

REPORTS.

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

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Wellington, 25th May, 1910.

I have the honour to present herewith the nineteenth annual report of this Department for transmission to His Excellency the Governor in accordance with section 68 of the Factories Act, 1908, and section 12 of the Labour Department Act, 1908. The report covers the late financial year—viz., from the 1st April, 1909, to the 31st March, 1910.

I have, &c.,

EDWARD TREGEAR,
Secretary.

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

THE year just concluded has ended more full of promise than seemed possible at its commencement. A heavy fall in the value of our exports abroad occasioned much financial depression, and the gloomy forebodings indulged in by some became partially justified as winter set in. The building trades, especially in Wellington, were greatly depressed, and difficulty in obtaining work was found by carpenters, painters, and others who for years previously had enjoyed steady and remunerative employment. Every effort was made by the Government through this Department to meet the difficulty by providing work at bushfelling, roadmaking, &c.; nor did the municipalities of the congested centres or private citizens spare generous effort on behalf of those temporarily unemployed. When the winter months were passed, the financial stress in some degree abated, and the encouraging news of the great advance in prices of our staple products (wool, frozen meat, flax, &c.) soon removed the grave fears that the depression would be long sustained. The values of our exports have risen by nearly £6,000,000 above those of imports. This promise of financial receipts soon to be available restored confidence in the soundness of the Dominion's position, although sufficient time has not yet elapsed for the full force of the flowing tide of returning business to be recognised. It is probable that in Wellington this winter the pinch of "short time" may be felt in some trades for a limited period, but in other places (Auckland especially) so many enterprises are projected, and are soon to be undertaken, that little difficulty will, I think, be felt in awaiting the advent of the spring and summer months of a year which shows promise of being of almost phenomenal prosperity.

The building trades, spoken of above as being in a state of depression last winter, felt the "hard times" much more in the large cities than in the smaller towns and country districts; in some localities stress was scarcely noticeable, but in all places these trades are fast recovering from lassitude. The woollen-mills and clothing trades have been very successful, but, particularly in the South, there are continued complaints of the scarcity of girl and boy labour, a scarcity which (as I pointed out in my report of two years ago) will undoubtedly be accentuated every succeeding month for a long period. The iron