

MASTERTON.

SIR,— Department of Labour (Women's Branch), Masterton, 25th April, 1913.

I have the honour to submit, for your consideration, my report on the work of this branch during the year ended 31st March, 1913.

The branch as a central agency for the assistance of female workers is now very well established in this district, and has been taken advantage of by employers requiring female assistants and helps. There have not, however, been nearly sufficient applications from female workers to satisfy the demand, and the dearth in this direction steadily continues.

During the year 68 applications were received from employers for domestic helps and other assistants, whilst 27 applications were received from employees, of whom 17 were suitably placed in situations. Very fair wages have been offered, in some cases up to £1 7s. 6d. per week.

I have, &c.,

E. M. RAYNER,

Officer in Charge.

The Secretary of Labour, Wellington.

WELLINGTON.

SIR,— Department of Labour (Women's Branch), Wellington, 22nd April, 1913.

I beg to submit my annual report on the work of the Women's Employment Bureau during the year ending 31st March, 1913.

The number of persons assisted—viz., 649—exceeded only in the year 1909–10, when 748 persons were sent to work. The total number of women workers actually assisted since its establishment five years ago is 3,258; of this total, 1,011 were married and 2,247 single women.

The applications from employers far exceeded the number of hands applying, and during the last twelve months at least one out of every two mistresses seeking domestic workers has had to suffer disappointment. The demand may be fairly stated to be as acute as ever it was, while the rate of wages has increased considerably. It was not unusual a few years back to make the majority of engagements of domestics at wages ranging from 10s. to 12s. per week, but during the last few years the range has been from 15s. to £1 for domestics, and for other classes of workers as follows: Lady-helps, 10s. to 15s.; house and parlour maids, 15s. to £1; nurses, 15s. to £1; housekeepers, 10s. to £1; laundresses, £1 to £1 5s.; cooks, £1 upwards; seamstresses, 5s. per day.

As was pointed out last year, the rate of wages now ruling is claimed by employers to be beyond their ability to pay, as in addition to wage outlay (say, 18s.) the extra cost of keeping a servant in a house in Wellington may be stated at 12s. per week, making an average total expense of £1 10s. per week. The inadequate supply of servants is met to some extent by the freer engagement of day-workers; an increasing number of such workers is available from year to year, and a new feature of this phase of work is the entrance of comparatively young women and girls into a field hitherto frequented by widows and married women only. The ruling rate of wages paid to such workers is from 5s. to 6s. per day with meals. This amount is freely offered for women able to wash clothes and do the heavier work required about a house. In my opinion the rate of 6s. per day (or 3s. for half-day) is little enough for the work expected. Some better arrangements for meals should also be effected, as at present an adequate midday meal is not always provided; this arises in most cases out of pure thoughtlessness. Many of the day-workers leave home in the early morning to be at work at 8 a.m., and naturally look for something more substantial in the way of fare than a cup of tea and bread-and-butter.

The employment available for women workers which is subject to awards or industrial agreements is still the most popular with the girls. Experienced waitresses for shop-work—i.e., in tea-rooms, &c.—are fairly easily procured, as the hours are limited to fifty-two per week and the wages (£1 7s. 6d. per week) are considered to be fair. If domestic service could have defined conditions in a similar way it would certainly tend to attract more workers to it. In my opinion the girls are infinitely better off, from a financial point of view, in domestic service, as they can save practically the whole of their earnings that are not required for dress.

The number of persons assisted, largely from Great Britain, was 131, which is the highest total reached during the last three years. The assistance afforded to employers by the immigration of these girls has not, however, been effective in coping with the demand made upon this office.

I have, &c.,

E. R. BREMNER,

Officer in Charge.

The Secretary of Labour, Wellington.

NELSON.

SIR,— Department of Labour (Women's Branch), Nelson, 28th April, 1913.

I have the honour to submit my report on the working of this branch of the Department for the year ending the 31st March, 1913.

The difficulty of obtaining women for all classes of work is still very serious, and an ever-increasing difficulty has been experienced in obtaining girls for domestic work. All sorts of concessions have been offered by mistresses, but although restrictions are fewer, wages better, and