

Attention is called to the diagram at the end of this report showing the increases of workers in the main industries of the colony during the last eight years.

The co-operative works by which our railways and roads are constructed averaged some three thousand men in their operations. A larger majority of these were single men than was the case in former years, thus showing that heads of families were better provided for elsewhere than in the past, as married men have always received preference in obtaining situations through the Department of Labour. In Wellington 518 men were sent to private employment, and only 346 to Government works. The number forwarded by the Department throughout the colony was 2,860, being considerably fewer than that of last year. Of these, 777 were married and had 3,085 dependants. The total number of those assisted since 1891 (the year the Department commenced operations) is 35,242, having 73,855 dependants, amounting together to 109,097 persons to whom the Department has been of direct service. Many of the applicants only require instructions as to localities in which their abilities can best be utilised, they not being in need of transport or other assistance. Such applicants do not appear on the books of the Department nor in the enumeration of those forwarded to work.

NUMBER OF MEN ASSISTED BY THE DEPARTMENT SINCE INSTITUTION TO DATE.

Year.	Total.	Married.	Single.	Dependants.	Private Work.	Government Work.
1891-92	2,593	1,054	1,539	4,729	1,730	863
1892-93	3,874	1,808	2,066	7,802	2,518	1,356
1893-94	3,341	1,836	1,505	7,942	1,019	2,322
1894-95	3,030	2,007	1,023	8,883	894	2,136
1895-96	2,871	1,880	991	8,424	708	2,163
1896-97	1,718	1,084	634	4,719	652	1,066
1897-98	2,035	1,163	872	4,928	544	1,491
1898-99	2,115	1,178	937	4,759	638	1,477
1899-1900	2,147	1,115	1,032	4,471	486	1,661
1900-1	3,124	1,326	1,798	5,432	519	2,605
1901-2	1,830	713	1,117	2,747	396	1,434
1902-3	3,704	1,492	2,212	5,934	580	3,124
1903-4	2,860	777	2,083	3,085	1,216	1,644
	35,242	17,433	17,809	73,855	11,900	23,342

THE FACTORIES ACT.

Throughout the whole colony the Act has worked well. There has been little friction, and the very large majority of employers do their best to keep within the provisions of the Act. Wherever new buildings are erected solicitude is shown to have the latest improvements and conveniences supplied. The machinery is better guarded, the ventilation and sanitation are more perfect, and more attention is given to the health and comfort of the employees than before the Act reached its present state of efficiency. It is generally the fact of new businesses occupying old buildings thoroughly unfitted for factory purposes, but built as offices, shops, or residences, which makes interference on the part of Inspectors necessary so far as the habitat of the industry is concerned.

Heavy fines have been inflicted on some factory-owners for non-payment of wages, but these penalties have usually been decreed by the Court of Arbitration for breach of its award, not by a Magistrate for violation of the Factories Act. Details of such fines, &c., will be found on another page of this report.

The question of overtime and its limitation is still full of difficulties. The industrial unions of male workers are generally strong enough to see that their members are not tasked beyond their strength by protracted hours, but non-unionists (especially women) have to be very carefully watched over by the Department of Labour. The following short table shows the overtime worked last year (excluding that of men) in the four chief towns in the colony:—

Auckland ...	1,466	women and young persons worked	45,751	hours' overtime.
Wellington ...	1,361	"	"	"
Christchurch	2,218	"	"	"
Dunedin ...	1,487	"	"	"
	6,532		194,212	