

Table showing Fees received from Employers and Servants by Servants' Registry Offices in the Fifteen Chief Towns in New Zealand during the Year ending 31st March, 1912.

Town.	Number of Offices.	Number of Engagements.	Number in which Worker charged Fee.	Total Fees paid by Workers.	Number in which Employer charged Fee.	Total Fees paid by Employers.
				£ s. d.		£ s. d.
Auckland..	13	3,483	3,324	607 9 8	3,183	625 16 0
Wellington ..	7	3,492	3,306	601 12 2	1,486	455 7 6
Christchurch ..	10	5,346	5,320	870 15 8	5,335	890 15 0
Dunedin..	9	2,889	2,804	571 6 6	933	202 7 6
Gisborne ..	5	296	292	55 10 6	269	64 16 0
New Plymouth ..	4	25	25	4 5 0	25	8 12 6
Palmerston North ..	4	2,368	2,155	452 7 6	88	10 6 0
Invercargill ..	8	666	624	130 6 2	243	55 12 2
Other towns ..	14	3,245	3,085	503 11 5	2,213	472 16 9
Totals]	74	21,810	20,935	3,797 4 7	13,775	2,786 9 5

WAGES PROTECTION AND CONTRACTORS' LIENS ACT.

A case worthy of note concerning the liability of persons having work done by contract occurred under this Act before the Stipendiary Magistrate at Napier. Sections 49 and 52 create a worker's right of lien and charge which attach to the whole interest of the owner of the land or chattel on which work is done by the contractor, but is limited to the moneys payable by the owner to the contractor under the contract and to thirty days' earnings of each workman. In section 59, subsection (2), it is provided that an employer shall retain in his hands one-fourth part of the moneys payable under the contract to the contractor until the expiration of thirty-one days after the completion of the work. In the case referred to—viz., *Neal v. the Roman Catholic Mission*—a claim for a charge was made in respect of wages due by defendants on excavating-work. There were also several other plaintiffs claiming in a similar way. The contractor, Hagen, performed part of his contract and then abandoned it after having received several progress-payments. It was shown that the owner had in such progress-payments paid more than the value of the work actually done. In his decision the Stipendiary Magistrate stated that "Moreover, even assuming the owner has paid the contractor more than the value of the work done, where there are, as here, *bona fide* claims of lien and charge made by workmen, he cannot, as we have seen, set up that overpayment as a defence. An owner who pays the contractor the full value of the work done (instead of retaining the one-fourth part) cannot afterwards be heard to say there are no contract-moneys payable to the contractor for the contract." Judgment was therefore given for the plaintiff with the right of lien over the land in which the excavation had been made.

COST OF LIVING.

The inquiry conducted by the Department during the year, as outlined in last year's report, did not meet with the expected measure of success, in that only 69 workers sent in records which could be regarded as reliable and useful for statistical purposes. However, a complete analysis of the returns received was made, and the result was published in the April number of the *Labour Journal*. Later the article was published apart from the *Journal* and is available for those interested in the question. Whilst the inquiry showed that the data was supplied almost exclusively from thrifty and careful workers, the results will be valuable in many ways for the purposes of comparison in later years. The relation of income to expenditure in various family and income groups is shown, and a general analysis of expenditure under five main headings—i.e., housing, food, clothing, fuel, and light—and other items, makes interesting reading. It is especially noted how unfavourably the man with a large family compared with the man who had few or no children. The latter appeared to be able to save in rent and clothing, to have more luxuries in the way of food, and at each week end to show a larger amount of money saved than his mate who was bringing up a family of children. Another feature of the Department's inquiry was in respect to the rent problem. The figures published emphasized the high rents ruling in Well-