

town workers, but, of course, reacts through agricultural districts also. The steadiness of trade accounts for the general aspect of prosperity which strikes a visitor to New Zealand, and which is in great measure owing to the fact that wages although low are reliable, and are not discounted by much lost time as they were some years ago.

The four chief cities of New Zealand are increasing year by year in the number of fine buildings which have been erected for commercial and industrial purposes. In Wellington alone several hundreds of thousands of pounds have taken architectural form in stone, brick, wood, and steel during the year, while Christchurch, Dunedin, and Auckland are very little way behind in heavy expenditure. Napier, Timaru, Invercargill, Masterton, Nelson, Wanganui, and Palmerston North have also added greatly to their valuable business and private establishments. The result has been that the building trades have had a period of pressure and more than full work, very few places having had any slack time. Some part of this progress may be allocated to the share of the "rating on unimproved values" being adopted in many places, thus making it costly to keep sections of land idle for speculative purposes or occupied by old buildings at low rentals; but more, perhaps, may be put down to the share which the extension of electric tramways has had in encouraging building in the suburbs.

In the north the boat and ship building trade was busy. The engineering and iron trades have been slack all over the colony for a long time, but began to brisk up again in the south at the beginning of 1906. There are still some blacksmiths and boiler-makers out of work. The agricultural-implement trade has made steady progress in Dunedin. The boot trade appears to have taken a fresh lease of life. A few years ago it seemed probable that as a local industry it would become extinct. It has not only recovered itself, but hands for special departments could not be found, especially female machinists. The saddlery and harness-making business, which looked sickly two years ago, is improving. The coach-building trade has been poor; the electric-tram system and motor-cars are exercising a prejudicial effect thereon. Laundries have been very busy, efficient laundresses being in number far below demand. Clothing and tailoring are active, and employ many hands; but the woollen-mills are keeping expenses down as much as possible, the high price of wool and the imports from Britain eating into all the margins of profit. The furniture trade follows the building trade in its variations of activity, and has consequently done well this year. Straw-hat and felt-hat making are employing many women and girls. Upholstery, confectionery, fruit-preserving, &c., have been up to full standard of employment.

Country labour has been difficult to adjust owing to fluctuations, but on the average there has been a dearth rather than a surplus of agricultural and unskilled labour. A great many men have been at work on the railway co-operative works, and many new-comers have had to resort to the pick and shovel. To some this has proved distasteful, but it must be remembered that when work is provided for almost every one who asks, the question of fitness has to be ascertained by practical experience of their capabilities. For farm-hands, and for men able to do drainage, fencing, &c., on stations and farms, there was plenty of occupation to be obtained. In country settlements the ordinary labourer or small settler declines to leave his home for casual work, preferring that temporary employment should be catered for by strangers. The harvesting and grass-seeding operations in Canterbury were badly influenced by the severe weather.

The number of men assisted by the Labour Department or obtaining work by its agency is as follows:—

NUMBER OF MEN ASSISTED BY THE DEPARTMENT SINCE INSTITUTION TO DATE.

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
	45,084	20,413	24,671	84,631	15,789	29,295