

haymaking, &c. The bush-felling, which takes place during the winter months, absorbs our surplus applications for employment.

The public works above spoken of have been carried on under a new system designed to supersede the contracting middleman, by whom very large profits were formerly made, inducing a constant tendency towards reduction of wages. The new system is that of constructing roads and railways by what are called co-operative contracts. In these, a small party of men, generally six in number, is allotted a certain section or length of road or line; one of them is elected a "ganger" and trustee for the others, to deal for them with the Government. The Government Engineer states a price for the portion of work, and, as this is done by an unprejudiced officer, it is generally accepted without murmur by the men. The results usually have been very satisfactory. Progress payments are made fortnightly, for the benefit of the men's families, and the whole amount is paid up in cash on the work being passed by the Engineer. It is the intention of the Government to provide small farms of ten or fifteen acres each, for these workmen, in village settlements, so that they may be induced to make their homes in country districts, and thus in some degree to neutralise the centralising tendency of modern industrial life.

It has been found that the information gathered and disseminated by the Bureau has been of great service to those who have not become destitute nor applied for free passages. Much time and money were formerly spent by those seeking employment wandering through districts already glutted with workmen, while in other unknown places labour was in demand. That has now been altered, and undoubtedly to the gain of both employer and employed.

Other attempts are being made by the Bureau for the benefit of the deserving workmen needing employment. The system by which Cook's tourists enjoyed certain advantages of reduced prices, &c., when journeying for pleasure, has been partially applied to others travelling for necessity. This is done by the issue to the Bureau Agents of labour coupons, which are given in small quantities to unemployed in country districts, and which enable the bearer to get food, bed, &c., in certain hotels and lodging-houses at reduced rates. Employment being obtained, the coupons are no longer allowed to be used, but full prices are charged.

EXTENSION OF THE BUREAU WORK.

It has been found by the experience gained during the first year of action that further powers are needed before this department can be worked in a manner likely to fulfil its best functions. Returns asked for by circular are either not made at all, are filled-in carelessly, or are accompanied by requests that they be treated as confidential. It is impossible that industrial information of a valuable character can be collected and arranged statistically unless two important arrangements can be made—First, that the officers of the department should be empowered to demand information, and obtain it, if necessary, by legal enforcement; second, that an agent or agents should visit every part of the colony, ascertaining personally the rates of wages, cost of living, cost of production, ages of workers, &c. The cost of wages, as supplied by employers, is found sometimes to differ very considerably from the rates supplied by those who receive the wages. Nor is such statistical information as is required a mere matter of idle curiosity, or to provide sheets of dead figures. No one can calculate the loss Great Britain has sustained from her dilatoriness in instituting some organized form of collecting her industrial information. Select Committees and Labour Commissions sit in the dark, unfurnished with any reliable information as to wages, cost of production, cost of necessities of life, &c.; and no statesman can properly calculate the effect of tariffs or taxation without duly authenticated statistics on which to rely; fiscal policies in such cases are mere matters of assertion concerning blind forces. While Britain spends millions on petty wars, a few thousands a year are grudged to the officer and clerks who, attached to the Board of Trade, attempt to provide such poor information as that which can be secured by circulars issued by an over-worked department. In bright contrast stands the Labour Department of the United States. There (with State Bureaus in Maine, New York, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Tennessee, Maryland, Massachusetts, Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas, Dakota, Nebraska, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, New Mexico, and California), a Department of Labour for the whole country has been instituted, the functions of which become more valuable and more important with the passing of each year. No one can look on the mass of information tabulated and presented by Colonel Carrol Wright, the Commissioner of Labour, without being convinced of the national importance of his annual report, its immense value as a work of reference to statesmen, and its general usefulness to those engaged in industrial pursuits. Canada, too, has its Bureau of Industries at Ontario, and gathers together much valuable information, although it deals more with agricultural than with industrial labour. Switzerland, Germany, and Belgium have recognised the vast economic value of such inquiries, and have established Departments of Labour. That extended powers must be granted to the New Zealand Bureau is certain, if it is to prove its efficiency by gathering industrial statistics.

STATE FARMS.

The Government has intimated its intention to initiate the experiment of establishing a few State farms in New Zealand. The leading idea in this scheme is to provide places of refuge and instruction for those persons who, not being able to succeed in getting employment in their own trades in towns, may be encouraged to undertake work in the rural districts, and be prepared to engage in it. A State farm is to comprise about 1,000 acres of land fit for agricultural purposes, and to this farm will be drafted the surplus workmen of the towns. Many of the "unemployed" applying at the Labour Bureau are clerks, stewards, firemen, tailors, printers, &c., who, crowded out of their regular employments, are in a state of destitution; these being in addition to a large body of general labourers who, though used to the pick and shovel, have no knowledge of work upon farm or station. All these could be sent with advantage to an institution where, in return for food and shelter, and perhaps some small wage, they could assist in the general work of a farm, and make