

Employment in jam and confectionery factories absorbs a considerable proportion of the local domestic labour that might be available ; but the girls prefer this to domestic work. There is always keen competition by employers for female labour during the fruit and hop season, which has just been completed. A standing order was given to the Department to place women and girls in these industries. Even this demand has not been fully supplied.

Outside of the demand for factory hands, 67 applications have been received for "domestics," the wages offered ranging from 10s. to £1 5s. Thirty-three applications have been received from domestic workers. These have all been suitably placed at good wages.

The work of this branch of the Department is steadily on the increase, employers making full use of the benefits offered. Amongst employees there is an erroneous impression that fees are charged. This is gradually being dispelled, and the branch is becoming better known amongst workers.

I have, &c.,

M. EMERSON.

The Secretary for Labour, Wellington.

Officer in Charge.

CHRISTCHURCH.

SIR,— Department of Labour (Women's Branch), Christchurch, 20th April, 1910.

I have the honour to report the work done in this branch for the year ending 31st March, 1910.

It is nearly two years since the branch was opened, and right from the beginning the business done has, from every point of view, been most satisfactory.

We have no difficulty now with either employers or workers as to the object of the branch being established ; both fully recognise the great boon it is to them, as it has had the effect, in a measure, of centralising the domestic labour-market. Employers now feel that if there is a domestic to be got they have a better chance of getting one at the Department of Labour than elsewhere, and that every precaution is taken to send only the most suitable person. Of course, the best is done to find employment for all ; but some are quite unsuited for the class of employment they seek. Sometimes girls or women will come seeking employment, when they have absolutely no intention of taking it ; others will make engagements, and then calmly ignore them. Employers experience much hardship in this way, as often they are quite without help of any kind, and perhaps have waited a week or two for a particular girl whom they have engaged, only to find, after having waited, that the girl does not keep her engagement or send any kind of apology. Of course, we can erase her name off our books ; but, as domestics are so scarce, she can easily get employment elsewhere (if she wants it), but she will probably go on repeating her previous performance. At the same time, it gives me great pleasure to say we have sent out some of the finest girls it would be possible to meet, who are giving the greatest satisfaction to their employers, and who are themselves happy in the positions that have been found for them.

There is still great difficulty in getting domestics—we cannot nearly meet the demand. It is hard enough to get them in or near town, but it is almost an impossibility to get them for the country. People in the country, especially farmers' wives who have families, and men coming in to meals, are experiencing great hardship from this cause, as they simply cannot get help of any kind. Most of these places would be good homes for girls, as the mistresses help with the work, and the girls would be treated as members of the family ; while the wages range from 12s. 6d. to 15s. for a young mother's-help, and from 15s. to £1 for a general.

Workers express great satisfaction with the branch, as they feel that the greatest care is being taken to find them the most suitable employment under the very best conditions. This is especially the case with new arrivals, a good many of whom are doing splendidly, and have expressed their thanks to the Department for their success.

We have not had many new arrivals lately. Those we have had were found employment, and are doing well. We have had a good many married couples, recent arrivals, whom we have placed on farms, and, although they were quite inexperienced, are doing very well indeed, receiving from £85 to £100 per annum, and all found, and in some cases receiving a £10 bonus.

There is still no difficulty in finding employment for women who are honestly wanting work. There is sometimes a little delay for hotel workers to get suited, in slack times in the hotel trade ; while, on other hand, when the trade is busy we are very often unable to supply the demand. Most of the hotel workers here come from other parts of the Dominion, especially at holiday times, when fares are cheap, and they are usually of a class who are neither suited for, or willing to take, private employment.

We are still receiving applications for any number of girls for factories, shops, laundries, &c., particularly for the tailoring trade, dressmaking, and for preserving-factories, but we are quite unable to supply them. Girls for these branches are almost as hard to get as domestics. We were hoping that the branch would be able to assist employers to obtain this kind of labour, but girls are simply not to be had.