

They also complain in having to give a half-holiday when there has been public holidays during the week.

With regard to bakehouses, every attention has been paid to the 41st clause of the Act, and the renovation regularly made.

With regard to the 51st clause of the Act, where overtime is allowed, I would suggest that, if the number of hours allowed were specified as so many hours per year—not more than three hours per day—the amendment would be more workable, as in some instances the employers only require their hands for one hour over their regular time.

THE SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

This Act has been fairly carried out, the assistants getting their regular holidays. There have not been any prosecutions under this Act during the year; neither have I received any complaints from the assistants.

E. Tregear, Esq., Wellington.

I have, &c.,

H. HALLETT, Inspector of Factories.

ASHBURTON.

SIR,—

Ashburton, 2nd May, 1894.

There has been neither increase nor decrease in factories here during the last twelve months. There are only two factories in the ordinary sense of the word—namely, the woollen factory and Rollitt's flour-mill. The woollen factory has not been employed full time since Christmas, as business is slack; but the flour-mill has been going as usual. Both are remarkably well conducted, and keep to the letter of the law. All the other places are only shops for work, and are fairly well conducted. I do not think there is any glaring breach of the law, and I am sure there is no "sweating" here. Business has been very dull in all trades, excepting the building trade, which was pretty brisk for a while, but is now quite stagnant. This being essentially a wheat- and sheep-growing locality there is no employment for labour except during shearing and harvest, and much less area is put under crop this year than last year, and even the winter ploughing is curtailed. Landowners will only spend as little money as possible, and will leave the land for grass; farmers are disheartened at the bad harvest and poor prices, and numerous farms are in the market for sale.

S. MOLLER, Inspector of Factories.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

DUNEDIN.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Dunedin, 21st May, 1894.

In reply to your telegram *re* annual report, I beg to state that since the 1st June, 1893, the number that has been sent through this office to be employed on public works and survey is 303, and the number drafted to private employment is 107, or equal to a total of 410, including wives and children.

Last year those sent to private employment were 411, and to public works and survey 325, making a total of 736, or, in other words, 326 more than have been employed throughout this year by the Labour Department here. There is one notable feature in the above, and that is the small amount of private demand for labour in comparison with the previous year. As I pointed out formerly, this in a great measure arises from the Victorian crisis causing much distress, and, connected with a corresponding want of employment over there, inducing a large number to seek relief here, and distributing themselves over the country districts, supplying farmers and others with their labour. But I think the principal cause is the low price of grain, impoverishing the farmer to such an extent that he cannot afford to employ the same amount of labour as formerly.

The men here, on the whole, have been reasonably quiet during the year. They are beginning to appreciate the fact that the Government are striving their utmost to attend to their interest in the only possible way in which it can be done at present.

With regard to the Catlin's district, there has been more or less suffering amongst the struggling settlers, whose finances are too limited to do much in the way of improving their holdings, and who rely principally on the road- and railway-works as the chief means of subsistence; but after the railway is complete to Vial's Hotel their trouble will be considerably lessened, as they will be able to fall back on their ground, and increase their means of living, by getting their timber and other produce into the Dunedin market at less than one-half of the cost they are paying at present.

Business, on the whole, is on the ascending line. There has been throughout the year a vast increase in the building trade, and that always appears to me to be a sure sign of improvement in trade generally.

E. Tregear, Esq.,
Secretary, Department of Labour, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

WM. FARNIE,
Agent, Labour Department.

FACTORIES.

The continued illness of Mr. T. K. Weldon, the late Inspector of Factories, at the time when the local report was required, prevented any return from Dunedin being inserted this year.