

DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR.

REPORTS.

The SECRETARY, Department of Labour, to the Hon. the MINISTER OF LABOUR.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Wellington, 3rd June, 1908.

I have the honour to present herewith the seventeenth annual report of this Department for transmission to His Excellency the Governor, in accordance with section 65 of "The Factories Act, 1901," and section 12 of "The Labour Department Act, 1903." The report covers the late financial year—viz., from the 1st April, 1907, to the 31st March, 1908.

I have, &c.,

EDWARD TREGEAR,

The Hon. J. A. Millar, Minister of Labour.

Secretary.

THE steady upward progress of New Zealand in regard to its industries and the development of its agricultural and pastoral resources continues unabated. The prices obtained for wool-shipments fell far below those of two years ago, and frozen meat also has been disappointing as to results of sales. However, the volume of exports has continued to increase, and there is no reason for any feeling to be entertained but pride and satisfaction in the growth and stability of colonial enterprises.

Throughout the Dominion skilled labour generally has had a successful year. The building trades especially have been in full swing of employment in the larger cities, whilst in the country towns there was even a shortage of the necessary hands. The boot trade, which a few years ago seemed destined to die out almost entirely, has regained its old footing of security, and promises exceedingly well in the near future. Engineering has not been buoyant, but in most places trade was fairly steady. Cabinetmaking, tailoring, dressmaking, coachbuilding, agricultural-implement making, confectionery and jam making—all these trades have been busy, and some of them have had a record year. Woollen-mills have been running full time, and complain of shortage of workers. In many occupations this shortage has been reported by employers, who state that the expansion of trade and business is impossible if some means cannot be found to promote immigration. Sawmilling generally has been brisk, but differs greatly with locality; for example, in Westland the industry is growing fast, whilst in the Forty-mile Bush (Dannevirke) it has almost disappeared, the bushman being replaced by the farmer. Flax-mills, owing to the high price of flax, ran at full speed for the first part of the year, but the sudden fall in value of the staple has made only too many of the mills close down for a time.

Unskilled labour has very fully and generally found employment. In spite of the large numbers of immigrants, tens of thousands of whom have been quietly absorbed during the last five years, milking hands and farm labourers are scarce, and town labourers have had almost continuous employment. The extensive building operations in the first and second class towns, and drainage-works at places like Timaru and Nelson, account for the ease with which surplus labour has been provided with employment.