

1924.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR

(REPORT OF THE).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

REPORT.

The SECRETARY, Department of Labour, to the Hon. the MINISTER OF LABOUR.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Wellington, 16th June, 1924.

I have the honour to present herewith the thirty-third annual report of this Department, for the information of His Excellency the Governor-General and to be laid before Parliament in compliance with the Labour Department Act, 1908, and the Factories Act, 1921-22. The report covers the financial year 1st April, 1923, to 31st March, 1924.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Labour.

F. W. ROWLEY,

Secretary of Labour.

CONDITIONS OF TRADE AND EMPLOYMENT.

THE world-wide economic crises that have been a recurring feature of the years that have passed since the war have naturally had a marked effect on employment and trade in New Zealand. The "slump" of 1921-22 caused trade to be reduced to a lower level, and unemployment became a serious matter for the Department to cope with, the number of applications for employment reaching a large number—viz., 1,825—in June, 1922. By the end of that year, however, the most serious aspect of the unemployment difficulty so far as New Zealand was concerned was already passing away, the number of applicants having fallen steadily to 660. The following winter of 1923 saw an increase in the number, although the total—953—was only about half that for the previous winter. This total again fell, to 351, in December, 1923, which in turn has risen again this winter to 577. Labourers comprise over 50 per cent. of the present applicants, the remainder including clerks (27), cooks, stewards, &c. (27), drivers (26), engineers (30), farm-hands (21), seamen and firemen (18), and other occupations in smaller numbers.

It will be again noticed that, with the exception of engineers and motor-mechanics, none of the skilled trades in which apprenticeship periods are required shows any degree of unemployment.* The Public Works Department has been asked to make the usual arrangements for placing the more necessitous cases on public works for the winter months. Added to this, local bodies have throughout New Zealand taken up the work of effecting street and road alterations, putting in electric-power stations and tramway extensions, and making improvements to parks and reserves, and many men will thereby be employed.

As a result of the liberation through the State Advances Department of large sums for house building, the building trade has been more active than at any time since 1914, and an increased number of men were in consequence engaged in this industry.

The large importation of boots during 1923-24 has, however, had a depressing effect on the boot-manufacturing trade, one of the largest and newest factories in New Zealand being closed down for several weeks, while others have been working short time since last September.

Total engagements made at Department's employment bureaux:—

1923-24—3,877 (1,859 to public works, 2,018 to private employment). Dependants, 3,814.

In addition, 437 men were assisted by the advancing of railway fares or otherwise.

1922-23—3,987 (2,296 to public works, 1,691 to private employment). Dependants, 4,327.

* For remarks on the apprenticeship and vocational-training question, also the Apprentices Act passed last session, see page 11.