

1900.

NEW ZEALAND.

## INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS IN GREAT BRITAIN

(CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE AGENT-GENERAL AND THE HOME OFFICE  
CONCERNING TELEGRAPHIC STATEMENT RELATING TO).*Laid upon the Table of both Houses of the General Assembly by Leave.*

Mr. W. KENNAWAY to the Rt. Hon. the PREMIER.

SIR,—

Westminster Chambers, 13, Victoria Street, London, S.W.

Referring to my letter, No. 1800, of the 11th instant, concerning the telegraphic statement published in the *New Zealand Times*, relating to industrial accidents in this country, I beg herewith to transmit copy of correspondence, by which it will be seen that the Home Office, while admitting that there has been considerable increase in the number of such accidents since the Workmen's Compensation Act came into operation, express an opinion that no part of the increase can in any way be attributed to the working of that Act.

I have, &amp;c.,

WALTER KENNAWAY

(For the Agent-General of New Zealand).

The Rt. Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

Mr. W. KENNAWAY to the UNDER-SECRETARY of STATE.

SIR,—

13, Victoria Street, S.W., 8th August, 1899.

A statement has been published in New Zealand to the effect that after twelve months' working of the Workmen's Compensation Act there has been an increase in the records of workmen killed of 14 per cent., and of those injured 38 per cent., and in reference thereto the Agent-General has been instructed by his Government to ascertain whether that statement can be regarded as reliable.

The Agent-General would therefore be much obliged if you could favour him with such information as will enable him to reply to his Government's inquiry.

I am, &amp;c.,

WALTER KENNAWAY.

The Under-Secretary of State, Home Office, S.W.

Mr. K. E. DIGBY to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,—

Whitehall, 14th August, 1899.

I am directed by the Secretary of State, in reply to Mr. Kennaway's letter of the 8th instant, to say that, though the figures referred to in that letter are not quite accurate, it is the fact that a comparison of the returns of accidents for the twelve months preceding and the twelve months following the date when the Workmen's Compensation Act came into force does show in some industries a considerable increase in the number of workmen reported as killed or injured, but that there is no reason to think that this increase is in any way due to the operation of the Act.

Taking the twelve months from July, 1897, to June, 1898, and comparing them with the twelve months from July, 1898, to June, 1899, the following increases of fatal accidents are found in the different industries: In railways, from 505 to 522, or 3 per cent.; in mines, from 850 to 920, or 8 per cent.; in quarries, from 101 to 135, or 33 per cent.; in factories, from 504 to 660, or 31 per cent. (for buildings and for engineering works there are no complete returns). But with regard to these figures it is to be observed—First, that in railways the increase of 3 per cent. is less

than the annual increase of the number of persons employed, and therefore the death-rate (that is, the proportion of deaths to persons employed) has fallen, not risen; second, that in mines there has also been a great increase in the number of persons employed, and, though the figures showing the numbers are not yet available, there is good reason to think there is no material increase in the death-rate; third, in factories and in quarries the increase in the death-rate is to be attributed entirely to the condition of trade. An examination of the statistics of persons killed and injured in factories shows that the numbers regularly increase with the improvement in trade, and always reach a maximum in the years when trade is at its best; and there can be no doubt that the great increase during the past twelve months is due to this cause—the improvement of trade—which causes work to be done under high pressure, and therefore with greater risk, and which brings into employment a large number of less skilled persons, who are more likely to cause accidents than the permanent hands. The increase of fatal accidents from this cause extends to employments which do not come within the Workmen's Compensation Act, such as shipping, where the increase of deaths during the period under consideration amounts to 23 per cent.

As regards non-fatal injuries, the increase of reported accidents is greater than in the case of fatal accidents. The reason for this is, that the conditions under which non-fatal accidents are required to be reported leave in practice a considerable discretion to the employers of labour, and that the attention directed to accidents by the working of the Compensation Act has had the effect of leading them to report a larger number of cases than formerly. The improvement of trade, therefore, accounts for part of the increase in non-fatal accidents; the remainder of the increase is merely apparent, and is due to better reporting.

As stated before, the Secretary of State is advised that no part of the increase in actual accidents can in any way be attributed to the Workmen's Compensation Act.

The Agent-General for New Zealand, 13, Victoria Street.

I am, &c.,

KENELM E. DIGBY.

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