

## WELLINGTON.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Wellington, 15th April, 1907.

I have the honour to submit my annual report for the year ending the 31st March.

Owing to the general prosperity in all branches of trade during the period the result has been very pleasing. The activity in the building trade has far excelled previous years, thereby giving employment to a large number of workers. The buildings that have been erected are of a superior class, the architecture of some being a credit to the City of Wellington. In some instances the provisions made for proper ventilation were not as good as they might have been, still owners and occupiers have been willing to carry out any reasonable request, as they know that where there is good ventilation it is a boon and a blessing to the employee and the employer, as better results are obtained from the worker.

The extension of the electric tramway has had a telling effect on all suburban properties, and the high prices obtained for land in or near the city have excelled what was anticipated by the most sanguine. Up-to-date buildings are being erected in all parts of the suburbs.

The engineering and iron trade was dull during the early part of the period, but improved very much during the later part, and at present the prospects are brighter than for some time past.

The woollen-mills have been very busy in all branches during the period, and great difficulty has been experienced in obtaining the necessary labour to keep pace with the demand for the goods manufactured. The colonial article is gradually taking the place of the imported one.

The furniture trades have had an exceptionally good year, all hands being constantly employed.

The boot and shoe trade has maintained a healthy tone during the greater part of the period, and the output shows a substantial increase in all classes, especially in the lighter lines. A difficulty has been experienced in getting good machinists and finishers. The prospects seem good for the coming year.

The tailoring and clothing trades were a little slack for two months of the period; no one seemed able to account for the slackness, then orders came to hand with a rush. All available hands were anxiously sought after, but although the numbers were greatly increased the demand for garments far exceeded the supply.

## FACORIES.

During the period there has again been a very substantial increase in the number of factories over the previous year, there being now 1,051 registered. This shows an increase of 111, employing 9,033 persons—viz., 6,467 males and 2,566 females. This also shows an increase of 801 persons for the year.

During the said period 376 certificates of fitness to young persons were issued—viz., 157 boys and 219 girls. Of the boys 55 passed the Fourth Standard, 52 the Fifth, 37 the Sixth, and 13 the Seventh. Of the girls 70 passed the Fourth Standard, 62 the Fifth, 62 the Sixth, and 25 the Seventh.

The Act is giving general satisfaction to employers and employees. There are few, if any, employers who would desire to revert to the old state of things, for they now realise it is to their advantage that the conditions of the workers have been improved. There is very little difficulty in carrying out the provisions of the Act. Sometimes a difficulty arises in the case of old buildings when the lease has only a short time to run, and it is hard to get the necessary improvements carried out. Special attention has been given to providing fire-escapes.

There have been 10 prosecutions under this Act during the year, and convictions have been secured in each case.

## OVERTIME.

4,017 persons have worked 175,799 hours overtime—viz., 2,189 males have worked 123,129 hours and 1,828 females and boys worked 52,670 hours.

Great care has been taken to see that the overtime provided by section 22 of the Factories Act has not been exceeded. There has been a large increase in applications for overtime in the laundry business. This, no doubt, is due to the extra traffic on steamers and trains caused through visitors from all parts passing through *en route* to the Exhibition in Christchurch. The increase of overtime worked over the previous year is 75,039 hours.

## ACCIDENTS.

There have been 117 accidents reported during the year, none of which proved fatal. Full inquiries have been made into all accidents reported, and where it was considered possible to guard machinery such received the prompt attention of the occupiers. The following are among the most serious of the accidents: A boy had one of his fingers taken off while working a leather-cutting machine; another had his arm broken through his clothing getting caught by the shafting of a printing-machine; another had three fingers taken off by a planing-machine; a man while placing machinery in position got badly hurt by the giving-way of the overhead beam to which the tackling was fastened; another fell into a vat of hot fat and got his legs and feet badly scalded. A girl working a steam mangle in a laundry had her hand badly crushed and burnt. The other 111 accidents were of a less serious nature. Care in all cases was taken to see that the provisions of the 'Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act were observed.

## SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

The Act generally has been working satisfactorily, but the provisions of section 21, whereby it is provided that the closing-hour of all shops in any particular trade or trades may be fixed by requisition, has given rise to a good deal of trouble, and has entailed a good deal of extra work. The chief difficulty