

WHANGAREI.

Trade generally has been satisfactory. The dairying industry has been good, also the fruit industry. The coal-mines have had a fair year, as also the timber industry, sawmilling, &c. Freezing-works are about to start at Whangarei Heads.

HAMILTON.

There has been plenty of employment for those who wanted work, and at times labourers were scarce. The building trade especially has been very brisk.

STRATFORD.

It may safely be said that there have been no unemployed men or women in this district during the year.

This district until recent years consisted of a number of backward bush settlements, without roads worth the name, but now the Borough of Stratford is the centre of a prosperous dairying district.

HAWERA.

Hawera and surrounding district is chiefly engaged in the dairying industry, and during the milking season—namely, from October to May—there is no difficulty in obtaining employment, and during the remainder of the year there are various bushfelling contracts and road-forming jobs that absorb all surplus labour. On the whole, the past year has been a prosperous one for Hawera.

FEILDING.

In regard to factories, there has been a decrease of 2, and in registration of shops a decrease of 1. This state of things is not quite what it should be for a district so financially sound and progressive as this is. On inquiring from leading importers and employers of labour here I find there is a shortage of skilled labour, especially in the dressmaking and tailoring branches, and employers have been unable to procure sufficient for their trades; hence they have imported during last year one-third more of goods made in England than ever before, such as ladies' jackets, ready-made costumes, and men's clothing. During the coming season it is anticipated that fully one-half of the articles named will be imported for sale here, it being found cheaper to pay duty on such articles than to have them made here. The fact is, skilled labour in these branches is not procurable.

There have been no unemployed here during the past year, and all local men have been well employed. Building has been very brisk. There seems to be always a demand for boys on farms. I believe this may be accounted for by the fact that the boys of small farmers will not remain at home, especially on dairy farms, and get away the first opportunity. It may seem strange that many of these boys have a desire for the sea and for mechanical engineering. Again, boys in country towns will not go farming or milking, but prefer to get to a city as early as possible. A proper solution of this would, I think, be found if the parents paid their boys a fair and reasonable wage, and encouraged them to put it into the Post-Office Savings-Bank. Most lads desire to be earning a wage, and object to working for fathers and get little or no money.

The prospects for the coming winter in this district are good. I feel sure all local men will, as in the past, find plenty of work locally, and not have to seek it afar. Still, I can hold out no encouragement for men from outside coming here, there being no public work in progress, nor any likelihood of any being undertaken.

WESTPORT.

During the past year the trade of this district has been good, and fully up to the preceding year's standard, and in some instances has exceeded it.

The district still maintains its reputation for providing employment for the whole of its population, which has increased some 2,500 during the last four years; also, work has been and is still provided for a number of travelling population. Employment at present is plentiful, and openings for good workers are to be had at the railway contracts in the Buller Gorge. There is every probability of this state of affairs continuing during the coming winter, and there is not much prospect of an "unemployed" outcry for some time to come.

There were two prosecutions and convictions—one for failing to give holiday to a girl, and one for not keeping a time and wages book.