

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Wellington, 5th May, 1900.

The year just ended has been one of unexampled prosperity in New Zealand, so far as can be judged from reports furnished by local Inspectors. The figures for Wellington are a very good test as to the colony generally, and they show a decrease of 191 men assisted for the year, the numbers being—1898-99, 804; 1899-1900, 613; and many of these are men who were sent to private employment, paying their own passages, &c. The men sent to public works also cannot be classed as “unemployed,” at least as the term has been used in former times.

We are having daily inquiries for lads to work on farms and stations, but this class of labour cannot be got. The same difficulty presents itself in the cities and towns. Factory-owners complain they cannot get boys, and this refutes the statements that were freely made at the time of passing the Employment of Boys or Girls without Payment Prevention Act. As an instance, the match-factory run by Bell and Co. have had to raise the wages for beginners from 6s. to 7s. 6d. per week, and then the supply was not equal to the demand. These remarks apply also to girls, although not in such a marked degree.

I have visited most of the large towns in the colony, and many of the smaller ones, during the last year, and find our Inspectors are anxious and willing to carry out the duties of their office. It is indeed very seldom that any complaint is made by employers that Inspectors are at all arbitrary in manner or in their requirements.

One great difficulty we suffer under, but which, I presume, from the exigencies of the police service, cannot be avoided, is that through the frequent changes made by shifting the officers who act as our Inspectors a man is just getting used to the work when he is removed. Of course, it may be said that he will be able to take up his duties in the new place without any trouble; but it is not so, as he is strange, and has to find all documents, forms, schedules, &c. However, I suppose there is no remedy.

The work of the department goes on increasing: it has practically the supervision and administration of all the Acts relating to labour.

We continue to receive large numbers of letters from Great Britain, the United States, Canada, and other countries, asking for all sorts of information as to New Zealand; in fact, we have really become a Bureau of Intelligence. All new arrivals make their way to the department, having been instructed to do so by the Agent-General's Department in London, and 80 per cent. of such callers we are able to place in some employment.

Parliament having decreed that the control of the State farm should be vested in the Stock Department, stock-sheets have been prepared, and we will hand over to that department considerably over the four thousand pounds' worth of stock, tools, implements, and buildings, &c., that are actually on the place. This does not include the permanent improvements, such as fencing, roads made, &c. The land, which was originally bought for £4 per acre, is now valued by competent persons at £16; in fact, uncleared bush land in the immediate vicinity was sold the other day at £17 per acre, so that our valuation at £16 is a modest one. There is now quite 650 acres felled, grassed, and subdivided into paddocks, with wells, windmills, and dairy-buildings, and everything complete for carrying on dairy-farming. New cottages have been erected; and there is close on 30 acres planted with fruit-trees, besides numerous shelter plantations of walnut, ash, pines, and macrocarpa. Pursuant to instructions, all hands on the farm have received a month's notice, and the Stock Department took formal possession on the 1st April.

In conclusion, I wish to thank all our Inspectors whom I have visited during the year for their courtesy, also the many employers whom my business has brought me in contact with. The office staff also deserve a measure of praise for the faithful manner in which they have performed their duties. The number of outward letters sent from this office during the year ending the 31st March was 3,641.

I have, &amp;c.,

The Secretary, Department of Labour.

JAMES MACKAY, Chief Clerk.

## REPORTS OF LOCAL INSPECTORS OF FACTORIES AND AGENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR.

### AUCKLAND.

SIR,—

Auckland, 31st March, 1900.

I beg to forward for your information my annual report on the working of this department for the past year.

#### LABOUR.

During the year 287 men have been assisted to work, of whom 146 were married, with 505 persons dependent on them, and 141 single men. Of these, 243 were sent to Government works, and forty-four to private employment.

On the whole the past year has been a favourable one for workers. Skilled workers, with the exception of one or two trades, have had almost constant employment at fairly good wages. Unskilled labourers if competent for bush or navy work were seldom long idle, and the Government work open was not too keenly competed for, as in previous winters.

The Government co-operative workmen in this district had a fair turn, giving satisfaction to the officers in charge, and expressing general satisfaction with their work and treatment. At their request, I have assisted a good number of their wives and families to join them, the expenses being deducted from their earnings, and in many instances they hope to get permanently settled.