

Labour in 1892 was about four and a half—i.e., each married man supported a wife and an average of three and a half dependent children. By a gradual decline—a very gradual decline—the percentage fell to about two and three-quarters dependents in 1909. That is to say, that in 1909 each married man assisted had, in addition to his wife, an average of one and three-quarters dependent children to represent his family. Of course, there were among the numbers treated of some newly married men without families ; but men in a similar position are included with the others in each of the annual returns from the commencement, and the balance is fairly even.

I do not presume to say that husbands and wives earning small incomes, and evidently, from the circumstances, in precarious employment, when employed at all, should be expected to undertake the expenses, anxieties, and responsibilities attending the birth and nurture of large families, but I record the fact that young families do not belong to the men (artisans, mechanics, and labourers) who are helped to employment by this Department.

A possible cause for there being practically no increase in factory-workers this year in comparison with previous years is the decline of certain trades, notably those of milling flax and timber. Most of the men no longer employed in these industries have been absorbed into other occupations ; but, these being mainly agricultural occupations, the workers therein escape from being included in the factory figures.

A curious point in regard to this year's statistics is that whilst the number of factories increased by 454, the number of workers increased by only 223. As it takes two or more persons working together making goods for the purpose of sale, &c., before their work-place is considered a factory, it would appear at the first glance that in the 454 new factories there must be at least 908 people employed, and that the number of workers should have increased in ratio with the increase in the number of factories. The explanation is simple : workers discharged on account of slackening trade have, in many cases, started small factories on their own account, so drawing away other workers from longer-established places of business.

The total amount of wages paid in the New Zealand factories last year was £5,710,226, whilst that of the previous year was £5,319,019, showing that we gained £391,207 on the wages of the previous year. The following table shows how these wages were distributed in the different trades :—

*Wages paid in the Several Trades, 1st April, 1908, to 31st March, 1909.*

Class.	Wages paid during the Years		Increase.	Increase Percentage.
	1908-9.	1907-8.		
	£	£	£	
Food trades .. .. .	1,094,933	1,015,700	79,233	7.8
Woodworking trades .. .. .	1,017,393	935,336	82,057	8.8
Iron and metal trades .. .. .	993,408	896,057	97,351	10.9
Clothing trades .. .. .	821,716	781,372	40,344	5.2
Printing and stationery trades .. .. .	356,680	325,746	30,934	9.5
Leather-working trades .. .. .	339,438	303,253	36,185	11.9
Stone, clay, and mineral trades .. .. .	215,494	187,532	27,962	14.9
Light, heat, and power trades .. .. .	137,346	123,016	14,330	11.7
Ship building and repairing trades .. .. .	78,564	61,727	16,837	27.3
Chemical and by-product trades .. .. .	74,459	65,522	8,937	13.6
Watch and jewellery trades .. .. .	44,441	42,892	1,549	3.6
Paper and cardboard trades .. .. .	20,199	16,164	4,035	25.0
Basket and wicker trades .. .. .	18,178	15,879	2,299	14.5
Miscellaneous, not included above .. .. .	497,977	548,823	Decrease. 50,846	..
Totals .. .. .	5,710,226	5,319,019	391,207	7.3

There was an increase in the wages paid in all the larger groups of trades, amounting to £442,053. In the " Miscellaneous " there was a decrease of £50,846, so that the real increase for the year was £391,207. The decrease in " Miscellaneous " is, however, entirely owing to the depression in flax-milling (there being now only 173 factories registered, against 307 in 1907-8), in which the wages diminished by £64,229 against those of last year, and to the fact that the fellmongery business also lowered wages by £15,473 on its last year's record. Had it not been for these two items, " Miscellaneous " would have shown an increase of £28,856, and so have ranked with the other trade groups in a satisfactory way.