

1892.  
NEW ZEALAND.

# BUREAU OF INDUSTRIES

(REPORT ON THE).

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

The SECRETARY, Bureau of Industries, to the Hon. the MINISTER OF LABOUR.

SIR,—

Bureau of Industries, Wellington, 7th July, 1892.

I have the honour herewith to submit report of the Bureau of Industries for previous year. The report is subdivided as follows: Bureau of Industries; Extension of Operations; State Farms; Factories; Labour in Europe; Wages, &c., in New Zealand.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Labour.

EDWARD TREGEAR, Secretary.

## BUREAU OF INDUSTRIES.

The Bureau commenced its operations in June, 1891, under the direction of the Hon. W. P. Reeves, Minister of Education and Justice. The objects desired by the Government were the compilation of statistics concerning the condition of labour generally; the establishment of agencies for reporting the scarcity or overplus of workers in particular districts; the transfer of such workers from overcrowded localities to places needing labour; and, generally, the control of all industries for the physical and moral benefit of those engaged therein.

The pressing difficulty at the time the Bureau was inaugurated was the presence of “unemployed” labour in the chief towns of the colony. The centralising tendency of modern institutions is one of the predisposing causes of this plethora of workmen appearing in the cities, aided by the displacement of hands by labour-saving machinery on farms; but these influences were greatly augmented by the cessation (or contraction) of public works consequent on the exhaustion of foreign loans. It was necessary that some outward set should be given to the human tide, and that every facility should be given to labourers to proceed to available work in out-districts.

For this purpose 200 agencies were established, for economical reasons the agents being selected from officers already in the Government service, and in the country districts the duties generally being allotted to sergeants of police and local constables, as these officers are thoroughly acquainted with the needs and capabilities of the population surrounding them. These agents forward on the last day of every month a schedule stating particulars as to unemployed persons in their district, and make report as to the various works, private and public (if any), in their locality needing more workmen. In this manner the *minus* or *plus* quantities of available labour can be generally equalised.

On “unemployed” persons presenting themselves for engagement their names are entered upon schedules, which declare (for statistical purposes only) the age, dependent family, time out of work, &c., of each applicant; and suitable employment (if possible) is offered, men with families having preference. They are assisted by means of railway-passes, in some cases given free to those seeking work for themselves, but given to those proceeding to engagements only as advances, orders on the employers against future wages being signed by the men. Most of the said orders on future pay are honoured when matured.

Every effort, short of espionage, is used to ascertain the *bona fides* of applicants and to prevent the railway-passes falling into the hands of rogues. Few, it is believed, of the “loafing” fraternity have defied the scrutiny of the department, the true loafer rather desiring to loiter about the streets of towns than to be sent to heavy work in bush districts where he must either toil unremittingly or starve.

The result of the establishment of the Bureau was encouraging in the extreme. The congestion of labour in the large towns was reduced, and a true test applied to those who declared themselves as in want of work. The total number assisted to employment from the 1st June, 1891, to the 31st May, 1892, is 2,974, of whom 2,000 were sent to private employers and the others to public works. Only a few of these can be credited to the months of January, February, and March, which being summer months have called on all the resources of extra labour for harvesting, grass-seeding,