

the department still goes on increasing, the latest addition being that of the registration-work under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, the Workers' Compensation Act, &c. In addition to the ordinary correspondence, the Frisco and other foreign mails bring us piles of letters from the United States, Canada, England, the Continent, and even from far-off Japan, Egypt, and other places, requesting information as to the laws affecting labour, land, taxation, &c., in force in the colony. Almost every day new-comers arrive, either by direct lines or *via* the Australian Colonies, and use the office as a bureau of information; in fact, we are fast becoming an up-to-date intelligence department. The publication of the monthly Journal entails a considerable amount of labour, but the results are satisfactory, as we get innumerable letters from all parts of the world commending it for the information contained therein.

A measure of praise is due to the Wellington office staff for their strict attention to their duties and their willingness at all times to do a little extra when required.

I have to thank employers, managers, and others in charge of factories, workrooms, mills, &c., also employes all over the colony, for their invariable courtesy and kindness shown me when visiting their premises.

The following shows the number of letters that have been sent out during the past year from the Head Office and its branches: Auckland, 564; Wellington, 3,349; Wanganui, 338; Christchurch, 323; Dunedin, 711; Invercargill, 548: total, 5,833. This does not include circular letters and telegrams.

I have, &c.,

JAMES MACKAY, Chief Clerk.

REPORTS OF LOCAL INSPECTORS OF FACTORIES AND AGENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR.

AUCKLAND.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Auckland, 30th March, 1901.

I beg to forward for your information my annual report on the working of this department for the past year.

LABOUR.

During the year 851 men have been assisted to work, of whom 368 were married, with 1,396 persons dependent on them, and 483 single. Of these, 754 were sent to Government works and ninety-seven to private works. Applications from skilled workers were almost nil. Work in nearly all cases was found for unskilled labourers; but recently there appears to have been an influx caused by reports that Government work was plentiful. A number of these arrivals are unsuitable for country work—especially co-operative labour, where each has to do a fair share. Very few will entertain any proposition for farm labour.

FACTORIES ACT.

The provisions of this Act, such as sanitary and other general arrangements, have been carried out in a very satisfactory manner, resulting in a very great improvement in the condition of workrooms, new places having been erected and old ones improved. A consolidating and concise Act is very much required; and I trust, from reports submitted to you by all the Inspectors, you will endeavour to have one passed.

This year 908 factories have been registered in this district, employing 8,714 hands—namely, 6,238 males and 2,476 females—being an increase on last year of thirty-nine factories and 845 persons. 395 permits have been issued to young persons under the age of sixteen years—boys, 200; girls, 195.

Permission to work overtime has been granted to 1,407 persons (102 males and 1,305 females) to work 25,354 hours—namely, males, 1,457 hours; and females, 23,897. This overtime work is on the increase, and I think, in certain instances, it is impossible to do without it, but there should be a more liberal scale of payment. Say a girl works three hours at 6d. an hour, it will cost her 6d. for tea in many cases, 6d. for fare home—she is thus left with 6d. for her three hours' night-work.

There were thirty-two accidents reported and investigated. The majority of them were of a very slight nature, but there were others more serious, such as the loss of fingers and other injuries caused by machinery. In nearly all instances the injuries were accidental or caused by the thoughtlessness of the injured ones unnecessarily placing themselves in danger. Where I considered it otherwise the case was tested, and through the vague construction of the Act, found to be running in conjunction with another Act carried out by different officers, diversity of opinion existed which caused a nullity.

Twenty-eight charges under the Factories Act were preferred against six owners. Twenty-seven convictions were recorded, and one case dismissed.

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

The provisions of this Act have been carried out as well as can possibly be expected under existing circumstances. Like the Factories Act, there are so many amendments that it is very necessary that a consolidating Act should be framed. As to the numerous defects in the present Act, I think that as you are in possession of them from repeated reports from myself and colleagues it is needless for me to reiterate them; suffice to say that at present it does not give the protection