

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

Four licenses have been issued during the year, 2 new ones and 2 renewals. The Act appears to be well observed by the registry-office keepers. A few complaints have, however, been received, owing to employers deducting from the worker's wages the fees which should have been paid by themselves. The amounts were refunded when the irregularity was pointed out to the employers concerned.

WORKERS' DWELLINGS ACT.

Thirteen dwellings have been erected during the past year, 6 in the Suburb of Wanganui East and 7 at Gonville. The dwellings have recently been completed and taken over by the buyers.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT.

Many inquiries have been made by workers entitled to compensation as to the mode of procedure in making their claims, and also as to the amount due to them. In all the cases brought under my notice the compensation due to the worker has been readily paid by the insurance companies.

SCAFFOLDING INSPECTION ACT.

As Inspector of Scaffolding I have paid visits to all buildings in course of erection; and in the course of those duties I have visited Hawera, Patea, New Plymouth, Taihape, and Marton (see separate report).

I have, &c.,

HENRY E. MOSTON,

Inspector of Factories.

The Secretary of Labour and Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

PALMERSTON NORTH.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Palmerston North, 15th April, 1913.

I have the honour to present to you my annual report upon matters receiving the attention of the Palmerston North district office of the Department during the year ending 31st March, 1913.

The year has been a very satisfactory one to both employers and employed. Trade generally has been even more encouraging than during the preceding year, retailers being specially congratulatory upon the business done. Particularly during the Christmas season was this noticeable, several storekeepers declaring that their transactions were more numerous and more profitable than during any previous season within their knowledge. The outlook is still very promising.

Outside employment has been fairly plentiful, thanks to the buoyancy of the money-market and the weather-conditions combined. Several shops, offices, banks, and dwellings have been erected during the year, while other large premises are in course of construction. These, with several anticipated alterations to buildings during the ensuing year, lead one to believe that the labour-market will be also satisfactory for 1913.

Building permits to the number of 31, and of the value of £71,128, were granted during the year.

The Municipal Corporation paid £9,906 1s. 8d. in wages during the year, while some £10,776 18s. 11d. was spent in public works, and £7,000 more is already allocated for the current year. Skilled labour generally has been sufficient to supply the demand. Carpenters have, however, been badly wanted, and in some instances have been advertised for all over the Dominion without success. One employer has paid as much as 1s. 8d. per hour to good men. Tailors, tailoresses, and dress-makers have also been badly wanted, and in one or two cases are still required.

With regard to unskilled labour, however, there have been a few more unemployed applicants lately than during the previous year. The suggestion that these men will not go out of the towns, and that plenty of work is waiting for them in the country, is met with the statement—and there is a large amount of truth in it—that the work on the country farms is not continuous, and that the jobs are so far apart. Until the land is more closely settled this will be the difficulty for some years to come.

If the work could be so arranged among the farmers so that continuous employment of labourers could be guaranteed for a term, work could be found for all our men, and those men now frequenting the towns might be induced to remain in the country. Men will not risk going into the country to find only temporary employment awaiting them, with the probability of a tramp for miles before they can pick up other work. 150 persons with 69 others depending upon them have been assisted at this office with railway tickets at reduced fares to places of employment. All were sent to private employment with the exception of one man who was sent to public works. The sum of £84 16s. 9d. was remitted for fares to the Railway Department, of which £21 4s. 2d. is defrayed by the Labour Department. Of the balance, all but £2 7s. 11d. has been refunded by the workers concerned, and repayment of this small outstanding amount is guaranteed.

FLAX-MILLING.

Probably the most important industry affecting the Manawatu district is flax-milling. The following opinions have been expressed by both employers and workers, and may therefore be said to be a true report on the state of that industry. The hemp-markets throughout the world have seen a substantial increase in prices since this time last year. For this reason the industry in this district as well as in other parts of New Zealand has shown renewed activity, and many mills that have not worked during the recent depression have again, during the season, been in active