

The new flood relief-works (a private contract) employ about fifty hands and some seventy horses, and will soon be completed.

During the early part of the year road-making started at the new settlement at Seddon. At times some hundred men were employed, labourers coming from all parts. Several men were sent to the Sounds on the same kind of work.

The harvesting season in this district was a very fair one, and, though not as good as that of the previous year, some good crops were got in. No floods visited the district this year, and the farmers in the lowlands have profited in consequence.

I inspected the shearers' accommodation this year and found everything very satisfactory, excepting at one place, where I ordered a new whare to be built, and this is now in the course of erection. Several Sydney shearers were here this season, and they say they never saw anything to equal the accommodation.

Gold-mining here seems to be gradually going ahead. Increased attention has been given to dredging, and some promising stone has been turned out of the quartz claims.

Flax-millers have had a real good time of it this season, the fibre fetching very good prices. One man in this district started three mills when the flax went up.

I have, &c.,

THOMAS PRICE, Inspector of Factories.

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

#### \* NELSON.

SIR,—

Police-station, Nelson, 31st March, 1900.

I have the honour to report as follows on the working of the Factories and Shops and Shop-assistants Acts in this district since my arrival here in the latter end of December last.

#### FACTORIES ACT.

This Act, with few exceptions, gives general satisfaction here. There are 142 factories registered, as against 136 up to this date last year, and in no case has there been any attempt to evade registration when directed by me to register. There are yet a few returns to come in, which, owing to the great distance of these factories from town, and the limited time at my disposal, I will have considerable difficulty in getting. Nearly all the factories here are kept busy, and a large amount of overtime has been worked during the last three months.

Prior to my arrival here there was a considerable amount of discontent among a number of employers owing to their belief that the Act places equal restriction in respect to hours of labour, holidays, closing of factories, wages, &c., upon adult male employes and upon all females and boys under eighteen years of age. I, however, have succeeded in dispelling this erroneous notion.

I have had one case for breach of this Act, a fine of £2 and £1 3s. costs being inflicted.

#### SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

This Act is now working smoothly enough here. For some time I had considerable difficulty in convincing shopkeepers that they must close on the statutory half-holiday, the law on this matter heretofore not being enforced.

I had one case under this Act for failing to close on the half-holiday, and a conviction followed, which had the desired effect, and all shops are now closed on the Wednesday afternoon.

The sitting-accommodation in the larger shops I found inadequate, and I received various complaints on that matter. I am now glad to say that that has been remedied, and satisfactory accommodation has been provided.

#### LABOUR.

Trade here, especially carpentering, painting, and bricklaying, has for the last three months been very brisk, but unskilled labour is rather slack, and I have received a number of applications for work. There are still a number of men on my books waiting employment.

CHARLES E. ALDRIDGE, Inspector of Factories.

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

#### WESTPORT.

SIR,—

Police Office, Westport, 25th April, 1900.

I have the honour to report respecting the working of the Factories and Shops and Shop-assistants Acts in Westport district for the year ending 31st March, 1900.

#### FACTORIES.

About fifty factories were registered, nearly all of them being small tradesmen, employing from one to eight hands.

No prosecutions took place, no trouble having been experienced in carrying out the provisions of the Act.

#### SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

Many of the shopkeepers were in the habit of reopening their shops after 6 o'clock in the evening on public holidays, which they considered they had a right to do. To let them know they were wrong I prosecuted four of them, who were convicted and discharged, it being the first prosecutions of that nature in Westport. I had no further trouble with them afterwards, and it had a good effect on others.