

MASTERTON.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Masterton, 16th April, 1910.

I have the honour to submit herewith, for your consideration, the annual report on the work of the Department in Masterton district for the year ended 31st March, 1910.

GENERAL.

The period under review has shown a general improvement on the preceding year. Trade and business have revived considerably, but are not yet up to their previous standard. A notable feature of advancement is the marked improvement in the building trade. During the year 53 permits for buildings estimated to cost over £17,000 have been issued by the local Borough Council, and outside of this borough, in the immediate vicinity of Masterton, a larger number of buildings, comprising manufacturing works and superior residences, have been erected.

Skilled labour has been in fair demand during the year, the majority of tradesmen obtaining fairly steady work.

Coach and carriage building has experienced a decided improvement, nearly all tradesmen obtaining full time during the year.

Engineering, ironworking, and agricultural-implement manufacturing have maintained a level, very few tradesmen being out of employment at any time during the period.

Motor-car and cycle repairing have experienced considerable improvement, especially motor work, in consequence of the more universal introduction of motor power throughout this district.

In the wood-working trades, sash and door factories have experienced an increased demand for joinery, &c., causing more regular and increased employment. The furniture trade, however, has remained exceptionally quiet, a number of good tradesmen not being able to obtain full working-time.

With respect to the clothing trades, tailoring, during the latter part of the year, has experienced considerable slackness, the majority of firms finding it necessary to dispense with some regular hands for a time.

In the leather trades, saddlery and harness making has maintained a very steady level, the majority of tradesmen obtaining unbroken employment. Boot making and repairing have been decidedly quiet.

The dairying industry, in the making of both butter and cheese, has experienced an exceptionally good season, which from general and reliable reports may be classed as a record one for this district. The success is greatly due to the mildness of the season, and consequent abundance of feed, allowing the milk-supply to hold up much longer than usual. Factories have also been enlarged, and up-to-date machinery installed, which assisted considerably in handling the extra quantities of milk offering.

A pleasant feature with regard to trade generally in this district is the promotion of some new industries, notably a new freezing-works (the Wellington Meat Company, Limited), which is now being erected on a site connected by rail a few miles from Masterton. The buildings for these works are costing approximately £19,000; the equipment and other requirements are estimated at upwards of £16,000, making a total expenditure, when complete, of about £35,000. Quite a number of men are already employed in pushing along these works vigorously, in order that the works may be in up-to-date working-order for next season. When completed these works will employ a large number of hands.

Another industry revived, and now almost in practical working-order, is the Youla Wool-works, which is a method whereby dirty wool (which otherwise would be almost wasted) is treated, cleaned, and rendered fit for good marketable value. These works when in full operation will employ upwards of 50 men.

Another important industry may be now considered fully established here—viz., the bee industry, which will in all probability open up a profitable trade between this district and Great Britain.

It is to be hoped that the improvement now noticeable will be continued, so that there should be every reason to consider the outlook for the current year as promising.

FACORIES ACT.

There have been 148 factories registered in Masterton during the year. This is only a small increase on the number for last year, but it must be taken into consideration that several factories ceased operations, while new ones have registered. The number employed was 363 males and 90 females, making a total of 453. The amount paid in wages exceeds £41,000.

Certificates of fitness to work in factories were issued to 17 young persons under sixteen years of age—10 males and 7 females.

Warrants to work overtime were issued to 15 employers for 61 women and boys, who worked 1,428 hours' overtime.

There were 8 accidents reported as having occurred in factories during the year. Fortunately none were attended with any serious results, and in no case could the accident be said to have been due to any neglect on the part of the occupier.

There were no prosecutions under this Act during the year.

The majority of factories and workrooms throughout the district are of ample dimensions, well ventilated, and attention is paid to sanitary arrangements.

The working of this Act is of a satisfactory nature, employers now realising what is required with respect to its several clauses.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

During the year 160 returns were furnished by shopkeepers, showing an increase of 27 over the previous period.

The number employed in the various shops was 193 males and 68 females, a total of 261.