

TIMARU.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Timaru, 18th April, 1910.

I have the honour to submit, for your consideration, my report for this district for the year ending 31st March, 1910. Part of this time—until the middle of August, 1909—the administration of the Department's work was in the hands of my predecessor, the late Mr. P. Keddie.

GENERAL.

The year just ended has been fairly prosperous, and there is every indication of continued and increased prosperity; even the building trade, which had been very quiet indeed during the greater part of the year, is now reviving, and there are several good-sized buildings being erected, besides a good many cottages and villas.

The number of building-permits issued by the Borough Council was 124, and the estimated cost of erection of buildings was £57,809, and besides these a large amount was spent in the building of suburban residences outside the borough area.

The wool season was rather above the average—the clip being heavy—and prices were higher than last year, and at the time of writing mutton and lamb are fetching good prices, and the freezing-works are exceptionally busy.

The grain-harvest has not been so good as last year, owing to a long spell of dry weather, but still there has, in most cases, been a fair average crop.

There was a good deal of unemployment during last winter, but there was not the acute distress that was felt in other centres. Had it not been for the drainage-work that has been going on, however, there is no doubt the distress would have been much worse.

The Port of Timaru has during the year ending 31st December, 1909, had a very busy time, and has established a record for business done, the total exports and imports being 173,164 tons. The exports alone have only once been exceeded, and that was in 1901. The direct imports are steadily increasing, and this fact, no doubt, makes extra business for the town and district. The principal exports for the year were as follows: 39,735 bales of wool, 3,446 hides, 333,930 sacks of wheat, 226,988 sacks of oats, 11,061 sacks of barley, 142,966 sacks of flour, 69,565 sacks of bran and sharps, 35,943 sacks of potatoes, 1,863 tons of tallow, and 652,361 carcasses of frozen mutton.

FABRIKES ACT.

The number of factories registered during the year was 235. The factories employed 1,245 persons—viz., 945 males and 300 females.

Two factories enlarged their staffs, and paid additional fees in accordance with the Act.

The factory premises are, on the whole, very well equipped as to space, light, ventilation, and sanitary arrangements, although with regard to the latter there is a good deal of improvement to be desired; but doubtless when the underground drainage is complete, and all the urban factories are connected, the improvements will be effected.

Fifty-seven certificates of fitness to work in factories have been issued to 23 females and 34 boys under sixteen years of age.

The amount of overtime worked in factories during the year by boys under sixteen and females was 6,011 hours.

Forty-seven accidents were reported during the year, none of which terminated fatally, and very few were of a very serious nature, the majority of the accidents being cuts sustained by slaughtermen whilst dressing sheep. The men were usually back at work in the course of a few days.

Three cases for breach of this Act have been taken during the year, and a conviction secured in each instance; and several warnings have been given in cases where slight breaches of the Act have occurred; but on the whole the Act is working very well, and occupiers and managers of factories have carried out with cheerful alacrity any suggestions for alterations or improvements that have been made by me, and in only one or two instances have written requisitions been necessary.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

This Act is working very well. The shopkeepers, generally, have been found ready to keep within the limits of the requirements, and, as a rule, a warning has been quite sufficient to have any matter rectified. I would suggest that extracts from the Shops and Offices Act be printed and circulated amongst shopkeepers for posting up in their shops for the information of both occupiers and assistants.

There were 222 shops registered during the year, employing 448 assistants—viz., 312 males and 136 females.

Overtime permits were issued for 149 shop-assistants of both sexes, who worked 2,515 hours.

Six prosecutions under this Act have been taken before the Court, and convictions secured in 2 cases, the other 4 (against one shopkeeper) being dismissed without prejudice, owing to witnesses leaving the district before the cases came on for hearing.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

There are only 3 of these offices in the district, the same number as last year.

The offices in existence are conducted according to the requirements of the Act, but I understand that, notwithstanding the altered scale of fees reducing that chargeable to workers and raising that to be paid by employers, there is still a practice of charging the employee the full fee allowed by the Act,