

the most magnificent bush country in the Dominion, the timber from which only requires adequate means of conveyance, this is an anomaly which cannot exist much longer. At present the cartage of timber from bush to railway is £1 15s. per 1,000 ft., making it impossible to compete with the imported article. I am informed that another six or eight miles of railway will tap these timber regions, thus making a great improvement industrially, also increasing the railway traffic.

Just as the year closes we have news of a strong financial company being floated for the purpose of exploiting the local oil regions. Men who have made a study of this matter are very confident that immense deposits of oil are existent, and only require the necessary capital to develop a great industry.

The Harbour Board, fully alive to the requirements of the district, have just imported a very powerful up-to-date dredge, which will begin working in a few weeks to deepen the river harbour. The Union Steamship Company is only waiting for this to be done to put on a Gisborne-Napier wharf to wharf service, obviating the present cumbersome and uncertain system of tendering passengers and mails.

The Borough Council, also progressive, has obtained the sanction of the ratepayers to a loan of £17,500 for drainage, tramway, and other town improvements. In this respect Gisborne is just starting to construct municipal conveniences and necessities that other towns of a similar size already possess.

Along the coast at Tokomaru Bay a modern and up-to-date freezing-works and wharf-accommodation are being constructed, and will be ready for next season's business. These should also do a great deal towards the general prosperity of the district.

This district appears to have felt the recent depression very keenly, but there has been a marked improvement during the last few months of the year, which was shown most clearly in the various branches of the building trade. At the beginning of the year a large number of men were out of employment, but towards the close all hands were fully employed.

Last season's enormous output of frozen meat will not be obtained this season; although the moist season has produced abundance of feed, it is not of a quality to fatten lambs. The season's output, however, will be a good one. Although the industrial progress has received a slight check during the year, there can be no doubt that the future for the district is distinctly bright and encouraging.

There is a tendency shown towards the amalgamation of businesses in the town. Three of the butchers' establishments are now run by the Gisborne Co-operative Meat Supply Company, and the whole of the bread-baking industry is controlled by two firms.

FACTORIES ACT.

The Factories Act has been administered with very little friction. Five cases have been taken, all against one occupier. In each case a small fine was inflicted. The breaches were not committed in active defiance of the Act, but were due to culpable carelessness.

There are 188 factories registered this year. The number of employees this year is 1,072, as against 1,398 last year.

Sixty-three females and boys worked 1,397 hours overtime during the year. Certificates of fitness to young persons under sixteen to work in factories were issued to 16 boys and 6 females.

There were 41 accidents reported during the year. Most of them fortunately, of a slight nature, and none such as to cause loss of life. The greatest number happened at the two local freezing-works, where the high speed maintained amongst the butchers and other operatives has a tendency to cause cutting of the hands, &c.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT.

There have been very few complaints under this Act. Most of the employers have their hands insured against accidents, and all of them recognise their responsibility to report all accidents as required by the Factories Act.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

Very little difficulty has been found in administering this Act, the shopkeepers apparently being quite willing to close punctually at the hour appointed. Owing to a great number of the fruiterers being under the impression that they could sell tobacconists' goods on five and one-half days a week, and keep their shop open on the statutory half-holiday if they put the tobacconist goods away, it was found necessary to take a few cases against fruiterers for failing to close on the statutory half-holiday. Eight cases were taken altogether under this Act, and a small fine was inflicted in each case. There are 182 shops on the register.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

A number of complaints of stated beaches of awards were received; on investigation most of them proved to be either of a trivial nature or without foundation. Five cases have been taken to Court, and £7 5s. inflicted in fines.

The only occasions on which industrial unrest was shown were amongst the bakers' drivers, the slaughtermen, and the labourers at the Tokomaru Freezing-works construction. Eleven of the bakers' drivers struck, demanding a holiday on Monday, the 3rd January. The affair appears to have been a sudden thought. All hands were discharged, but eight of them were taken on again, and the three others had left the district. As the men were not working under an award, there was no breach of the Act. The slaughtermen's Association made demands on the employers for higher wages and improved conditions, but an agreement was entered into without having recourse to extreme measures. The labourers working for Messrs. Bull Bros., at the freezing-works construction, Tokomaru Bay, struck for a rise of 1s. per day. They were all dismissed, and their places filled in a few days. There was no award controlling the position, so that no breach of the Act was committed.