

business concerns to launch out, and also enabling the speculative builders and residents to raise sufficient money on their properties to make further improvements. Perhaps the building trades felt the pinch more acutely than any other trade, on account of the tightness of money, and the necessary advances not being forthcoming. The various manufactories felt the depression, I think, less than the trades previously mentioned, as their products were really necessities, and although the sales were reduced, the trouble was overcome by reducing the working-hours of the employees. During the depression the Government, also the Christchurch City Council and many private citizens, made efforts to put in hand necessary work in order to alleviate distress, and to assist the unemployed to tide over a few of the wet weeks.

There have been no serious labour disputes during the year, which may be attributed to the bringing-together of the employers and workers in conference to discuss matters in dispute, and no doubt also to the appointment of the Conciliation Commissioner for the district.

The principal industries of Christchurch have been well up to former years in volume of trade done.

Agricultural-implement making was slightly depressed during the early part of the year, and a shortening of hands took place. Many of these were subsequently put on to work again. This trade does not make the headway expected. Perhaps it is on account of the large number of implements imported from other countries. These machines only need assembling in New Zealand, which in itself provides very little employment.

The boot and shoe trade has been quite up to former years, but is one in which fluctuations take place during the year, entailing a considerable amount of broken time for some of the workers. One large factory went into liquidation, and a number of male and female workers were put off. Fortunately it was decided to carry on the business for a few months longer, so that most of the old employees were able to resume work for a time after several weeks idleness.

The building trade felt the depression I have referred to more than any other branch, and did not fully recover until the latter end of the year.

The clothing trade has had a very good year, and the large factories increased the number of their employees considerably. Perhaps this is accounted for by the increase of outside trade.

There has been a general improvement in factory premises, many new buildings being occupied.

No great difficulty has been experienced in administering the various labour laws. The factories and shops of the district have been systematically inspected, and occupiers have shown a readiness to remedy any defects that have been pointed out to them in the way of ventilation, sanitation, fire-escapes, &c.

Inspectors visiting factories where machinery is in motion have in many ways been able to recommend safeguards, in the form of handrails, or other small guards to machinery, which will prevent many serious accidents happening to the workers employed in such factories.

A considerable amount of extra work was entailed in inspection under the Shearers and Agricultural Farm Labourers Act, many farms being visited where it had been reported that insufficient or insanitary accommodation had been provided. In every case any alterations suggested were complied with.

#### EMPLOYMENT BRANCH.

The Employment Branch has had a very busy year, and has given assistance to a large number of workers who were unable to obtain work in the city. Altogether no less than 1,032 persons were assisted—viz., 804 single men, and 228 married men, with 661 dependants. (For particulars, see Table on p. 124.)

#### WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT BRANCH.

The Women's Branch has also been busy, being very successful in placing all suitable applicants for employment. The shortage of female labour is still severely felt, and only a few of the places available have been filled. The domestic servant is in the happy position of being able to choose from quite a number of situations offering. No less than 789 domestics were placed into suitable positions. A detailed report and summary is furnished by Mrs. Mitchell, the officer in charge.

#### FACTORIES ACT.

A general improvement is noticeable of late years in the workrooms provided for the use of the workers. At each visit of inspection due regard is paid to sanitation, ventilation, air-space, fire-escape exits, wages paid, &c., employers generally carrying out the requirements of the Department faithfully and well. Of course, there are those who are careless and indifferent, and, as a result, a number were compelled to either make up any wages owing or were brought before the Court. The arrears of wages collected on behalf of workers amounted to £67 1s. 2d.

During the year 1,310 factories were registered, an increase over last year of 73, which have given employment to 11,521 persons (including employers personally engaged)—viz., 6,853 male and 3,320 female employees, and 1,348 employers, an increase over last year of 33 persons.

Permits to work in factories were granted to 439 young persons under sixteen—viz., 207 males and 232 females.

During the year 2,576 boys under sixteen years of age and women worked 71,624 hours overtime.

Thirty prosecutions were taken under this Act for various offences. Favourable judgments were obtained in all cases. Total penalties imposed under this Act, £8.

During the year there were 83 accidents in factories, of which 5 were fatal. Two were caused through a fall of clay—1 in a brick-yard, and 1 in a stone quarry; and 3 workers were caught in machinery through trying to put belting on to a fixed pulley, or attempting to regulate the machinery, without first putting the machinery out of motion. In every case a visit of inspection was made in order to ascertain the cause of the accident, and as far as possible to guard against similar occurrences. Advice was also given in respect to any claim for compensation.