

1898.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR

(REPORT OF THE).

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

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

SIR,— Department of Labour, Wellington, 31st May, 1898.
I have the honour to present herewith the seventh annual report of this department. It covers the late financial year—viz., from the 1st April, 1897, to the 31st March, 1898.

I have, &c.,

The Right Hon. R. J. Seddon, Minister of Labour.

EDWARD TREGEAR, Secretary.

LABOUR.

The year ending 31st March, 1898, was one of prosperity to the working-classes of New Zealand generally, with the exception of the members of two or three trades. In some branches of industry there were large demands upon labour, and, although the grain harvest failed or was impoverished in certain localities, the high price of grain compensated for a diminished yield. There were few demands upon this department for work, if we make comparisons with the numbers similarly making application five or six years ago. The total number helped during the year was 2,035 men, these having 4,928 dependents. These figures do not include some 296 women assisted to situations in Wellington by the Women's Branch of the Labour Department. The summary of men to whom advances have been made hitherto is as follows:—

| | Men. | Dependents. |
|--------------------------------------|--------|-------------|
| June, 1891, to 31st March, 1892 | 2,593 | 4,729 |
| 1st April, 1892, to 31st March, 1893 | 3,874 | 7,802 |
| 1st April, 1893, to 31st March, 1894 | 3,371 | 8,002 |
| 1st April, 1894, to 31st March, 1895 | 3,030 | 8,883 |
| 1st April, 1895, to 31st March, 1896 | 2,871 | 8,424 |
| 1st April, 1896, to 31st March, 1897 | 1,718 | 4,719 |
| 1st April, 1897, to 31st March, 1898 | 2,035 | 4,928 |
| | 19,492 | 47,487 |

This tabulation shows that the number of persons helped by the Labour Department since June, 1891—viz., 19,492 men, with their 47,487 dependents—is 66,979.

To a large proportion of the men who have applied for and received the help of the Government to proceed to work it is certain that the employment thus procured has been of immense service. It has often meant rescue, if not from starvation, from the reception of charitable aid, the acceptance of which is generally unspeakably bitter to honest working people. It has sometimes prevented a feeling of utter despair taking possession of a defeated labourer, and has enabled him not only to get a few weeks' or a few months' work at a critical time, but in many cases has allowed him the means to leave an overcrowded town and proceed to a country district, where one job has succeeded another until he has found a place in rural society that he can fill with advantage both to himself and to his neighbours. On the other hand, it must be confessed that some of those for whom work has been found have made little effort to help themselves. This class of men has not been created either by the co-operative works or the Labour Department; they formerly stood about helplessly at street-corners; they are not really idle men, but they lack energy, and are economically helpless.

The operatives that have been exceptionally well employed during the past year are the engineers and ironworkers, together with those in the building trades. Woollen-mills and clothing-factories have been in full swing, and the constantly increasing demands in the tailoring and