

CONCLUSION.

In concluding this report, I desire to express my appreciation of the good work done by all our Inspectors and the entire staff for their uniform kindness and for the assiduous and faithful way they have carried out their duties, many of which are both arduous and difficult. I have also to acknowledge my indebtedness to the unfailing courtesy of employers and workers that my duties have brought me in contact with during my short term of office.

I have, &c.,

J. LOMAS,

Chief Inspector of Factories.

The Hon. the Minister of Labour.

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

AUCKLAND.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Auckland, 10th April, 1908.

I have the honour to submit for your consideration my report for the year ending 31st March, 1908.

LABOUR.

I am pleased to state that the condition of trade and labour has been highly satisfactory during the period under review. The building trade has been very active, and evidence of such activity is to be seen in the number of new substantial buildings that have been erected in and about the city. Very few tradesmen have failed to find employment at any time at this trade, and in proof of the continued stability of the trade I am credibly informed that no good tradesmen need be out of work.

Unskilled Labour: The condition of this class of our work has been very satisfactory inasmuch that we have had very little difficulty in finding employment for most of the men who have called at the office during the year just ended. Of course, there are some men that call here whom it is impossible to provide for—that is, men who have passed the age when they are regarded as useful or capable of earning their living, or when, as frequently happens, they are rendered useless by excessive drinking. Such men it is very difficult to deal with, but, fortunately, there are not many of those calling on us now. During the period 1,878 men have been sent to employment—i.e., 469 married and 1,409 single men. Of these, 596 were sent to private work and 1,282 to railway and other Government works. The preponderance of single over married men assisted is in itself evidence of the prosperity of the district, as showing there is not the necessity for married men to leave their homes to get work.

FACTORIES ACT.

This Act is working very satisfactorily. Both parties—the employers and the workers—appear to recognise its usefulness and respect its requirements, with the result that there are very few irregularities detected, and they are of the minor order. Such a thing as deliberate evasion of its principles is now practically a thing of the past. During the year the Town of Onehunga lost its local Inspector through the death of Sergeant Twomey, an able and faithful officer. Since that event Onehunga has been included in this district, and the number of our factories thereby increased by forty-one, employing 451 persons—namely, 361 males and 90 females. There are, including the above, 1,450 factories registered, employing 12,353 persons—viz., 9,558 males and 2,795 females, an increase of 1,194 over the number employed last year. The increase in favour of the masculine gender is 1,530, while there is a falling-off of 336 females from the number employed last year.

Permits to young persons to work in factories have been issued to 579 persons—namely, 238 boys and 341 girls. Of the boys, 98 passed Standard IV, 61 Standard V, and 79 Standard VI; girls, 132 passed Standard IV, 101 Standard V, and 108 Standard VI. In this connection the eagerness of some parents to get their children into work is remarkable, and the number of children who have reached the age of fourteen and have not passed the Fourth Standard is also astonishing. We have to refuse quite a large number of applicants because they have not passed the Fourth Standard, and in many cases the Third Standard. It is hard to believe that such carelessness exists with regard to the education of children when every facility is offered to educate them; but such are the facts.

Overtime is still on the increase. This year 1,499 males over sixteen years have worked 64,272 hours, and 2,426 females and boys under sixteen years have worked 64,478 hours, making a total of 123,750 hours worked, an increase of 1,432 persons, working an increase of 33,606 hours, over last year's returns. There are two reasons given by employers in support of the necessity for working overtime—first, the steady increase of trade; second, the difficulty they experience in getting young people, especially girls, to come in to learn the trade. This difficulty is met with more especially in the boot trade and the factory clothing trade. Prominent employers in the latter trade have assured me that they could give constant work to at least three hundred young women if they could get them, and they complain that, owing to the difficulty of getting workers to carry out their orders, there is a possibility of the trade going away from them.