

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

AUCKLAND.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Auckland, 16th April, 1907.

I have the honour to submit for your consideration my annual report for this district, and before proceeding therewith desire to express my sorrow for the sad event which deprived the Department of the services of so useful an officer as the late Mr. Ferguson, who so ably watched over the interests of the workers as well as those of the Department for so many years, and whose loss is equally felt by workers and employers, as well as by the Department.

LABOUR.

I am pleased to state that the condition of the labour-market has been most satisfactory. During the year just ended 2,055 men have been forwarded to employment—viz., 1,291 to Government works and 764 to private employment. Of the total, 340 were married with 792 dependants, while 1,715 were single. In addition, 73 wives (with 66 children) have been assisted to join their husbands where at work. The preponderance of single men over the number of married men assisted indicates that the latter in the labouring-class are mainly engaged in fixed employment, and that the bulk of our applicants are single men. It is pleasing to note that private employers are recognising the usefulness of the Department as a medium for securing workers, as the 764 so employed represent considerably more than one-third of the total assisted.

Skilled labour has been in a very satisfactory condition during the year. All branches of the building trades have been busy. Engineering trades, while not brisk, have been steadily working full time. The boot trade has been fairly busy, while the furniture trade has been quite brisk. Carriage-building has been in a very forward condition, while all branches of the clothing trade have been busy, and the same may be said of almost every branch of trade.

FACTORIES ACT.

This Act is working smoothly. Employers and employees so well recognise the necessity for observing its provisions that an infringement is rare.

There were 1,332 factories, employing 11,159 persons—viz., 8,028 males and 3,131 females—registered during the year: an increase of 52 factories, but of only 2 employees over last year's returns.

Four hundred and eighty-two permits to work in accordance with sections 26 and 27 have been issued to persons under sixteen years of age—viz., boys, 234; of whom 99 passed Standard IV, 52 Standard V, and 83 Standard VI; and girls, 248; of whom 89 passed Standard IV, 70 Standard V, and 89 Standard VI. (See table of permits granted by Inspectors.)

OVERTIME.

Overtime is still with us, and notwithstanding all we can do to check it it is increasing. Employers say that owing to the difficulty in getting suitable hands overtime becomes a necessity in busy seasons; female labour, especially in the clothing trades, the boot trade, and in laundries, being hard to obtain.

Overtime permits were issued to 2,025 women and boys to work 54,108 hours; while 468 men worked 36,036 hours; making in all a total of 90,144 hours worked by 2,493 persons.

ACCIDENTS.

One hundred and twenty-nine accidents were reported. Full investigations were made, and advice tendered to those injured re compensation, &c. The total shows a diminution of the number reported in the previous year.

One was fatal, a labourer (not, however, an employee at the factory) being killed by the fall of a Hornsby boiler which was being erected at brick-works. The engineer who had charge of the contract was himself badly hurt.

The majority of the accidents reported were minor ones; 10, however (in addition to the fatality mentioned), were of a serious nature. The main cause has been generally the negligence, or possibly overconfidence, of the workers. It is noticeable that no less than four cases of serious injury resulted to workers at buzzer planing-machines, and in each instance the accident has been occasioned by the planing of a piece of timber so small as not to permit of sufficient purchase of the guiding hand, with the inevitable result that as soon as the wood touched the knives it has jumped, causing the worker's hand to go on to the knives. Where these machines are in use I have requested employers to caution their employees as to this danger. There has practically been no instance where direct cause could be