

WINTON.

SIR,—

Winton, 20th April, 1904.

I have the honour to report that this district continues prosperous. Threshing for the season is about completed, and the yields on an average are very satisfactory; but the same quantity of oats is not being sent forward this season, as a number of farmers are holding owing to the prices being considerably below that of last year.

It will be noticed that there are three factories less registered here this year than was the case last year. This is owing to these having their headquarters in Invercargill, where they register. There will be, I think, a few more flax-mills and one or two sawmills erected here before the close of the present year.

All sawmills and flax-mills have been working full time during the year. Labour continues scarce. During the busy season of the year the same trouble existed as during last year, and good men were not to be had.

There are no unemployed, so to speak, in this district. Any one able and willing to work can always find employment at good remuneration.

Taking the district as a whole, there are signs of prosperity in every part of it.

I have, &c.,

H. P. RASMUSSEN,

Inspector of Factories.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

SIR,—

Police-station, Otautau, 14th April, 1904.

I respectfully beg to submit my annual report for the year ending the 31st March, 1904.

I am pleased to have to report that the Factories Act has worked very well during the year. I have had no trouble whatever in carrying out its provisions. There has been a slight increase in the number of factories registered—viz., 30 this year, as against 28 last year—but, as the schedules show, they are all small, with the exception of flax-mills and sawmills. There have been no overtime permits granted, no accidents have been reported, and no prosecutions for breaches have been necessary.

The Shops and Shop-assistants Act is working well. No complaints have been received from employees or others, and the half-holiday has been strictly observed.

The building trade during the year has been brisk. Carpenters have been fully employed at building dwellinghouses, more particularly farm homesteads. This in itself testifies to the general prosperity prevailing in the district. Painters and others connected with the building trade are kept constantly employed.

Blacksmiths and wheelwrights are kept constantly employed.

Sawmills and flax-mills have been very brisk during the year. The sawmills have not increased in number, but by the improvements in machinery and other facilities they are enabled to treat more material. As far as I can learn, the flax-mills are attracting attention, and the good prices at present ruling are making this a profitable industry.

The dairy industry has been very satisfactory to the milk-suppliers, owing principally to the good season experienced and the unusual amount of good grass.

Judging by the number of rabbits now being sent to the freezing-works, the output will not be nearly so great as for last year. However, this may possibly change in the course of the next few weeks, when the trade will be in full swing.

Unskilled labour: There has been no application for work during the year; local labouring-men do not complain. There is plenty of work, with fair wages, for all genuine working-men. There have been very few swaggers or loafers seen travelling, and very few complaints have been made as to lack of employment.

In conclusion, I may mention that there is a great scarcity of trained capable domestic (female) workers. They can demand almost any wage in reason, and usually get what they ask. Most of the competent workers get employment at hotels. They like the high wages given, and they usually manage to get a few hours of leisure one day a week. Good servants are scarce; some of the girls employed are most crude in their knowledge of cooking and general housework, consequently this class of servant-girl does not remain long in one place.

On the whole, the condition of the people has, at least in this part of the colony, considerably improved, noticeably so during the past couple of years, and, taking the district generally, it will compare favourably with any other part of the colony.

I have, &c.,

P. JOYCE,

Inspector of Factories.

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

INVERCARGILL.

SIR,—

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

I have the honour to submit my report for the year ending as above.

LABOUR.

The period under review has been eminently satisfactory for both skilled and unskilled workers.

The building trade has continued brisk in all branches throughout the year, and there has been no difficulty in tradesmen finding employment; in fact, there has been a steady demand for good tradesmen, especially plasterers. Besides business premises, quite a number of good modern dwellinghouses have been erected, and yet one rarely sees an empty house.