

LABOUR.

Unskilled labour: The supply and demand of labour has fluctuated considerably during the year. During the first nine months employment was plentiful for both skilled and unskilled labour, but in the remaining months of the period work became scarcer, whilst the applicants increased in number. On the whole, however, the year was a fairly prosperous one for all classes of labour. During the year there were 464 applications for employment registered—namely, 165 married and 299 single men, having 628 dependants. During the same period 174 persons were provided with employment on the several public works in the district, and a number of others were assisted towards finding private employment.

The timber industry, one of our most important industries, is making rapid progress in its development; but it should be borne in mind that forests are not inexhaustible, and that with the increased expansion our resources are becoming proportionately less. Therefore some steps should be taken to prevent the reckless waste of much useful timber by sawmillers and bush-workers. A large portion of this waste might be utilised with profit in the manufacture of paper, a purpose for which some of our soft woods are highly suitable. There are also, amongst the waste timber, trees and shrubs possessing medicinal and tanning properties, that might with a little ingenuity and outlay be made a beneficial and lucrative industry.

The flax-milling industry, although yet in its infancy, should soon rank as one of the most productive and profitable industries of the West Coast. There are thousands of acres of land admirably adapted for the flax-cultivation that will amply remunerate the cultivator of one of our most useful indigenous plants and resources.

EXPORTS.

The exports from the Port of Greymouth for the year ending the 31st March, 1908, were as follows: Timber, 45,940,268 ft.; sleepers, 70,710; coal, 349,425 tons; coke, 2,329 tons; bricks, 1,370 tons; flax, 2,598 bales; wool, 888 bales; gold, 73,775 oz. 14 dwt. 20 gr. There has been a large increase in every commodity over last year, except in sleepers and gold.

SHIPPING.

The number and tonnage of vessels that visited the port for the year ending 31st March, 1908, were as follows: Steamers, 750, of 344,737 tons; sailing-vessels, 41, of 8,285 tons.

In conclusion, I desire to thank all parties with whom I came in contact for the uniform courtesy shown me whilst carrying out my sundry duties.

I have, &c.,

JAMES ISDELL,

Inspector of Factories.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

HOKITIKA.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Police-station, Hokitika, 30th April, 1908.

I have the honour to forward my annual report for year ended 31st March, 1908.

While there has been nothing to mark special development during the past twelve months, yet, generally speaking, the district has maintained a quiet steady prosperity.

In the course of the next few months the Ross Goldfields Company will be working the Ross Flat by electrical power, to be generated by water-power derived from Lake Kanieri, near Hokitika. There can be no doubt that the carrying-out of this scheme will add very materially to the welfare of the whole of this district.

A few months also will see the Hokitika-Ross Railway inspected. This will be a matter of importance to both Hokitika and Ross, as it will enable the machinery needed for the gold-mining operations in Ross to be carried there direct by rail instead of carting it for miles by a long roundabout road. It will also enable those people who graze cows in Ross to transmit milk to within a mile of the Arahura Dairy-factory, and I have no doubt it will lead to the clearing of land and the increase of cattle-grazing in and around Ross.

Respecting the laws governing factories and shops, I have much pleasure in stating that they have been well complied with, both employers and employees being desirous that the provisions of these Acts should be strictly observed.

Fifty-six factories and 90 shops were registered during the year.

I have, &c.,

WM. FOLLEY,

Inspector of Factories.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

ASHBURTON.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Ashburton, 6th April, 1908.

I have the honour to forward my annual report for the year ending the 31st of March, 1908.

There has not been a very marked difference in the volume of trade done by shopkeepers during the year, although keen competition from outside must have the effect of injuring trade to some extent. However, they say the business done will compare very favourably with last year. In consequence of the very hot weather and grass-fires the work at the local freezing-works has been of a very unsatisfactory character, the butchers in some cases only having about 10 or 12 sheep each. The woollen-factory continues busy with the hands employed at the present time, and has worked a considerable amount of overtime.