

REPORT.

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

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Wellington, 30th May, 1913.

I have the honour to present herewith the twenty-second 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 and Labour Day Act, 1908. The report covers the late financial year—viz., from the 1st April, 1912, to the 31st March, 1913.

I have, &c.,

J. LOMAS,

The Hon. the Minister of Labour.

Secretary of Labour.

THE year just closed was a normal one from an industrial point of view. The first three months of the departmental year—viz., April, May, and June, 1912—gave promise of great activity in most manufacturing concerns, but after the end of June a falling-off was experienced in some trades, and although there was no undue slackness of work the call for more adult male workers was not insistent.

The building trades were fairly busy right through the year, and competent hands lost no time whatever on account of slackness. In some branches of the trade there was an unsatisfied demand for men, especially for plasterers and bricklayers. Plumbers and painters had a very fair run of work, and the furniture-trade workers were also fully employed. Towards the latter end of the year (February and March) there were signs of slackness in the furniture trade (especially at Auckland), and a few men were reported out of work. The engineering trade had a steady run for about ten months, but in the last two months some hands were discharged—generally unskilled workers—owing to slackness of trade.

As to unskilled workers generally the position was at no time acute, although during last winter the number of such applicants in the cities exceeded the demand for their services. The employment of unskilled workers is generally very intermittent during the winter season, especially for those who cannot, or will not, leave the towns. A very large number of men willing to take up country work was assisted by the Department, and this materially reduced the hardship on those remaining behind.

A special and exhaustive inquiry was made by an officer of the Department into the extent of labour shortages in manufacturing industries. As you are aware, employers had represented both to the Government and the Department that their operations were severely handicapped owing to the dearth of all classes of labour. Whilst the Department was aware, in a general way, of the conditions ruling, it was deemed advisable to get reliable data on the matter, and with this end in view Mr. J. W. Collins, of the Head Office, was deputed to investigate the matter and report on definite lines. In carrying out this quest practically all the leading manufacturers concerned in the Dominion were interviewed, and the summary of the reports on each of the manufacturing trades in the Dominion has already been sent to you. I consider the information collected will be of very great service to the Department and to the Government. The work was done in a thorough and systematic way, and showed not only where labour shortages existed, but the classes of hands required, rate of wages offered, and hours of employment. The report also dealt with the number of machines idle for lack of hands, and showed what attempts had been made by employers to remedy the shortages by advertisement and otherwise. Special attention was given to intermittent seasonal trades, and generally to those trades showing prospects of giving increasing employment as against those which are stationary or likely to fall off. The report will prove specially valuable as indicating the direction in which the Department might look for possible vacancies to place both men and women who apply to the Department for employment. It should be emphasized, however, that the report purports to be a statement of the shortages of labour existing at a definite period only, and it is probable that variations may occur from time to time in the supply of and demand for such labour. The representatives of the workers' unions throughout the Dominion were also invited to place their views before the Government in those trades where shortages of labour were alleged to exist.