

The year just passed may best be described as being a normal one. There has not been any undue fluctuation in trade, and, generally speaking, all branches of industry have been steadily busy. Skilled tradesmen have been well employed, and the ironworkers, who suffered a slack season in 1910, had a rather better year, although this trade still seems to lack buoyancy. Cabinetmakers and some of those connected with the building trades—notably plumbers, painters, bricklayers, and plasterers—had a fairly full year's employment, and there has been less complaint from carpenters on the score of lack of work during 1911–12 than during the previous year. Unskilled labour, too, has had a fairly good year, and it was noticeable that the winter months passed away without any congestion of unemployed being reported in any part of the Dominion. The total number of men assisted by the Department shows a considerable decrease over 1910–11: in that year 7,102 were sent or assisted to employment, as against 5,735 in 1911–12, a decrease of 1,367. Of this number, 1,407 were married and 4,328 were single men and widowers. Of the total, 3,450 were sent to or given assistance to private employment, and 2,285 were sent to Government works.

Of those applying at the Department's employment branches, the following have received practical assistance since the Department's formation:—

Year.	Total.	Married.	Single.	Dependants.	Private Work.	Government Work.
1891–92	2,593	1,054	1,539	4,729	1,730	863
1892–93	3,874	1,808	2,066	7,802	2,518	1,356
1893–94	3,341	1,836	1,505	7,942	1,019	2,322
1894–95	3,030	2,007	1,023	8,883	894	2,136
1895–96	2,871	1,880	991	8,424	708	2,163
1896–97	1,718	1,084	634	4,719	652	1,066
1897–98	2,035	1,163	872	4,928	544	1,491
1898–99	2,115	1,178	937	4,759	638	1,477
1899–1900	2,147	1,115	1,032	4,471	486	1,661
1900–1	3,124	1,326	1,798	5,432	519	2,605
1901–2	1,830	713	1,117	2,747	396	1,434
1902–3	3,704	1,492	2,212	5,934	580	3,124
1903–4	2,860	777	2,083	3,085	1,216	1,644
1904–5	3,130	953	2,177	3,425	1,960	1,170
1905–6	6,712	2,027	4,685	7,351	1,929	4,783
1906–7	7,393	1,427	5,966	4,187	2,718	4,675
1907–8	6,305	1,440	4,865	4,408	2,977	3,328
1908–9	10,391	2,538	7,853	7,510	4,190	6,201
1909–10	8,506	2,987	5,519	10,164	5,059	3,447
1910–11	7,102	2,181	4,921	8,454	4,251	2,851
1911–12	5,735	1,407	4,328	4,233	3,450	2,285
Totals	90,516	32,393	58,123	123,587	38,434	52,082

The usual shortage of farm labourers was experienced during the spring and summer months, and locally trained men could not be obtained. The oversea arrivals gladly availed themselves of this work, and farmers invariably welcomed their assistance, even although the majority had had no previous farm experience. In this regard I would like to emphasize the fact that farmers, especially dairy-farmers, are in the habit of engaging their labour through the Department's agents in the early spring, and, after providing work from September to April inclusive, many discharge the men during the winter. A fairly large number of such instances has come under my notice, whilst in other cases hands are kept on at reduced wages. Whilst this is a legitimate action on the part of farmers, it has the tendency to break the men's liking for the work, besides greatly increasing the Department's problem of finding work for such men during the winter months. Almost invariably the men find their way to the towns, and if they are successful in finding work they will not return again to the country districts when the busy season starts. Some reliable evidence has also been given to the Department that in a number of instances for wages of from £1 5s. to £1 10s. per week men in the dairying districts are expected to commence work at 4 a.m., and not to finish till 8 p.m.; and when the season slackens and the daylight hours draw in they have to face discharge or reduced earnings. Such being the case, I must infer that these methods are responsible to some extent for the shortage of farm labour experienced, as conditions such as these will not be accepted by men when they can secure better working-conditions elsewhere. During the coming season the question as to the