

It is interesting to note that in the Town of New Plymouth a Citizens' Unemployment Committee was formed, and a voluntary weekly levy was made on the wages of workers in numbers of establishments. As a result the committee were at the end of March last employing seventy-two men on road-construction work in the borough.

In previous years unskilled workers have comprised about half of the total number, the remainder being distributed amongst clerks, shop-assistants and storemen, drivers, hotel-workers, farm hands, building-trade workers, and others. Of the present total of 3,414, unskilled workers comprise 2,271, equalling two-thirds; the remainder being made up of carpenters, 150; drivers, 144; farm hands, 121; hotel-workers and cooks, 98; clerical workers, 60; painters, 60; storemen and packers, 68; engineers, 88; gardeners, 51; cycle and motor mechanics, 27; miscellaneous, 276.

During the year the value of building permits showed a decrease of £1,359,460 from £11,019,389 in the previous year. The building trades have been busy in the four chief centres, but in Auckland and Christchurch activities have been confined principally to bricklayers, plasterers, structural-steel workers, and others employed on large buildings. The value of building permits for the erection of private dwellings showed most of the above decrease—viz., £1,310,048 (from £6,141,574)—and this seems to indicate that building-trade activities have been confined mainly to the erection of business and public buildings in permanent materials.

Of other industries, engineering, sawmilling, electrical working, boot-manufacturing, and saddlery have been slack. As the result of inquiries made in the different districts of the Dominion the following are some of the reasons that are given to account for the present state of these occupations: Engineering—The increasing use of electricity, for which motors, &c., are imported, has had the effect of slowing-up the trade, although owing to the completion of the bulk of reticulation work the men employed on wiring are experiencing difficulty in keeping in employment. Sawmilling—Reduction in cottage-building, together with the importation of foreign timbers. Boot-manufacturing—Importations. Saddlery—The trade continues to recede in importance with the increase in motor traction.

Total engagements made at the Department's employment bureaux during 1927-28 (in addition to 1,113 men placed locally by Engineers on Government works), 15,246—5,660 for public and other Government works, 5,658 for local bodies, 3,928 for private employment; dependants, 29,639; in addition 310 other persons were assisted by the advancing of railway fares or otherwise. 1926-27: 10,268 engagements (3,260 for public works, 1,716 for local bodies, 5,292 for private employment); dependants, 16,925. Of the number sent to public works during 1927-28, 3,000 left the works of their own accord, and 244 others who were engaged did not proceed to the work. From the 1st April, 1928, to the 16th June (eleven weeks) 2,246 were sent to Government Works, of whom 741 have left of own accord.

A comparison of unemployment in New Zealand with other countries goes to show that it is much greater elsewhere than in this Dominion. For example, from recent information obtained it is stated that in Great Britain on the 1st March, 1928, there were 1,136,700, or 1 in 38 of the population. The number of unemployed there has since increased. A Government Committee reporting in 1925 on the British unemployment insurance scheme has estimated that the scheme should anticipate an average of 700,000 unemployed persons (equivalent to about 1 in 60 of the total population). United States estimates vary from two million to eight million, but the most reliable suggest four million, or 1 in 28 of the population, at the end of 1927. In Australia the estimates from the several States vary, but they appear to indicate that about 32,000, or 1 in 190, were unemployed in March last. (Queensland alone, however, shows 14,000, or 1 in 63, in that month.) In New Zealand the Department's applicants at the 1st April showed 2,500, equivalent to 1 in 575 of the population.

It should be pointed out, however, that estimates of unemployment are apt to be misleading, as the question depends on the duration of the unemployment in each case rather than on the number of persons. It is found that a large proportion of the unemployed change from week to week or month to month, showing that many of them have not been idle for a lengthy period. It is also necessary to take into account the nature of each applicant's occupation and his earnings during the past year or two years. An inquiry into all the serious cases of unemployment on the above lines is now in train.

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 (during the war)	.. 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).
1924-25	.. 15,868	859 ..	99,423	1,692 ..
1925-26	.. 16,311	443 ..	102,321	2,898 ..
1926-27	.. 16,619	308 ..	103,404	1,083 ..
1927-28	.. 16,782	163 ..	102,622	782 (decrease).