

This table shows that there have been assisted by this Department during fifteen years some 45,084 men, having 84,631 dependants, reaching a total of 129,715 persons benefited. This year the number of the men forwarded to the railways has been so unusual that it more than doubles the count of those sent to private work; but the people sent to private employment this year is greatly in excess of the co-operative worker on the railway a twelvemonth ago. Another point is that while for a decade the married men assisted exceeded the single men, the opposite position has been reached, and the single men outnumber the married men in more than double proportion.

FACTORIES.

The increase of factories and of workers therein for the last twelve years is as follows :—

Year.	Factories.	Increase.	Factory Workers.	Increase.
1895	4,109	...	29,879	...
1896	4,647	538	32,387	2,508
1897	5,177	530	36,918	4,531
1898	5,601	424	39,672	2,754
1899	6,286	685	45,305	5,633
1900	6,438	152	48,938	3,633
1901	6,744	306	53,460	4,522
1902	7,203	459	55,395	1,935
1903	7,675	472	59,047	3,652
1904	8,373	698	63,968	4,921
1905	9,123	750	67,713	3,745
1906	9,881	758	70,403	2,690
Total increase	...	5,772	...	40,524

This year's increase is largely composed of workers situated in Wellington and Dunedin. In Christchurch there is a decrease in the number both of factories and of persons employed; but the lesser number is probably caused by a shift in the local economic position, since the factory fees collected were £7 more than last year. This is interpreted to show that the small factories have been absorbed by larger establishments, better adapted, perhaps, to more extensive use of machinery, since the fees of small factories are merely nominal.

The overtime worked has been considerable, but cannot accurately be compared with that of former years, because by the help of statutory regulations the record is now more complete than it was previously possible to obtain :—

	Women and Boys.	Hours worked.	Men.	Hours worked.
Auckland	1,685	46,046	563	43,263
Wellington	1,614	37,146	952	63,614
Christchurch	2,405	60,681	1,622	64,059
Dunedin	1,198	37,080	785	104,071
Totals	6,902	180,953	3,922	275,007

This shows an average of twenty-six hours overtime each worked by women and boys, and of seventy hours worked by the men. Overtime as worked at present has few evils from the point of view of the workers' health, as the restriction to certain days, together with constant and close supervision given by the Inspectors of Factories to the question of the strength and endurance of the young people required to work overtime, prevent more than a very exceptional case (if any) of excessive strain. The economic point of view of overtime—viz., its militating against the employment of outsiders—has at present little bearing on the subject, as in the trades which have used the permits for overtime trained hands have not been obtainable from outside to take the temporary place of those at work.

The accidents in factories number 529. Few were of a serious nature, but eight were fatal, and occurred in spite of precaution being taken to prevent casualties. It is difficult to suggest more strict enforcement of guards and protections for machinery, unless the efficiency of the machinery is to be paralysed. In the case, however, of two fatal accidents which occurred in Auckland, both taking place in elevators, I recommend that some more stringent regulation be made for those using such machines, and that penalties be inflicted on persons disregarding notices that certain lifts are to be used only for goods and not for the conveyance of human beings, as the practice seems common to regard such notices as being mere matters of form.

In Auckland, Dunedin, and Wellington, Chinese laundries appear to have gained an undesirably secure footing. In Dunedin there are twenty-one European and twenty-three Chinese laundries. Asiatics probably have their uses, since they have acquired a share of public patronage, but their establishment in such a business is a thing to be regretted, since laundry-work is often the refuge of poor widows and other women who have hitherto found in the occupation refuge from destitution. The