

Factories Act.—Very little difficulty has been experienced in the administration of the Act; employers and workers alike show a commendable desire to comply with the same. There have been but three prosecutions under the Act, conviction being recorded in each case.

The number of accidents reported was fifteen—none of a very serious nature.

Shops and Offices Act.—The administration of this Act calls for no special comment. Its various provisions are generally well observed. During the year ten informations were laid for breaches of the Act.

Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act.—The work in connection with the administration of this Act and the awards made thereunder has increased considerably. Thirty-five complaints of breaches were received. Twenty-three of these were found on inquiry to be either unfounded or of such a nature that the Department was able to adjust matters without taking action. Ten cases were taken before the Court, and a penalty was inflicted in each case.

Men's Employment Branch.—The work in this branch of the Department shows a considerable increase over the previous year. A large number of youths could have been placed at the commencement of the milking season had they been available, but although wages ranging from 15s. to £1 10s. per week and found were offering, the majority of applicants preferred to stay in the town.

WANGANUI.

The Inspector (Mr. H. Moston) reports:—

General.—The year under review has been prosperous from both the workers' and the employers' point of view. The effects of the industrial troubles during the latter part of 1913 were not so apparent here as in other parts of the Dominion.

The dairying industry (despite the check received early in the season owing to the strike) has on the whole had one of the most successful seasons experienced for some years. The meat-freezing industry, although retarded somewhat by the late and protracted shearing, has been very satisfactory throughout the season. The quantities of stock treated up to the end of March show an increase in all classes as compared with last season. The building trades have been very busy throughout the year. All classes of skilled men in these trades have been well employed.

I have again to call attention to the difficulty which exists in getting apprentices for the skilled trades. In every trade (with the exception of the motor-engineering trade) there is a dearth of apprentices. If a high standard of efficiency is to be maintained in our trades it would appear that some inducement will have to be offered to boys to take up the trades.

Factories Act.—Little or no difficulty has been experienced in the administration of this Act, it having been found necessary to prosecute only three employers for breaches. In each case a conviction was recorded and a penalty imposed.

Thirty accidents were reported during the year: the most serious occurred in the case of an employee who fell down the well-hole of a lift a distance of 30 ft., fracturing his leg in two places and sustaining severe internal injuries.

Shops and Offices Act.—All the shops in this district have been visited, and the Act generally has been well observed. Five employers were prosecuted for breaches of this Act; in all cases convictions were recorded.

Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act.—107 complaints of breaches of awards were received and investigated. In fourteen cases applications were made for penalties for breaches of the awards. One case was withdrawn, and convictions were obtained in the others.

Men's Employment Branch.—Throughout the year there has been very little difficulty in finding employment for those calling at the office in search of it. Skilled men in all trades were invariably readily placed.

PALMERSTON NORTH.

The Inspector (Mr. W. J. Culver) reports:—

General.—A dislocation of business was threatened as a result of the strikes, but happily Palmerston North suffered little or nothing by the disputes. The busiest outside trade was the building trade, while of the factory trades the most active were those of tailoring, dressmaking, and printing. Owing to the low prices ruling for fibre, the exceptionally wet season, and a scarcity of green leaf the flax-mills in the district have not been working to their full capacity.

Factories Act.—All the factories within the Borough of Palmerston North have been visited during the year, and all were found to be in a satisfactory condition as regards sanitary and other requirements.

Forty accidents occurred, none of which was of a serious character. The Department's assistance in the settlement of claims for compensation was invited in eight cases, and claims amounting to £383 9s. 8d. were settled as approved.

Shops and Offices Act.—Both shops and hotels have been very satisfactorily conducted, in that there has been no complaint as to non-compliance with the requirements of the Act. Seating-accommodation for female assistants is now provided in all shops where they are employed, and has been availed of by employees generally.

I would again draw attention to the anomaly existing between the Factories Act and the Shops and Offices Act in regard to the employment of young persons under sixteen years of age. Under the Factories Act no such young person may work in a factory except under a special permit issued by the Inspector, who, except in exceptional circumstances, must be satisfied that the applicant has passed the Fourth Standard, and is not less than fourteen years of age. Under the Shops and Offices Act, however, there are no such restrictions, and consequently a boy or girl of any age and without educational qualifications may, unless a Truant Inspector under the Education Act intervenes, work in a shop without hindrance.