

1900.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR

(REPORT OF THE).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

The SECRETARY, Department of Labour, to the Hon. the MINISTER of LABOUR.
SIR,— Department of Labour, Wellington, 1st June, 1900.
I have the honour to present herewith the ninth annual report of this department. It covers the late financial year—viz., from the 1st April, 1899, to the 31st March, 1900.

I have, &c.,
The Right Hon. R. J. Seddon, Minister of Labour. EDWARD TREGGAR, Secretary.

LABOUR.

THE past year has been generally one of great prosperity to the workers of New Zealand. Labour has been in unusual demand, a demand that has in some districts exceeded the supply. A very large area was laid down in cereal crops, and, as an abundant harvest followed, agricultural employers needed many hands, not only for the farm, but for transport purposes. Millions of bushels of wheat are still awaiting transit to the world's markets. The skilled trades have especially been busy, with one exception, that of boot-manufacture, which appears to be steadily losing ground so far as the employment of hands is concerned, artisans being replaced by machinery ever moving forward towards automatic perfection. Engineers have had their factories in full swing, especially in Dunedin, owing to the enormous demand for engines, boilers, and other machinery for the new gold-dredges. The gold-dredging industry has become so inflated by the investment of nearly two and a half millions of capital that orders for machinery are being placed outside the colony. Carpenters, shipwrights, blacksmiths, &c., are in great request for the construction of the dredge-pontoons, not only in Otago, but on the West Coast rivers. The building trades have been busy all over the colony; in Christchurch the demand for cabinetmakers far exceeded supply. In many tanneries, woollen-mills, tailoring, clothing, and dressmaking establishments more orders were received than could be executed, even when the maximum over-time was allowed to be worked.

Unskilled labour has also been prosperous during the year, and has been well employed (speaking generally) all over the colony. There have been comparatively few applications to Government officers from men in absolute distress from want of work, and the request for employment was soon satisfied in deserving cases. The number of men passed through the books of this department as obtaining employment was 2147, having 4,471 dependents. These cannot altogether be classed as "unemployed," because all manual workers (whether skilled artisans or labourers) employed by Government are entered in the record of the Labour Department, and are included in the above-mentioned figures.

FACTORIES.

The manufactures of New Zealand have this year absorbed some 3,633 persons in their production in advance of those working thereon in the previous year. The total number of those employed in factories (excluding 1,464 in Government railway workshops) is 48,938. The rise in numbers is best marked by the following table showing annual returns for the last six years:—

						Factory-workers.	Increase.
1895	...	...	...	...	...	29,879	...
1896	...	...	...	...	...	32,387	2,508
1897	...	...	...	...	...	36,918	4,531
1898	...	...	...	...	...	39,672	2,754
1899	...	...	...	...	...	45,305	5,633
1900	...	...	...	...	...	48,938	3,633
Total						...	19,059

This shows an increase in five years of 19,059 persons engaged in factories, and for whom fees have been paid to the Government.