

HAWERA.

SIR,—

Hawera, 31st March, 1906.

I have the honour to submit my annual report upon the working of the factories, Shops and Shop-assistants Act, &c., during the year ending the 31st March, 1906.

There were 100 factories registered, employing 307 males and 54 females, as against 89 factories registered the previous year, employing 323 males and 65 females. The falling-off of the number employed—16 males and 11 females—can be accounted for through the increased use of machinery, as in the newspaper office, where females were employed as compositors, the work is now done by the linotype.

The building trade is dull. Unskilled labour has been in great demand, particularly for harvesting, and could not be obtained. Milkers also were in demand, and, though high wages were offered, could not be got. Several milking-machine plants are being erected to obviate this difficulty. Dairying has been in a flourishing state: two new creameries were built to meet requirements of milk-suppliers.

There have been four accidents in factories, but none of a serious nature.

There have been no prosecutions for infringements of the various Acts, which have been working satisfactorily.

I have, &c.,

J. S. BERNARD,

Inspector of Factories.

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

NEW PLYMOUTH.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, New Plymouth, 21st April, 1906.

I have the honour to forward my report for the year ending the 31st March, 1906, herewith.

The total number of factories registered under the Act during the year was 129, employing 511 males and 86 females, as against the previous year, when the factories numbered 125, employing 482 males and 100 females. This is an increase in the number of factories of 4, and an increase of male hands of 29, but a decrease of 14 females employed. The latter item is, I think, well accounted for by a decrease in the number employed in dressmaking.

The business done at the various factories has not, perhaps, been as brisk as owners would like, and tradesmen generally may be said to have been slack. On the other hand, unskilled labour has been in fair demand, and fully employed.

The butter industry is still the mainstay of Taranaki. The amount produced has increased both in quantity and value. Butter graded and reckoned at 10½d. per lb., amounting to over £490,000, and cheese, valued roughly at £30,000, are about the values of local exports, and may be considered a very satisfactory return.

With such a cash return for produce, it would seem strange that retailers generally complain that money has been scarce, and trade very dull. The coachbuilders, saddlers, and engineers have had but very little new work through their hands; probably land-speculation and the opening-up of new country may in some way account for the condition of affairs.

Unskilled labour has had a fairly good year in connection with the completion of the town improvements. The sewerage, drainage, and water works may be said to be practically completed, and householders are now connecting with the drainage works and sewers, which must add greatly to the health of the town.

The electric light has superseded gas for lighting the town, and is being extended to private houses as well; but the Gas Company is extending its works and offering inducements to consumers to continue the use of gas.

The expectations of a good flow of petroleum at Moturoa have not yet eventuated. Work has been continued during the past year with a certain amount of success, and the prospectors are still very hopeful as to their future success.*

A good deal of work has also been done in connection with the extension of the breakwater, with very satisfactory results, and at a much less cost than was originally estimated.

In the building trade, with the exception of the additions to the post-office, there is very little going on in the way of new building at present.

The relations between employer and employee in the factories seem very satisfactory, no complaints being received from either side. The few accidents that have happened have been slight in themselves, with one exception, and are such as are likely to occur where machinery is used.

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

This Act appears to be giving satisfaction. Permits to work overtime are not often required. There has been one prosecution under this Act for working a shop-assistant after hours, a conviction being obtained.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

The registry offices under this Act have been reduced from four to two during the past year, and I am of opinion that this number is quite equal to local requirements.

I have, &c.,

WALTER H. HADDRELL,

Inspector of Factories.

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

* Realised since date of report.