

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

## AUCKLAND.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Auckland, 28th April, 1909.

I have the honour to submit, for your consideration, my report for the year ending 31st March, 1909.

### LABOUR.

There has been a marked change in the condition of trade and labour this year from what we have been accustomed to, and the result is that since July, 1908, trade has fallen off very much, throwing numbers of workmen out of employment; consequently the number of applicants for work has ever since outnumbered the applications for workers.

The building trade has fallen off to such an extent that as many as 24 carpenters, 26 painters, and several in other branches of the building trade have registered their names for work in one day.

There does not appear to be so many unemployed tradesmen about at present, but that is due largely to the fact that a number have left for the Commonwealth, with the hope of obtaining work there; yet there are still 20 carpenters signing the out-of-employment book daily.

*Unskilled Labour.*—Since July, 1908, owing to the completion of work on the North Island Main Trunk Railway, and from other causes, men began to flock into town, making for a time a considerable number of men unemployed. A certain amount of agitation was caused by means of “unemployed” meetings, but, notwithstanding this, only a small number registered their names on our books.

The position was relieved when the Public Works Department transferred its operations to a certain extent from the Main Trunk line to the North Auckland Railway line; yet we have had more men calling since that date than we have been able to provide work for.

During the year 1908–9 the number of men sent to work from this office was 2,250—viz., 378 married men with 1,184 dependent on them, and 1,872 single men. 1,422 were sent to railway and other Government works and 828 to private work. I would draw attention here to the preponderance of single men assisted as against married men (being about five to one), as an indication that the falling-off in the demand for unskilled labour has not fortunately so far very seriously affected the married worker. The City Council will shortly be employing a number of men on their drainage and other works, which will no doubt relieve the somewhat congested condition of the labour market.

### FACTORIES ACT.

This Act is working very smoothly. There is very little attempt at evasion of its provisions, and where breaches do occur they are generally of the minor order. There are many reasons to advance for the success of this Act, the chief of which is that both employers and employees are alive to the advantages they receive under the Act, and so safeguard them; and also because so many persons employed in factories are working directly under awards of the Arbitration Court, which cover some of the provisions of the Act. During the first quarter of the year our factories were busily employed, but since then the volume of trade has fallen off very considerably, with the result that for the greater part of the year our factories have been running slack. This slackness has not been confined to any particular trade, but has been very general. In some cases the hands have been retrenched, in other cases they have been obliged to work short time. It is pleasing to note, however, that employers speak very assuringly of an early return to their former active condition.

We have this year registered 1,502 factories, employing 12,903 persons—that is, 9,366 males and 3,537 females. This constitutes a record for this district, being an increase of 52 factories, employing 550 persons, over last year's returns.

Permits to young persons to work in factories, under sections 28 and 29, have been issued to 536 persons—namely, 283 boys and 253 girls. Care is taken to have the ages verified by the constituted authorities, and the school standard certificates produced. There is a decrease of 43 permits issued from last year's return, which is explained by the fact that there has not been the demand for young workers during the latter part of the year that has usually existed.

*Overtime.*—There has been a considerable falling-off in the volume of overtime (94,781 hours) worked this year. 1,271 men have worked 58,107 hours, and 1,461 women and boys have worked 36,674 hours, being 1,193 less persons working 33,969 less hours than for last year. The falling-off is almost entirely in the clothing (factory) branch of the trade. It will be remembered that during the year 1907–8 there was some difficulty in securing workers in that branch of trade, consequently the work had to be done by working overtime.

*Accidents.*—Two hundred and sixteen accidents have been reported during the year; 21 were of a more or less serious nature, amongst which a butcher got entangled in the gear of a sausage-machine, and had his right arm broken and a few minor injuries; he attempted to adjust a belt while the engine was running at full speed. A boy engaged in feeding a tile-making machine incautiously put his hand into the hopper, and lost his left arm. A yardman was stacking timber, when a quantity of timber fell on him, injuring him internally. A lad working at a biscuit-machine was told to clean out under the machine; he attempted to do so while the machine was in motion, with the result that his clothes caught in the machinery, and he was badly bruised and three ribs were broken. The remainder were of a slight nature, consisting of cuts and bruises incidental to factory life where machinery is employed, and necessitating a short absence from work. All accidents are carefully inquired into, and where anything can be done by way of guarding machines to minimise accidents, it is done.

*Prosecutions.*—There were 9 prosecutions during the year, and a conviction and penalty were secured in each case.