

VI.—LABOUR.

The Department of Labour of the Dominion Government was established in 1900 by Section 10 of the Conciliation Act, 1900 (63-64 Vict. c. 24), its chief duties originally comprising the collection of statistical and other information relating to the conditions of labour and the publication monthly of the Labour Gazette. From 1900 to 1909 the Department was administered by the Postmaster General, who was also Minister of Labour. It was constituted a separate Department under the Labour Department Act, 1909 (8-9 Edw. VII, c. 22). The Industrial Disputes Investigation Act, 1907 (6-7 Edw. VII, c. 20), and the Combines Investigation Act, 1910 (9-10 Edw. VII, c. 9), have thrown additional duties and responsibilities upon the Department, whose work has also increased in other directions, especially in the investigation of the wholesale and retail prices of Canadian commodities and of questions affecting the cost of living.

Labour Conditions in 1912.—As noted in the Labour Gazette for January, 1913, the year 1912 surpassed all previous years in industrial and trade activity, the buoyancy of 1911 having been more than maintained. New manufacturing plants and extensions to existing ones were erected to an extent hitherto unequalled. The supply of farm labour was not nearly equal to the demand. Throughout the year there was an unprecedented activity in manufacturing establishments, factories of nearly all classes working to their full capacity, with overtime in many cases. A shortage of skilled artisans and female operators was generally reported. Unskilled labour was almost constantly in good demand, the various railway construction works and civic improvements keeping unskilled workers busy. At the close of the year the outlook for continued prosperity was unusually bright.

Labour Organization in Canada.—The total trades union membership reported at the end of 1912 was 160,120, the membership being comprised in 1,883 local branches of trades union organizations of all types. The membership reported at the close of 1911 was 133,132, comprised in 1,741 branches. Of the total trades union membership for 1912, 136,389 is to be placed to the account of international unions, comprised in 1,638 local branches.

Industrial Disputes.—The number of strikes and lockouts in Canada in 1912, as reported in the Labour Gazette of February, 1913, was 150, as compared with 99 in 1911, 84 in 1910 and 69 in 1909. A great proportion of the strikes and lockouts of 1912 were, however, of comparatively small importance, no less than 111 of the number that began during the year being disputes affecting less than 300 employees, while eighty-five of them affected less than 200 employees. The disputes of the most serious nature as affecting a large number of employees were those of railway labourers in British Columbia. Two disputes directly affecting 9,000 railway construction labourers occurred on lines that were being constructed in that province, the approximate loss of time occasioned by them being 441,000 working