

FACTORIES ACT.

Year.	Number of Factories registered.	Movement.	Number of Factory Workers.	Movement.
1913-14 (before the war) ..	13,469	94 (increase)	87,517	919 (increase).
1914-15	13,937	468 "	88,812	1,295 "
1915-16 (since the war began) ..	13,214	723 (decrease)	83,011	5,801 (decrease).
1916-17	12,455	759 "	78,188	4,823 "
1917-18	12,485	30 (increase)	79,653	1,465 (increase).
1918-19	12,444	41 (decrease)	82,783	3,130 "
1919-20 (after the war) ..	13,490	1,046 (increase)	85,591	2,808 "
1920-21	13,661	171 "	96,603	11,012 "
1921-22	14,013	352 "	96,980	377 "
1922-23	14,535	522 "	92,608	4,372 (decrease).
1923-24	15,009	474 "	97,731	5,123 (increase).

Last year it was observed that there was a large decrease in the number of workers employed in factories in New Zealand. This year there is an increase of 5,123, and the number of factories has increased by 474.

On the west coast of the South Island there was renewed activity in the timber trade, and a number of new sawmills was registered. In other parts of New Zealand the betterment of international trade conditions was reflected in many small factories commencing business.

The figures as to the number of factories and the workers employed therein do not purport to coincide with those of the Government Statistician (Census of Industrial Manufactures), as his returns, which are drawn up purely for statistical purposes, do not cover various small establishments that are included as factories under the Factories Act.

ACCIDENTS.

The total number of accidents shows an increase of 450 over the previous year, most of which come under the heading of slight accidents. The greater portion of these happened in freezing-works, being mainly cuts on hands from knives, and no means of preventing these accidents has been devised.

The increase in the number of accidents reported is chiefly due to the extra vigilance resulting from the resumption of country inspections, and there is no reason to believe that there has been an actual increase in the number of accidents. It has been decided to lay down a more definite classification of accidents in future, in order that a clearer comparison from year to year may be made, and also to coincide as nearly as possible with the accident statistics of other countries, in accordance with the recommendation of the International Labour Office.

Where accidents occur in connection with machinery the Department acts in conjunction with the Inspection of Machinery Department.

During the year safety posters, drawn up by the Department's officers in collaboration with the officers of the Department of Health, were distributed to factory-owners throughout New Zealand. The Inspectors report that these were posted in conspicuous places in all rooms in which dangerous machinery was located, and their reports show that employers and managers speak favourably of this system of constantly impressing on every one the necessity of avoiding risk of accident.

Of the fatal accidents recorded the following particulars are given:—

(a.) A contractor was engaged in putting down a tram-line for a sawmill, and, while driving a truck loaded with gravel, slipped on the tram-line, the truck passing over him before he could get clear. The fatality was purely accidental and not preventable.

(b.) An employee in a timber-mill was engaged in cleaning rubbish from between the rollers of a breaking-down bench when his head came into contact with a running circular saw, resulting in fatal injuries. The matter was referred to the Inspection of Machinery Department for attention.

(c.) A freezing-works employee who was deaf was walking on a cinder path a few feet distant from and parallel to a railway-line, in the same direction as that in which a locomotive was travelling. The engine-driver blew his whistle as a warning, but the worker commenced to cross the line at an angle, apparently without looking up the line. The brakes were applied and steam cut off, but the engine struck the worker and passed over his body. The engine was travelling at a speed between eight and ten miles an hour.

(d.) A worker was engaged in dusting down an 11,000-volt switchboard, and proceeded to carry out this work on a portion of the equipment not included in his instructions; this caused him to come into contact with a "live" part of the switchboard. He sustained shock and severe burns, from which he died.

(e.) An employee in an electric-power house received a shock from a portable lamp which he was using, and died from heart-failure. This matter was dealt with by the Public Works Department under their regulations.

(f.) Two men were cleaning out chutes in a chemical works, and while one was ascending a ladder leading from one platform to another, which was about 40 ft. from the floor, he fell to the floor, striking his head on a beam on the way. He sustained fractures of the skull and pelvis, and died on the same day.