

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT.

This Act is a boon to workers and to their dependants, and has removed that great dread of being left destitute should an accident occur to the breadwinner of the home. It has also resulted in extra care being taken to guard machinery, &c., as insurance companies have insisted on reasonable precautions being taken to guard against accidents.

There have been instances where claims for compensation have been settled without recourse to the Arbitration Court, and in which inadequate amounts have been accepted through ignorance of the amount to which the claimants were entitled. No doubt an offer of a seemingly large sum of money at the time of their great trouble has induced them to accept sums without making full inquiries as to the amount to which they are entitled. I therefore submit a suggestion which would cover such cases—viz., that in any further amendment to the Workers' Compensation Act provision be made disallowing any settlement for a sum less than the full amount provided by the Act without the sanction of the Magistrate for the district. The law might also be altered to compel an employer to furnish Inspectors with a statement showing the earnings of the injured workmen during the preceding twelve months or any such less time during which the worker has been employed by the same employer; it would enable parties to ascertain more quickly the amount of compensation payable. (These statements are now furnished by the employer to the insurance companies.)

GENERAL.

The continued growth of the Department, and the large increase of statistical matter required during the past year, has materially increased the clerical work of the Department, and it has been found absolutely necessary for a large amount of overtime to be worked by the different officers in order to keep pace with the increased work. This work has been performed by the various officers very willingly, each realising his responsibility to assist in keeping the huge amount of work in check.

The correspondence for the year shows that 4,710 letters, 7,250 circulars, and 470 telegrams were sent outwards. To this work must be added the large number of incoming letters, telegrams, and circulars, showing the large amount of clerical and other office-work attended to.

The best thanks of the Department are due to the District Health Department and the Inspectors of the City Council for their ready assistance in bringing about better sanitary conditions in shops, factories, &c. I have also to thank the officers of the Department for their ready and capable assistance in carrying out the work of the Department, and their willingness to work greatly increased hours without additional payment therefor.

I have, &c.,

W. H. HAGGER,

Inspector of Factories.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

DUNEDIN.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Dunedin, 26th April, 1910.

I have the honour to submit my annual report of the working of the Department in the Dunedin district for the year ended 31st March, 1910.

LABOUR.

Although during the winter months there was a marked dearth of employment, taking the whole year the position of labour here may be considered to have been generally satisfactory, while from a commercial standpoint the year has been a good one. During the months of June, July, and August there was stagnation in the building trades, which, combined with the usual cessation of agricultural work in the winter season, caused an abnormal number of men to be idle. A great deal was done to overcome the difficulty. Workers were increased on the Government Mosgiel duplication and Catlin's River works, and with the active co-operation and assistance of the City Council and the Drainage and Harbour Boards work was found for 640 men within the space of ten weeks.

The period of depression was fortunately of short duration. A large number of building contracts came out, country work increased, and what appeared likely to be a somewhat disastrous year was on the whole changed to a really satisfactory one. The wool-clip was good, and the rise secured in prices will be a boon to the district. On account of the very dry season, harvesting in the district did not come up to anticipations. This cause also affected the stock market. Dairying has been excellent. There has been a large market for rabbits, and work has thereby been made for many hands. The flax market also showed improvement, and in consequence trade conditions in the city have on the whole been good.

Building operations during the latter half of the year were particularly active. The new high school for girls, one large warehouse, and several fine factory-buildings have been the main contracts. They are now nearing completion, and a slackening of work is imminent. With the use of Oamaru stone, fair work has been secured by stonemasons. Plumbing has been busy. The printing and stationery trades have been good, but the adoption of the loose-leaf ledger has operated to the detriment of bookbinders. In the joinery and sawmilling trades business has been very bright, bushfellers being in strong demand. The engineering trades have been steadier than in the previous year, but there is room for improvement. On account of the power supplied by the City Council from Waipori Falls being used in nearly all the factories and establishments where motive power is required, electrical engineering has been exceedingly brisk. The main power-supply is being duplicated, and this branch of trade is likely to have a very busy time in the coming year.