

Clothing-manufacturing and woollen-milling have been kept at high pressure throughout the year. The same remark applies to the boot trade. In respect of these three industries there has been further outcry *re* the scarcity of female labour. Anent this, one firm in the boot trade has informed me that they have advertised extensively in England, but invariably the replies have been that it costs too much to get to New Zealand.

Manufacturers urge that if they could get more girls they could employ more men, and suggest that the Government might assist by granting this class of worker passages at reduced rates. It will be seen in another portion of this report that there was a reduction of over 15 per cent. in the number of permits granted to young persons to work in factories, and this falling-off in the recruiting-ground will tend to increase the anxiety by making the scarcity more marked. Saddlery and harness trades have been wonderfully steady.

During the year 1,882 men were assisted to work through this office—viz., 707 married and 1,175 single, of whom the number of dependents was 2,727. Four hundred and thirty-six men were sent to Government works, and 1,466 to private work. This is by a long way a record for the district. The considerable number of men (1,446) sent to private employment plainly shows that the object of the Department to secure work for all classes of workers is now more generally being taken advantage of by private employers. Advertisements were inserted in the newspapers, and over 1,000 circulars indicating our facilities for supplying labour were issued to farmers, station-holders, contractors, and other employers; still, the recognition of the Department's value in this respect is far from being as complete as it should be. Those assisted included labourers, farm hands, miners, and artisans.

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT BRANCH.

There is a marked scarcity of applicants for domestic service. A separate report is submitted by Miss Hale, the officer in charge. In addition to her duties in connection with this branch, this officer has, in her capacity of Inspector of Factories, visited factories in the district where women workers are employed, and her being always available for this purpose is an advantage.

THE FACTORIES ACT.

This Act being now fully accepted by all concerned as a necessary measure, its provisions are so well observed that there has been a total absence of any friction in connection with its enforcement. Of the new places erected, the modern advantages are at once noticeable. Increasing attention is given to the direct welfare of the workers, such as the fitting of shafting and belting under the floor instead of inside in the workroom. Again, new machinery is, where possible, fitted or furnished by the makers with adequate safeguards.

In this city—probably the oldest manufacturing district in the Dominion—there are, of course, a number of places which could with advantage be supplanted by new premises. Several of them have already lived their lives, and in the present year a number of firms have removed to new and up-to-date premises. With the old existing workrooms we cannot get the satisfactory conditions that we would like; but as the change to new premises goes on, all necessary requirements can be insisted upon. The past year shows many of these desirable changes, but the evolution is still far from complete. My remarks in last year's report *re* the desirability of plans for new premises being first submitted to the Department have evidently been noted, for in every instance since then this course has been adopted by intending occupiers and their architects.

Under the definition of a factory—section 1 (a)—I consider that the word “bakehouse” should be extended in its interpretation, so as to include such places as sugar-boiling and confectionery-manufacturing establishments, whatever the number of persons employed therein. These articles are food for human consumption, and it is surely essential that these places should be kept as rigidly clean as a bakehouse.

Re minimum rate of wages for young persons, there are instances where it would be an advantage to leave it to the discretion of the Chief Inspector to allow an under-rate permit to be given in special cases. Several cases have come under our notice where, owing to infirmity or physical disability, the strict application of this provision is a veritable hardship.

During the year 1,174 factories were registered in Dunedin and suburbs, showing a decrease of 4 on last year's record. The number of persons, including employers, engaged was 10,809—6,321 male and 3,345 female employees, and 1,143 employers, an increase of 36 male employees and a decrease of 13 female employees on last year's returns.

Certificates of fitness to young persons under sixteen to work in factories were issued to 490 persons—232 to boys and 258 to girls. This shows a reduction of 90 on the number issued last year. Considerable anxiety has been expressed by occupiers *re* the difficulty of obtaining recruits, and this falling-off in the natural recruiting-ground tends to accentuate the position, and is to be deplored.

Overtime.—During the year 1,736 women of all ages and boys under sixteen years of age worked 60,473 hours' overtime. Compared with the previous year, there is a decrease of 6,495 hours' overtime worked by women and boys.

Accidents.—The number of accidents reported was 106, a decrease of 46 on the previous year's total. There was one fatal accident, when a Corporation employee met his death, while installing electric power in a factory, through coming into contact with a live wire. In all cases care was taken to advise the persons injured of the provisions of the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act. Nearly every accident was caused through the negligence or lack of attention of the worker. Accidents are always numerous to workers employed at circular saws. The question as to properly safeguarding these saws gives rise to some difficulty. The ribbon-guard for goose saws is accepted. The fin-guard on large rip-saws has been generally insisted upon; but very many factory-occupiers denounce it, urging that (particularly on a bench where different-sized saws are used) it hinders the usefulness of the saw. *Re* small circulars, the guarding of these saws at all is, to my mind, unnecessary.