

I think the Act loses a large amount of its good by the long absence of the Court from any one district: sometimes nine months elapse before a dispute can be heard. Meantime those interested may have left the district. No doubt those matters will have the attention they deserve.

It has been held that an individual member of a union cannot be cited before the Court for breach of award: if this be so, I think it is a defect, and ought to be remedied as soon as possible.

UNSKILLED LABOUR.

During the year 194 men have found employment on Government and private works through the Department. Very little difficulty has been experienced by men in search of employment in obtaining it; for those willing to work there was plenty in the country districts. The city has been relieved of its surplus labour by work being plentiful on the electric-tramway lines and on the drainage-works now in course of construction.

Large numbers have come from the Old Country and the neighbouring States in search of employment. When calling at this office on arrival, if no employment was offered them they lost no time in moving into the country districts; it is only the undesirable class that hangs about the city.

Taking it altogether, this has been a very prosperous year for the workers in general, and the prospects are exceedingly good for the ensuing year.

In closing my report, I feel it is my duty to thank all employers and employees for the kind courtesy that has been shown me in the execution of my duties. It is a great assistance to any Inspector to feel that he has the confidence of both parties while doing his duty honestly and fearlessly.

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

I have, &c.,

J. B. LINDSAY.

RUSSELL.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Russell, 31st March, 1904.

I have the honour to submit for your information my annual report upon the working of the Factories Act in my district for the year ending the 31st March, 1904.

I find that the Act has been working smoothly—there have been no complaints and no prosecutions.

I am sorry to say that two accidents occurred during the year, details of which have been sent to your office.

Business on the whole has been brisk.

MULLET-CANNING.

The mullet-canning factories at Russell and Purerua have had a limited supply of fish. The weather during the year has been most unpropitious for the factories and the fishermen. The Waikare factory closed down, and the plant was moved to Hokianga and re-erected there.

KAURI-GUM.

The gumfields seem to be a reserve for the settlers and others to fall back on when other spheres of labour are dull. The high prices now ruling for gum have caused an influx of men to the gumfields. Good wages have been made by those digging in the swamps.

FLAX.

The high prices now ruling for dressed flax have given an unusual activity to the industry in this district. No less than four flax-mills have been erected, giving employment to a large number of men.

WHALING.

The shore whaling at Whangaumu seems to be improved upon each season by those engaged studying closely the habits of the whales, and the manner in which they try to avoid the nets set to catch them. Eighteen whales took the nets and were killed by the whalers, but only sixteen were landed. Two of the largest whales sank with the nets on them, and all efforts to recover the whales and the nets proved unsuccessful. This was a great loss to those concerned, because the whales were very fat and would have yielded a considerable quantity of oil, and the carcasses would have made several tons of fish manure; the two nets alone were worth £50.

DAIRYING.

The dairying industry is still in an incipient stage as far as this district is concerned. The butter-factory at Ohaeawai and the creamery at Okaihau are making steady progress. In the near future dairying will be the chief and permanent industry in this district, especially when the large blocks of Native land in and around Kaikohe and Ohaeawai are finally dealt with by the Maori Lands Council, and opened up for settlement. All the land in question is suitable for dairy-farming.

TIMBER.

This industry appears to be improving. The old sawmill at Opuia was pulled down and a large and commodious mill, with modern machinery, erected in its stead. This mill commenced operations recently, and is now giving employment to seventeen hands, nine more than were employed at the old mill. The frequent heavy rains during the year caused freshes in the creeks, bringing out a large number of logs which had been lying in these creeks for nearly two years past. These logs are now in the booms at the mill. The first shipment—117,000 ft. of sawn timber—from this mill was taken to Dunedin by the brigantine "Sarah and Mary" this month. This vessel is to return and take another load for that port.

I have, &c.,

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

WM. PARDY, Inspector.