

1916.
NEW ZEALAND

DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR

(REPORT OF THE).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

REPORT.

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

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Wellington, 31st May, 1916.

I have the honour to present herewith the twenty-fifth annual report of this Department for the information of His Excellency the Governor, and to be laid before Parliament, in compliance with the Labour Department and Labour Day Act, 1908, and the Factories Act, 1908. The report covers the financial year 1st April, 1915, to 31st March, 1916. Owing to the necessity for brevity and economy at the present juncture the report has been considerably curtailed, and the various paragraphs deal chiefly with such items as may be noteworthy on account of the war.

I have, &c.,

F. W. ROWLEY,

The Right. Hon. the Minister of Labour.

Secretary of Labour.

CONDITIONS OF TRADE AND EMPLOYMENT.

Generally speaking, no difficulty was experienced during the year in coping with any unemployment that arose. Indeed, it can be claimed that in point of the number of applicants the year was a record one, there being fewer applicants for work than during any other period of the Department's history. In many cases weeks elapsed in some of the larger secondary towns without a *bona fide* application being recorded. A high percentage of applicants was assisted, the bureaux being able in most cases to offer employment—both Government and private—to all classes of workmen. Tradesmen have had an exceptional year, employment being regular owing to record weather-conditions and to the great demand for various classes of the Dominion's goods, notwithstanding the fact that in many cases work was retarded by the shortage of imported materials. Much overtime has also been worked, supplementing the ordinary earnings. On the Wellington wharves there has at times been an insufficient supply of labour; this fact no doubt accounts for the few minor industrial disturbances that are referred to later in this report. In the engineering trades a shortage of fitters and turners has been felt. There has been considerable activity in the freezing industry, and several new works, besides additions to others, have been erected in various parts of the Dominion. The retail traders are reported to have had a good year, particularly fancy-goods dealers, jewellers, and tobacconists, whose increased business is, no doubt, due to the purchases made by or for departing members of the Expeditionary Forces.

An unusual feature has been the extensive employment of girls in the place of men in various avocations, notably in banks.

The providing of additional camp accommodation at Trentham and the erection of the new buildings at Featherston gave employment to a very large number of building tradesmen of all classes and to unskilled labourers, and all parts of the Dominion had to be drawn upon to provide the requisite workmen. Many private employers reported a scarcity of hands, and despite offers of increased pay and overtime work the hands were unprocurable—especially was this the case during the late summer.

In anticipation of larger crops of cereals than usual and of a shortage of labour to harvest the same, special and complete arrangements were made by the Department for an adequate supply of labour, and in addition to the workers that usually follow this class of occupation numbers of volunteers were ready to come forward when necessary. While the harvest was on the whole a very fair one, it was found, contrary to expectations, that little or no difficulty was experienced by farmers in themselves obtaining on the spot what assistance was needed, and very few applications for workers were made to the Department.

The facilities afforded by this Department's Employment Bureaux in the various towns in the Dominion have been placed at the disposal of the Discharged Soldiers Information Department, and a number of the returned men have already been assisted to employment. The Department has during the year also assisted the Department of Munitions and Supplies in making inquiries concerning those workers whose retention in the Dominion is necessary to the output of supplies.