

IX.—LABOUR.

The Department of Labour of the Dominion Government was established in 1900 under the authority of the Conciliation Act, 1900 (63-64 Vict., c. 24), its chief duties originally comprising the administration of certain provisions of this statute designed to aid in the prevention and settlement of labour disputes, the administration of the Government's fair wage policy for the protection of workmen employed on Dominion Government contracts and works aided by grant of public funds, the collection and classification of statistical and other information relative to conditions of labour and the publication of a monthly journal known as 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 work of the Department was greatly increased in 1907 by the passage of the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act, 1907 (6-7 Edw. VII, c. 20), which was designed to aid in the prevention and settlement of strikes and lockouts in mines and industries connected with public utilities. The Department is also charged with the administration of the Combines Investigation Act, 1910 (9-10 Edw. VII, c. 9). The scope of the Department has 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. A change has been made in the "Labour Gazette" year, which terminates on December 31 instead of on June 30 as formerly.

Labour Conditions in 1916.—According to a review of industrial conditions which appeared in the January, 1917, issue of the "Labour Gazette," the close of the year 1915 showed a return to almost normal activity after the depression which began in 1913, and which was accentuated for a time on the outbreak of war. In 1916, with enlistments continuing and with industry speeded up still further, the supply of labour became quite inadequate, and efforts were made to dilute the labour supply with women workers. Some relief also came from the release of interned aliens and the slackening of municipal and other public works; and at the close of 1916 a year of almost abnormal activity has to be reported. Almost every group of manufacturing industries worked at high speed. Metals, machinery and conveyances, the group of industries on which of course the effect of the war was most marked, were greatly speeded up, larger outputs being reported from steel plants, locomotive works and automobile establishments. Shipbuilding was also active. In the textile and clothing groups the mills had to meet heavy war orders, and much overtime was worked. The transportation systems of the country were so heavily taxed by the vast increase in the export trade that the shortage of rolling stock and tonnage became serious towards the end of the year, and the question of cancelling some of the passenger services was raised. Metallic mining and ore refining were stimulated by the demand from munition plants, and coal mines worked to the capacity of the labour force to meet the heavier calls from railroads and manufactories. In building and construction there was improvement, as manufacturers made extensions to plant, but