

holiday is well observed, all shops and factories being closed up punctually in the afternoon of each Thursday. I have had no occasion to find any fault with any one for breaches of the Act since I arrived here.

So far as I know, there are no unemployed in this district, although there is very little work of any kind being done, this being a pastoral district. A great many men belonging to the labouring class have in the last year left here and gone to the goldfields, wages being much higher there, and work more easily obtained. Everything here is very dull, and seems to be at a standstill.

P. BLACK, Inspector of Factories, Gisborne.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

NAPIER.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Napier.

I have the honour to submit for your consideration the following report, giving a brief outline of the work done by this department during the past year:—

THE LABOUR-MARKET.

In reviewing events affecting labour in this district for the past year it is gratifying to be able to say that at the close of the present period the outlook is considerably brighter than it was at the commencement. During the early part of last winter the prospects for the outdoor workers appeared exceedingly gloomy. Large numbers of able-bodied men were about the town idle. Most of these were men that had been working at the breakwater for a number of years, but when the Harbour Board let this work to a contractor it became necessary to discharge upwards of ninety men that were employed by the Board at the breakwater works. It was generally anticipated that the contractor would require these men when he started operations, but unfortunately these anticipations were not realised, as there were only about forty of them who succeeded in getting work with the contractor, leaving the majority to seek employment elsewhere. The result of this was that every avenue of employment for labouring men was glutted for several months. A few of the men made their way north to the goldfields, and fortunately I was enabled to place some twenty-five married men on the roadworks at different intervals of the depression. Eight mechanics were engaged by me to alter and renovate Government buildings, and several were assisted through the department to private employment, and as the summer advanced other avenues of employment for willing hands were opened. The building trade improved, and has been busy for some time past. Those engaged in the iron trade have had very little to complain of during the year. Carriage- and coach-builders, saddle- and harness-makers, plumbers, tailors, dressmakers, and most of the other industries have had a fairly good year's employment.

FACTORIES ACT.

For this year 122 factories and workrooms have been registered, employing 846 persons—i.e., 695 males and 151 females. Compared with last year there is a considerable decrease in the number of bootmakers employed here, but in other industries the numbers are well maintained. This Act is now fairly well understood, and I have little difficulty in its administration. The amendment of last year prohibiting work from being taken home by those employed during the day in factories is a very useful provision, and was absolutely necessary to make the Act consistent with the other sections dealing with overtime.

THE SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

This Act is well observed here, and most of the employers appear to appreciate the half-holiday equally as well as the employés. The amendment of last year bringing hawkers under the Act, and classing them as shopkeepers, has assisted considerably to make this Act work smoothly. The amendment of last year dealing with banks, offices, &c., has not improved matters much, and there is still a great amount of difficulty to contend with. I also beg to draw your attention to the fact that there is no definition of a "shipping office": section 6, Amendment Act of 1896, simply states that shipping offices are exempt, but I think it is absolutely necessary that the meaning should be properly defined, otherwise a large merchant could, by taking a small shipping agency, give the department considerable trouble.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY-OFFICES.

These offices appear to be in very respectable hands, and are well managed. I have had no complaints of any person being overcharged, neither have I been able to find any such thing to have taken place.

PROSECUTIONS.

There have been very few prosecutions during the year. Most of the people I have had to deal with have generally been amenable to reason. However, it was necessary in a few instances to prosecute, and the following is a list of the cases undertaken: Factories Act—One charge, for employing youths on Saturday afternoon. Shops and Shop-assistants Act—Two charges, against different persons, for keeping their shops open for trade on the afternoon of the day appointed for closing; two charges, against different persons, for employing two shop-assistants and nine office employés more than half an hour after the prescribed time of closing. These cases were all successful. One charge of obstructing me in the execution of my duty was withdrawn.

I have, &c.,

E. Tregear, Esq.

L. D. BROWETT.