

Wages and Work In New Zealand

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WELLINGTON, New Zealand, Feb. 27.— (Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—I had lost myself in Auckland. I had been visiting Mr. Frank Dillingham, our American consul, who lives in one of the suburbs under the shadow of Mount Eden, and had started back on foot when I met a coarsely dressed, rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed, healthy-looking young man and asked him to direct me to the Star hotel.

"I am going that way," said he, "and, if you will walk with me, I will show you." So we went along together.

"How are times here?" said I.
"Very good," was the reply. "We all have plenty of work and we get enough to keep us from starving."

"What is your business?" I asked.
"I belong to the street-cleaning brigade. I have a job with the city and I get 8 shillings (about \$2) per day."

"What hours do you work?"
"Oh!" with a laugh, "my hours are not bad. No one here works more than forty-eight hours a week. We put in enough time on the first five days so that we can have a half holiday Saturday. We street cleaners have a soft thing. We have only four hours' work on Saturday. We begin at 4 o'clock in the morning and get through by 8, so that we really have the whole day for ourselves."

"But how about wages on Saturday?"
"The wages are just the same as for the other days. I suppose I should say I get 48 shillings (\$12) per week instead of 8 shillings a day."

This conversation gives you some idea of work and wages in New Zealand. This is the land of the eight-hour day and the weekly half holiday. So far as the men are concerned the laws do not fix the number of hours, but forty-eight working hours is the usual week of the laboring man and every person has his weekly half holiday.



OFF FOR TRAMP FROM SATURDAY UNTIL MONDAY.

Where there is no weekly arrangement the day lasts for eight hours and when men are employed by the week they piece out the eight-hour day by working overtime, so as to give them only four or five hours on Saturday or some other day of the week. All government employes put in forty-eight hours a week. The various trades unions fix this as their time and at present the only people who work longer are the men on the farms and the clerks in the stores. There are a few trades which necessarily require some overtime, but, as a rule, the unions equalize this and the law steps in and supports the unions in their rules.

It was recently decided in a trouble between the employers and the shoemakers of Auckland that forty-eight hours must be considered a full week's work, and that no shoemaker should be paid less than 20 cents an hour. The Auckland butchers limit their labor to sixty-one hours, but they take off nine hours of that time for meals, so that the week's work is forty-eight hours. The wages of the different classes of butchers are fixed by law and the employer who breaks the law will be fined not to exceed \$50.

I have before me some decisions of the government boards of conciliation and arbitration regulating such matters. In all of them the union rules as to time are upheld and an hour rate of from 25 to 50 per cent higher than the regular wages is charged for all overtime.

Weekly Half Holiday.
The weekly half holiday is compulsory. The day is usually fixed by the local authorities and the factory or merchant who keeps his store open is fined for doing so, even if he dismisses his employes. If the merchant keeps his clerks he is fined for that. I see a record of a man in Foxton who employed two boys under 18 years of age on Saturday afternoon a few months ago. He was called up by the court and heavily fined. Another man employed a carter to work on a half holiday. He paid about \$5 and costs. The saloonists here

have scratched the country as with a fine tooth comb for pretty girls to act as barmaids. The law provides that every barmaid must be given her half holiday once a week or the saloonist pays \$25. It is the same with all classes of clerks and it is the same in the factories.

The question of the day on which the people are to take their weekly vacation is usually settled by the municipal authorities. It is fixed in January of each year and continues from then until some other day is



NEW ZEALAND WORKINGMEN—"THEY RUN THE COUNTRY."

appointed. In some towns it is Tuesday, in some Wednesday, in some Thursday and in many Saturday. Saturday is the day usually chosen for the factories, even though the stores in the same town may close on another day. If Saturday is the day fixed there are certain classes of men, such as grocers, butchers and market men, who may meet together and choose another day for their regular holiday.

This closing of the stores for one-half day each week seriously disarranges the work of the commercial travelers. The merchants will not buy on a holiday and the salesmen have to regulate their trips so as to skip the holiday towns on such days. The railroad guides publish the names of the towns, with the days of the week set aside as holidays opposite each town.

On half holidays the streets are as deserted as on Sunday. There are cricket matches, golf meetings and excursions. Most of the people put on their best clothes and go to the parks, and the whole town takes a vacation. Some go off into the country, and you will now and then meet a man on a tramp trip from Saturday to Monday. On such days the saloons are usually open. They are not known as saloons, but hotels, and you never expect a hotel to shut up. As far as I can see, however, there is much less drinking at such times than you would expect, and nothing like that of Saturday afternoons in the cities of Scotland.

The clerks seldom work much more than eight hours a day. I have gone along the streets at 8 o'clock in the morning and found many of the stores still closed. There is also a proviso that merchants and banks must close their places at 5 in the afternoon for two-thirds of each month. There is a penalty for delivering goods on a half holiday, and the law provides that the clerks shall not be worked longer on ordinary days to make up for their half holiday.

A Chat with Secretary for Labor.
It was to ask some questions about this and other labor matters that I called the other day upon the Honorable Edward Tregear, at the Labor department in Wellington. New Zealand has a department of labor which ranks even with the other departments of the government. It is on the same basis as the Treasury department and Agricultural department, and the secretary for labor has as much influence in New Zealand as a cabinet minister has in the United States. The present head of the Labor department is Mr. Tregear. He has been secretary for labor for the past decade, and has been one of the prime movers in all of New Zealand's experiments for the benefit of the laboring men.

It was in his office at the department of labor that I met Mr. Tregear. He is a slender, bright-eyed, intellectual looking man about 40 years of age. He is a good talker, especially on the subjects nearest his heart, namely, those connected with the labor movements. During our conversation he told me that he was at the bottom a socialist, and that he believed New Zealand's efforts toward equalizing the rights of man to be the beginning of a development which would spread and which would in time better the social condition of mankind.

I asked Secretary Tregear how the laboring men had come to get the upper hand in New Zealand. He replied:

"It originated in a strike which failed. It was the last strike we had, and it was more than seven years ago. At that time the unions controlled many branches of trade and they were fairly well united. Among others there was a union which handled all freight at the wharves, called the Maritime union. It was an old organiza-

tion, with plenty of money in its treasury, resulting from assessments upon its members throughout a period of years. As the funds increased, the old members decided that all new unionists should pay an initiation fee somewhat proportionate to the share each would have in the assets of the treasury. There were but few laboring men who could do this, and the consequence was that entrance to the union was difficult. Nevertheless, the union would not permit non-union men to work, and, though they could not handle all the work themselves, they still protested against the ship owners employing outsiders. The ship owners could not stand this. They took on extra men and defied the union. The members of the union struck, and through their relations with the other unions brought

Every factor keeps a record of the age, sex, character of the work, hours of work and wages of each of his employes and if this is not in accordance with the laws the inspector will notify him of the fact and prosecute him.

As to Women and Children.

"We have very stringent laws for the protection of women and children in the factories," Mr. Tregear continued. "We have women inspectors who go from factory to factory to investigate the condition of the women. According to law no woman or boy can be employed for more than forty-eight hours a week in a factory. No boy under 14 or girl under 18 can work in a glass factory, nor can any girl under 16 be employed in a brick or tile works or any place where any dry grinding in the metal trade or the dipping of lucifer matches is going on. This is to protect the health of the girl."

"Up to what age do you keep your children out of the factories?" I asked.

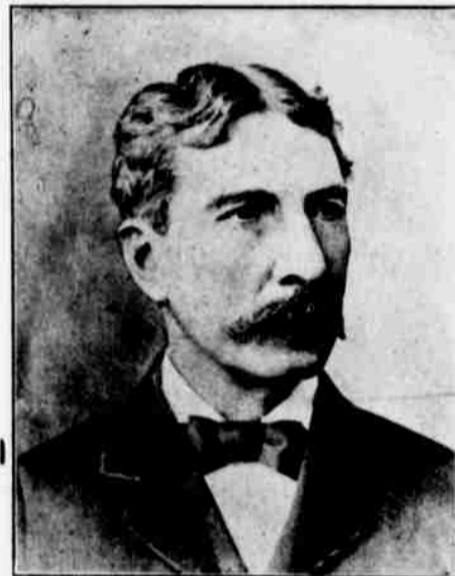
"We do not allow any to be employed under 14 and all under 16 must have passed through the fourth grade of the public schools. No woman, and no boy or girl under 18, can be employed for more than four hours and a half without an interval for meals. We provide that all the meals shall be taken outside the work rooms. This is to prevent any work being done during meal hours."

"How about wages, Mr. Tregear? Are any of your people paid in orders on stores?"

"No, we have strict laws as to such matters. The payment for labor in goods is illegal. In actions for wages, goods or articles furnished by the employer or supplied on his premises cannot be brought forth as a set off, nor can the employer sue his clerks for things so bought. Workmen must be paid in money, and at least once a month, if they so desire. In absence of written agreements those engaged in manual labor must be paid weekly, and if not so paid they can attach all money due or thereafter to become due to the employer on the work. The wages of those who receive less than \$10 per week cannot be touched for debt and where a man goes bankrupt the wages of his clerks and workmen for four months preceding are preferential claims on the estate."

I here asked Mr. Tregear to give me some idea of wages in New Zealand. He handed me a government report, from which I have deduced the following:

"Farm hands with board get from \$12 to \$20 per month, and without board from \$1 to \$1.75 per day. Shepherds receive from \$250 to \$350 per year, and shearers about



NEW ZEALAND'S FAMOUS LABOR SECRETARY—PHOTOGRAPH PRESENTED TO MR. CARPENTER.

5 cents per sheep. The sheep shearers have their union and regulate wages.

"Masons, bricklayers, plasterers and carpenters get from \$2 to \$3 per day, and plumbers and painters about the same. Saddlers are paid from \$1.75 to \$2.50, shoemakers from \$1.50 to \$2.50, and watchmakers from \$2 to \$3."

As to common everyday laborers, they get from \$1.25 to \$2.25 per day of eight hours. Engineers receive from \$2 to \$3 per day, tailors from \$1.75 to \$2.50, butchers from \$5 to \$8 per week and compositors from \$10 to \$15 per week.

In dry goods stores clerks are paid from \$7.50 to \$20 per week; grocery clerks receive from \$7.50 to \$15 per week and bakers about the same. The wages vary in the different provinces of New Zealand, the highest being paid in the gold fields.

The government has a minimum wage for certain classes. According to law every one who works in the factories must receive something. It is impossible to retain an apprentice merely for the privilege of learning a trade. Young people under 18 years of age must be paid at least \$1 per week if they are girls and \$1.25 a week if they are boys, irrespective of overtime, and by the factory act the pay for overtime cannot be less than 12 cents an hour.

Government Employment Bureau.

The labor department has its employment bureaus at Wellington and at 200 other places, covering all parts of New Zealand. At these bureaus those who want work and those who want workers register and the government brings the two together. This is so not only as to factories but as to domestic service and farm hands. From these bureaus the government gets many of its employes for the public works and in some cases it advances money to laborers to take them to their new places of employment. In one year more than 2,000 men obtained work through these bureaus and of this number more than 1,100 were

married and with their families represented a population of almost 5,000.

New Zealand does all it can to prevent sweating or house industry at starvation wages. There are laws against taking work home from the factories, and the employer who allows his workmen to do so is subject to a penalty not to exceed \$50, while the workman himself can be fined \$25. All work done for factories outside the factories by other parties must be recorded and also the names and addresses of the persons by whom said work is done, together with the amount paid for the same. Any one who gets work from a factory is not allowed to sublet it under penalty of a heavy fine. He must do the work himself or have it done by his own workmen on his premises. A label at least two inches square must be put upon all goods made outside the factories showing just where the goods were made and how. The failure to affix such labels is liable to a penalty as high as \$30 for each offense, and the removing them after having been affixed is liable up to \$100.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Revealed by a Letter

The hazard of an old letter sold by an autograph dealer reveals a fact concerning Mme. de Stael which the great writer was able to keep concealed all her life and which nobody has known till now—namely, that she dyed her hair. Everyone, even her adorers, believed that her hair was black, and nobody knows how many sonnets have been written to her raven locks. It was an error. Mme. de Stael's hair was red, a beautiful Venetian red! It appears that red hair, so much admired to day, was at the beginning of the century held in horror. There appears no doubt of the fact. "It is to be remarked," says this letter, which is from a certain Baron Capelle to the chief of police of the day, "relative to Mme. de Stael, who passes for having black hair because she has always colored it, that it is naturally red, and it would be easy for her thus to make of it a disguise."

A Bachelor's Reflections

New York Press: There is no happy halter for the horse with the heavens.

An old bachelor is a man who has thought seriously enough of getting married.

The average woman can keep a secret only as long as her hair will stay in curl.

The average man quits getting his teeth fixed ten years before he loses his last political ambition.

If a woman had her own way her last request would probably be for them to fix her hair a certain way for the funeral.

There are more men than women in the world, but if half the women had the men they wanted there would be none of us left for the rest.

The average man respects a woman who is honest enough not to try to smile when he steps on the back of her dress and they both hear it tear.

Shakeup

Detroit Journal: The Ordinary Citizen stood aghast.

"What! resign?" he exclaimed. "Why, it's only the other day you were telling me what a sinecure your office is!"

The Mere Politician smiled wanly.

"My dear sir," he replied, "have you never reflected that it takes only a little shaking up to make sinecure spell insecure?"

Epigrammatic this, and suggesting that the Mere Politician was perhaps, after all, less mere than had been thought.



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