this district may be said to have held up wonderfully well; but the credit system had, of course, to be stretched, in order to meet the necessity of farmers who had suffered through the continuous drought.

The building trade has had a fairly prosperous year, and the outlook is encouraging.

The woodworking and sawmilling trades, although not in large compass, have been kept steadily employed.

Woollen-milling in this district is always working at full pressure, and the other branches of trade, considering all the circumstances, have done well.

It might be remarked that the dairying industry here has just completed the most successful season in its history.

The unemployment difficulty has been a stranger to the district for some time now, and the only trouble lately has been experienced in the difficulty of obtaining suitable labour, both for general farm-work and harvesting.

## FACORIES ACT.

The number of factories registered was 162, being a substantial increase upon last year.

The amount of overtime worked by 116 women and boys totalled 2,494 hours.

Certificates of fitness were issued to 11 girls and 10 boys under sixteen years of age.

*Accidents.*—Seven accidents were reported and inquired into, only 1 of which could be regarded as very serious, and in this case a boy had his hand so badly crushed in the machinery that amputation was necessary. The Department saw that the full amount of compensation was paid.

Arrears of wages were collected in 9 cases, making a total of £9 6s. 11d.

Seven informations were laid for breaches of this Act, and convictions were obtained.

The occupiers and managers of factories are now generally doing their best to comply with the provisions of the Act, and it is a satisfaction to notice the good feeling existing between employers and employees throughout the district.

## SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

The number of shops registered was 172 (excluding restaurants), a considerable increase upon last year.

Permits were issued to 65 assistants, who worked 686 hours' overtime.

Twelve informations had to be laid under this Act, and convictions were obtained.

Amount of wages and overtime collected without recourse to the law-courts was £85 1s. 10d.

Hotel and boardinghouse keepers are improving in their observance of the law.

## SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

There were 3 offices registered. They are all well conducted, and satisfactorily carry out the requirements of the Act.

## SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION, ETC., ACT.

I have visited for inspection a total of 9 shearing-sheds, and found that in 6 cases better sleeping-accommodation for the shearers was essential, according to the Act. Requisitions to this effect were left with the employers, who, I believe, will give due attention to the improvements required.

A number of the employees complained of the clause excluding from the operation of the Act employers who have less than 6 men working in or about a shearing-shed.

## CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, I wish to express my thanks to both employers and employees for assistance willingly given to me when carrying out my duties.

I have, &c.,

J. C. YORKE,

Inspector of Factories.

The Secretary of Labour and Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.