

CHRISTCHURCH.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Christchurch, 5th April, 1909.

I have the honour to submit, for your consideration, my report on the working of the Scaffolding Inspection Act of 1908, and its amendments.

The year just passed has been an uneventful one, and during the latter part showed a considerable falling-off in building operations, especially in respect to residences in the suburbs. During the earlier part of the year, however, the whole of the premises destroyed by the big fire right in the centre of the town were rebuilt, and owing to the height of the buildings, and the large number being erected at the same time, there was a considerable shortage of really good scaffolding hands available, thus entailing considerably more inspection on my part to insure the various scaffoldings being erected in strict accordance with the Act, and thus guarding against any serious accidents happening by the erection of any shoddy or insecure scaffolds.

The Scaffolding Inspection Act has worked smoothly, there being no friction whatsoever, employers willingly making any alterations or improvements suggested.

I must again bring under your notice the necessity for the use of the rope guard-rail being abolished, as I am quite confident that the same is unsafe, and a trap to those who might have the misfortune to fall against or depend upon it to steady themselves in case of a slip. I would recommend that provision be made for the substitution of a 3 in. by 2 in. wooden rail.

I would also suggest that rope guard-rails should be discontinued on swinging stages, and in place of same that a $\frac{3}{4}$ in. iron rod or pipe be substituted. There are several of these swinging stages in use in this district, and they are giving general satisfaction. Many workers who would be afraid under ordinary circumstances to work very high from the ground feel quite safe when working on the swinging stage mentioned.

I would also suggest that the Act give power to Inspectors to make periodical visits of inspection of all gear stored in contractors' yards. This would prevent any scaffolding being erected with faulty poles, ropes, ladders, &c., and would especially apply to buildings being erected in outlying districts where the scaffolding is under the height of 16 ft., and where it is not necessary for the Inspector to be notified.

I have made periodical visits to the whole of the Canterbury district, including Timaru, Temuka, Waimate, Fairlie, Greendale, Ashburton, Rangiora, Kaiapoi, Lyttelton, and other places. I found on my first visit to these places that many of the scaffoldings erected were not quite in accordance with the Act. Contractors, however, seemed quite willing to make any necessary alterations.

During the year I received 488 notices from contractors of their intention to erect scaffolding, and in every instance these scaffolds were inspected. Altogether I made some 1,066 visits to buildings in course of erection. In 234 cases various alterations were required; 37 scaffolds were condemned, and the men notified to discontinue work until the scaffolding was re-erected.

I also condemned the rope guys and falls of 6 derricks, on account of their being worn or unfit for the strain likely to be put upon them. I also condemned a cat-head derrick, because the timber of which it was comprised was rotten. Numerous ladders and scaffolding-cords were condemned as being unsafe for use.

I am very pleased to report that only 3 accidents happened in this district; 2 of them, however, were of a serious nature. Both cases resulted in broken ankles—one through falling from a one-plank scaffolding, about 15 ft. high, and one due to falling through a skylight on to the top floor. The third accident happened to a worker who fell from a scaffolding about 8 ft. high, resulting in a scalp-wound of a not very serious nature.

Five cases of prosecutions were taken against contractors for failing to notify their intention to erect scaffolding above the height of 16 ft., and one for failing to report an accident—the latter case at Timaru. In all cases convictions and fines were recorded.

I have, &c.,

EDWIN J. G. STRINGER,

Inspector of Scaffolding.

The Secretary for Labour, Wellington.

DUNEDIN.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Dunedin, 20th April, 1909.

I beg to submit the following report of inspections made during the year ending 31st March, 1909.

I have made 796 visits to 366 buildings in course of erection in the Otago and Southland district. In 129 cases I have had to direct that alterations be made in scaffolding, so as to insure the safety of the workmen engaged thereon. The majority of these defects have not been of a serious nature, comprising, as a rule, broken ladders, insufficient bracing, and other trifling details which could easily be put right, but which would have been a source of danger, if allowed.

In a few instances I have had to order the entire reconstruction of certain portions of scaffolding. I am pleased to state that all my requests have been carried out with a minimum of friction between builders and myself, and all matters in dispute have been amicably arranged.

There have been 6 accidents on buildings during the year, 1 of which has had fatal result. This fatality happened to an apprentice plumber, who slipped on a roof, and who, in falling, bruised one of his kidneys. He died through the effects of this occurrence some six weeks later. The other accidents have been slight, no permanent injury resulting.

There have been several scaffolds carried to a considerable height from the ground, and I have been consulted on all such occasions as to the best means to be employed for the safe construction of same.