

1904.  
NEW ZEALAND.

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# DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR

(REPORT OF THE).

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

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The SECRETARY, Department of Labour, to the Hon. the MINISTER OF LABOUR.  
SIR,— Department of Labour, Wellington, 20th June, 1904.

I have the honour to present herewith the thirteenth annual report of this Department. It covers the late financial year—viz., from the 1st April, 1903, to the 31st March, 1904.

I have, &c.,

EDWARD TREGEAR, Secretary.

The Rt. Hon. R. J. Seddon, Minister of Labour.

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THERE is no diminution or retardation in the steadiness of New Zealand's economic advance. The year has been exceedingly prosperous for a very large majority of the workers. Municipal enterprises, such as electric tramways, &c., have absorbed surplus labour near cities, while in many of the country districts men have been hard to obtain. In spite of our reinforcements from Australia (18,188 arrivals over departures in two years), agricultural labourers were sometimes scarce at 1s. an hour, and it has not been easy to get thoroughly reliable workmen to meet the calls for hands on railway-construction.

The building trades have been very fully employed all over the colony, especially in the larger towns. Wellington alone has added to the value of inhabited property during the last five years to the extent of £1,513,722. The better class of carpenters were scarce even when 11s. a day was offered; masons and bricklayers received high wages, while the call for competent plasterers is still unsatisfied. In the iron trade a few were out of employment towards the end of last year, but all engineering-work is showing improvement, and is fast recovering from the dullness experienced after the temporary collapse of the over-inflated gold-dredging industry, which now rests on a more solid basis than on the excitement of the mining markets. The boot and shoe trade, which was somewhat depressed of late years, shows much more cheering symptoms in the past few months, and promises increase of output in a marked degree. The woollen-mills have steadily kept up their full employing-capacity, and the only drawback to their increased trade is the difficulty in getting sufficient labour, especially that of girls in the hosiery departments. Laundry-work almost doubled, and the demand for workers in this industry exceeds the supply. There was some falling-off in business among tanners and fellmongers, while the saddlery and harnessmaking trade was decidedly decadent. Tailoring, clothing (factory), and dressmaking were very buoyant and called for much overtime work.

The full employment of skilled labour in towns has been equalled by that of agricultural and pastoral workers in country districts. That the increase in cultivation and breeding of stock has been of service to all classes is shown by the steadily growing value of the colony's exports, which has risen from £8,557,443 to £14,838,192 in the last ten years, a fact in which both farmer and runholder must rejoice; while the value of the savings-banks deposits (accumulated in small amounts) in increasing by £3,861,154 in the same ten years shows that the operative classes have not only prospered, but have husbanded much of the financial results of their labour.