

WESTPORT.

SIR,—

Westport, 19th March, 1901.

I have the honour to submit a report on the working of the various Acts in this district during the past year.

FACORIES ACT.

During the year forty premises were registered under the Act, giving employment to 166 persons—140 males and twenty-six females. I have heard of no complaints from employers or employes and no breaches of the Act have been reported.

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

No complaints have been received from employes under this Act during the year. The half-holiday is strictly observed, even by those who are exempt, and the Act is working very smoothly. There have been no applications for overtime permits.

LABOUR.

There have been twenty-eight applications for work during the year. At present there are no unemployed about the district. The average rate of wages for labourers and bushmen is 9s. per day; miners average from 10s. to 15s. per day; carpenters average 11s. per day; blacksmiths and strikers from 9s. to 12s. per day.

ROBT. DARBY, Inspector of Factories.

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

GREYMOUTH.

SIR,—

Greymouth, 10th April, 1901.

In again forwarding you my annual report I am pleased to say the past has been one of the most prosperous years the Coast has ever had. It may not have been a year in which money was being thrown about in a reckless manner, as in the early days of gold-mining, but there has been a permanent improvement in every way visible; and the workers, who, after all, are the mainstay of this and every country, have been less burdened with difficulties and more comfortable in every way than I have ever before seen.

We have had a revival in gold-mining, and as far as one can tell it has come to stay. The method of obtaining gold by steam-dredging has quite revolutionised the mining industry, and acres that some years ago most experienced miners would have laughed at are now in a fair way to proving payable. Apart from the increased wealth the gold will bring to the country, as it particularly affects the working community, there will be a decided benefit to be gained. Carpenters, bushmen, sawyers, are all wanted, and work can be found for some time to come by these classes of artisans at pontoon-building. Unskilled labour also finds demand, as there is bush-felling and other work in connection with the dredging industry requiring men.

The local foundry has been hard at work day and night trying to meet the crush of work thrust on it by the dredge contracts taken by the directors, and the hands—numbering some 122—are making good time, and consequently wages, the weekly payments being about £252. The company have an up-to-date plant, and the work turned out compares more than favourably with that obtained in other parts.

The carpentering trade has been very brisk during the past year.

The Blackball district suffered for some little time owing to an accident in the mine, which necessitated the flooding of the mine and consequent stoppage of work. The Government, however, employed the men at some very necessary road-making near the town of Blackball.

The shipping trade has been good during the past year, and the wharf-labourers have been well employed.

There has been an immense quantity of timber used in the district for pontoon-building; and the export trade alone amounted to 10,064,813 superficial feet, and no less than 164,227 silver-pine sleepers have been shipped this year from this part of the Coast.

WM. H. BOASE, Inspector of Factories.

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

SIR,—

Police-station, Greymouth, 22nd March, 1901.

I have the honour to submit my annual report *re* the working of the Factories Act in this district. The various Acts have been well observed, and I am glad to say that every trade has been brisk during the year, and there have been scarcely any unemployed.

There has been an increase in trade and general commercial activity; buildings are being erected in all directions, and a large number of people have come to this district during the year. The consequence is that house-property and building-sections have increased in value by 25, 50, and, in some cases, 100 per cent. A large amount of capital has been invested in gold-dredging and the Harbour Board is spending a large sum (£50,000) on harbour improvements, and the Town Council intend spending £20,000 on waterworks and drainage. At present there is an active demand for skilled labour; carpenters can obtain 12s. per day, and enough men cannot be got at that figure.

There is very little farming in this district, and no sheep-runs.

Greymouth and this district are in a more prosperous state than they have been for years past, and the coming year promises to be equally prosperous.

I have, &c.,

PAUL SHIRLEY, Inspector of Factories.

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