

Fifteen married men were also sent from here to roadwork at Glentanner, Mount Cook, on the co-operative principle, and on their return, after eight weeks' work, they all seemed well satisfied with their earnings.

The total number of married men assisted by the Bureau was twenty-six, together with the single men above stated.

I beg to add that business in general has been dull in this district during the year, especially skilled labour, where the supply has far exceeded the demand.

Owing to the very small price of grain and other produce, farmers and employers generally have been doing with as little labour as possible.

On some of the large stations and farms ploughmen's wages have been reduced from £1 to 18s. per week, which is not sufficient pay for an average good man, who looks well after his team and does a fair day's work.

E. Tregear, Esq., Wellington.

I have, &c.,

ROBERT CRAWFORD, Agent, Labour.

SIR,—

Factory Inspector's Office, Timaru, 30th March, 1895.

I have the honour to report on the Factories Acts for the year ending the 31st March, 1895.

In the Timaru district 103 factories and workrooms have been registered under the Factories Acts, 1892 and 1894, against forty in the year ending March, 1894, the increase being due to the amendment of the First Schedule. The amount of fees received to date, £40 5s.; and 503 males and 174 females at present employed.

Two flourmills are shut down for their annual overhauling.

The tailoring and ladies' dressmaking trades are very dull. When these places are in full swing from 100 to 150 persons are employed.

Sixteen permits have been issued to young persons under sixteen years of age—ten males and six females—copies of their register of birth having been obtained, also school certificates.

Permits to work overtime have been given to seventy-five persons. I may say that clause 55 of the Act gives dissatisfaction, inasmuch as it only allows two consecutive days' overtime, which may not be sufficient time to complete an order urgently required, and, perhaps, additional hands for the particular work not obtainable.

With reference to clause 63 of the Act, I called attention to the clause in my last year's report. The tradespeople consider it hard upon them to be compelled to give their workpeople a holiday on the Thursday when there has been public holidays during the week. The general opinion here is that the 3rd clause of the Shop Act should apply to the Factories Act.

With regard to the sanitary conditions of the several factories and workrooms in my district, I beg to state I have, as far as time would admit, paid particular attention to this clause, and that my suggestions have been carried out.

Several alterations and improvements have also been made for the comfort of the employes—viz., water-closets have been built, ventilators constructed, rooms enlarged, dining-rooms provided. In one tailoring establishment the stove for heating the irons has been removed from one room to another to regulate the temperature, and in one firm a fire-escape has been erected.

It would be almost impossible to carry out this portion of the Act to the letter, owing to the buildings being so cramped for space, and an alteration to any great extent would mean large outlay, which, in the present state of depression, would be ruinous to the small tradespeople.

There has been three accidents during the year, two of which were very slight; the third was of a more serious nature, causing a young man to lose his hand, he having been "skylarking" while attending machinery.

There has been one prosecution during the year (non-registration of factory), when conviction was obtained, and a fine of 5s. imposed.

"SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT, 1894."

I have the honour to submit my annual report on "The Shops and Shop-assistants Act, 1894."

Thursday half-holiday has been held here for some years past, so that I have not had to contend with the same difficulties which have been experienced in other districts where there has been no fixed day. But I regret to say there are several clauses in the Act which are looked upon with disfavour. For instance, the interpretation clause, which permits persons who reside on the premises and employ no labour to keep open their shops for business, gives dissatisfaction here to persons who have to close.

With reference to clause 18 of the Act—closing offices at 1 p.m.—this is most disastrous to Timaru, as Saturday is the market-day, and most of the country people are in town, and agents and merchants do most of their business on that day; therefore the closing of offices not only causes a serious loss to merchants, &c., themselves, but great inconvenience to the public, who do not care to break the week by leaving their work. This refers principally to farmers.

I think notice should be given to the Inspectors when clerks are going to work the three hours' overtime as allowed by the Act, to enable a register of the hours worked to be kept, otherwise it will be difficult to carry out this clause.

I might say that the desires of the majority of the employers here with regard to the half-holiday is that the law may be so altered that it will compel all retail houses to close on the Thursday afternoon, and that all employes shall have a holiday on that day, including clerks. It would, of course, be impossible to make certain exemptions—fishmongers, for instance; to close them on Thursday would mean a considerable loss to them, and inconvenience to the public, as it is necessary to sell fish on that day for consumption on Friday (being the principal day).

Also, bookstalls on railway-stations should be exempt. But, with regard to Timaru, there is very little business done here on Thursday, and I do not think that closing up their shops would cause any loss to the shopkeepers generally.