

At the date of writing practically there are no unemployed in this district, as threshing, ploughing, and grain-carting and other farm-work is busy at this season of the year.

As you will have noticed in my monthly returns, the building trade has been in a very satisfactory condition during the past year, which indicates considerable prosperity among the class of people who build cottages for themselves. Other trades have been better than the average for past years, and, considering the fair price of grain, there is some indication of an increase in agricultural farming during the coming year.

I beg to add that a considerable number of settlers in this district are anxious to take up Government farms if suitable land could be obtained in the Timaru district.

I have, &c.,

ROBERT CRAWFORD, Labour Agent.

E. Tregear, Esq., Secretary, Labour, Wellington.

SIR,—

Factory Office, Timaru, 10th May, 1897.

I beg to report as follows:—

#### FACTORIES ACT.

Up to the 31st March, 1897, 103 factories have been registered in this district, employing 680 persons. I may state that, being stationed here for only the past two months, I am not fully conversant with the working of the various factories. I have, however, been assured by Constable Beddek, who, off and on, has acted as Inspector, that the provisions of the Act have been closely observed by the various employers. No complaints have been received, and no prosecutions instituted.

#### SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

The provisions of this Act, so far as I have ascertained and observed, have also been respected by the shopkeepers, and, as a consequence, there have been no complaints.

I have, &c.,

CHAS. FRASER, Inspector.

E. Tregear, Esq., Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

#### OAMARU.

SIR,—

Police Office, Oamaru, 13th April, 1897.

I have the honour to report for your information upon the working of the Factories Act, the Shops and Shop-assistants Act, and the Bureau of Industries in this district during the year ending the 31st March, 1897.

#### FACTORIES ACT.

I am glad to report that this Act has worked smoothly during the year. With the exception of some small improvements to buildings, closets, and fences, I have had little or no trouble in carrying out the provisions of the Act. There are about seventy factories, most of them being now registered. Miss Scott has visited the district, and I always find her visits do good.

#### SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

This Act is working well, and I have had no trouble in carrying out its provisions. The half-holidays have been duly observed, and I have not had any complaints. The seating accommodation in shops has also worked well.

#### LABOUR BUREAU.

I am glad to say that I have had less trouble than the previous year. This is accounted for to some extent, as the greater part of the work was found in the district, and also that the number of applications were much less than last year.

I have, &c.,

THOMAS O'GRADY, Sergeant of Police.

The Secretary for Labour, Wellington.

#### INVERCARGILL.

SIR,—

Bureau of Industries, Invercargill, 3rd May, 1897.

I have to report that during the past twelve months ending 31st March, 1897, trade has, on the whole, been better than it has been for some three or four years back, although the cry of the unemployed is ever in our ears, awakening sympathy, sometimes justly, but in many unreasonably doing injury to the chances of the deserving ones. During the year this office has found employment for ninety-five men, whose earnings have had to maintain 324 persons. Nearly the whole of these ninety-five men were of the unskilled class; they exist by getting two or three days' work now and then, and live in the suburban townships, where they are convenient to this town. This class of labour has been greatly assisted by the various Government relief-works carried out on the system of co-operative contracts, which seems to work fairly well.

#### FISHING INDUSTRY.

This is a growing industry, giving employment to a large number of persons, and enriching this colony. Although it is comparatively in its infancy, it has from the Bluff exported during the year about 7,000 tons of fish, equal in value to about (at its lowest) £7,000 clear profit to the colony,