

FACTORIES ACT.

During the year 116 factories have been registered in this district, an increase of five over last year, and permits of fitness to the number of forty-one were issued to young persons under the age of sixteen years to work in factories. 204 overtime permits, under section 55 of the Act, were granted, as against 104 for last year. As I have already stated in a former report, this section of the Act should be abolished, and no overtime granted save in special cases, such as mourning orders, &c. The sanitary conditions of most of the factories are fairly good; but there is still room for considerable improvement. On two occasions the Health Officer accompanied me on my inspection visit to the various factories. With few exceptions the Act is well observed. There were only two prosecutions, and convictions were recorded in each case.

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

The provisions of this Act have been well complied with. The Thursday half-holiday gives every satisfaction. Only one draper was prosecuted during the year, and a fine and costs imposed.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES.

There are two licensed holders under the Act, who conduct their business in an honest and straightforward manner.

LABOUR MARKET.

Work was found through this office for fifty-nine men on co-operative, railway, and other works. The number of applicants for employment during the past year was small in comparison with former years. There is an abundance of work in the district, and every prospect of this healthy state of the market continuing for some time. The various trades appear to be very brisk, especially the building trades. At present there are several new buildings in course of erection; and the Timaru Harbour works, which are now in full swing, have also greatly added to the demand for labour—eighty men being employed daily at these works under the day-labour system.

I have, &c.,

ROBERT CRAWFORD, Inspector of Factories.

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

OTAUTAU.

SIR,

Police-station, Otautau, 1st April, 1901.

I have the honour to submit to you my labour report for year ending the 31st March, 1901.

FACTORIES ACT.

There have been twenty-four registered as against twenty-one for year ending the 31st March, 1900. There are eighty-three persons in the factories, all males. There are over thirty men employed at the sawmills who do not come under the Factories Act—bushfellers, bullock- and horse-drivers, &c. From my own observation I am of the opinion that the Act works well, and I have no trouble whatever in carrying out its provisions; everything seems to work very smoothly. There were no permits to work overtime applied for.

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

This is well observed; there have been no complaints and no trouble whatever. There have been no prosecutions under the above Acts during the year.

SAWMILLS AND FLAXMILLS.

With one exception, the sawmills are now in the hands of a company. For a considerable time they have been very busy, and at times unable to cope with the demand. This is not due so much to local demands, but to the great increase in the exportation of timber to other parts of the colony and to Australia. As far as I can learn the flaxmills are turning out a first-class fibre and doing a good business.

DREDGING.

A large up-to-date dredge is now approaching completion, and operations will be commenced in about a month on the Waiau River, about forty miles from here, and, judging from reports, should prove successful.

FROZEN RABBITS.

This trade will be in full swing about the end of the month, and, judging from last year's output, I am safe to say that this trade will put more money into direct circulation than any other industry at the present time. It is a poor hand that cannot make £3 per week at trapping. The price paid last year was 5d. per pair; the same price will doubtless rule this year.

UNSKILLED LABOUR.

I am pleased to say that there has been a keen demand for this class of labour during the past year. I have had no application for assistance.

I have, &c.,

P. JOYCE, Inspector of Factories.

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