

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

AUCKLAND.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Auckland, 9th April, 1906.

I have the honour to forward for your information my annual report on the working of the various branches of this Department for the year ending the 31st March.

LABOUR.

Owing to the general prosperity, and work being fairly plentiful, the record for the year has been good.

During the year 1,877 men have been forwarded to employment—594 to private and 1,283 to Government works. Of these, 1,332 were single and 545 married, with 1,807 dependants. Besides the above number, 108 men were assisted on more than one occasion, and 79 wives (with 83 children) were assisted to join their husbands where they had secured work, costs of fares being subsequently remitted.

Throughout the year a good supply of labour has been available, and suitable workmen in good demand. This was especially applicable to country work—bushfelling, navvying, draining, farming, &c. With the exception of ironworkers—in which industry work has lately been very slack, and also, although to a less extent, in boat and ship building—local tradesmen have had good employment. There has been a continual influx from many countries of applicants for unskilled labour, and robust and efficient workers appear to have soon found a share of what was offering. There have been a number of whom it would have probably been better for themselves and the colony had they remained at their former vocations. This has particular reference to men hoping to find easy billets about town, and who are, in many instances, physically unable to satisfactorily turn their hands to work that requires energy and strength. It should also be taken into consideration by intending immigrants that the sphere in any one trade is of a limited nature.

FACTORIES.

For the year, 1,280 factories, employing 11,157 hands—viz., 8,057 males and 3,100 females—were registered, an increase on last year of 51 factories and 256 employees. The number of hands employed shows an increase of 309 males, but a decrease of 53 females. This slight decrease of female workers will no doubt be augmented as the season advances, as their class of work fluctuates with the seasons.

Four hundred and fifty-six permits to work in factories were granted to young persons under sixteen years of age—boys, 259; girls, 197. Of the boys 99 had passed Standard IV in school education, 72 Standard V, and 88 Standard VI; and of the girls 79 had passed Standard IV, 61 Standard V, and 57 Standard VI.

89,309 hours' overtime were worked by 2,248 persons. Of these, warrants were issued to 100 boys under sixteen years of age, and 1,585 females, who worked a total of 46,046 hours; and returns sent into this office show that 563 males over sixteen years of age worked a total of 43,263 hours. (See table.) This shows a considerable increase upon the total overtime worked in the previous year, and is chiefly attributable to the fact of occupiers more generally complying with the regulation requiring the return to be sent in. In the dressmaking and clothing trades there has been a noticeable decline in the overtime worked by females, but owing to the scarcity of women-workers in the bootmaking and laundry industries extra overtime was worked in these two branches of industry. As the Arbitration Court awards in general make provision for overtime, and the Factory Act scale of payment is on a fairly liberal basis, and taking into consideration the general conditions under which factory-work is carried out, I do not think that employees suffer or are adverse to the present system of overtime; in fact they appear anxious to get it, and I am certain that employers only resort to overtime when it cannot possibly be avoided. It may be said that such overtime keeps other applicants out of work, but, so far, I do not think that such is the case, as at certain seasons of the year when extra work is required all available hands are generally employed, and at or on the particular nights on which overtime is required it would be an utter impossibility for an employer to call in suitable extra hands to take up the work at the stage left off by the regular employees.

One hundred and seventy-one accidents were reported, full inquiries were instituted, and in each case, all parties concerned advised in respect to compensation in terms of the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act. Two were fatal. A carter, not, however, an employee at the factory, was taking a short-cut across the goods lift when it was ascending, and he was jammed against the frame and killed. The other also occurred on a goods-lift—a message-boy using same to ascend to another story in factory got his head crushed. In connection with the accidents on goods-lifts, I attended at the coroners' inquests, and although in the present cases the owners were held blameless, I elicited evidence which I consider resulted in a rider from the jury that owners should be held more responsible than at present for accidents on lifts by persons travelling thereon, owners appearing to think that a notice to the effect that the lifts were not to be used for travelling was sufficient. Such notice is usually treated as only a form and daily broken to the knowledge of all concerned. Although the number of accidents reported are this year more than usual, the majority are minor ones—only slight injuries resulting; and inspection did not show that there was fault through defective machinery, the majority being what might be