

Flax-mill Employees.—Seventy-seven inspections were made, and two notices served to effect improvements in the accommodation. No complaints have been received during the year.

Agricultural Labourers. Two hundred and nineteen visits of inspection were made, and eighteen notices were served on employers to effect improvements. Generally speaking, the agricultural labourers are well housed.

SCAFFOLDING INSPECTION ACT.

In view of the housing shortage and of the difficulty of obtaining materials and labour, it is pleasing to note that a considerable increase in the number of notices of intention to erect scaffolding has taken place during the year. The following shows the number of notices received in each of the years 1913-14 to date: 1913-14, 1,488; 1914-15, 1,453; 1915-16, 937; 1916-17, 888; 1917-18, 706; 1918-19, 666; 1919-20, 897.

Although these figures refer to large buildings (*i.e.*, where scaffoldings over 16 ft. in height are required) they indicate that building operations generally are increasing, and the effect of the war on the trade will no doubt be less apparent from now on.

There were fifty-six accidents, one of which was fatal. No blame was attachable to any one, all precautions having been taken. Five other accidents were of a serious nature. There were five prosecutions. Otherwise the provisions of the Act appear to have been well observed.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

Number of offices registered, 70. Only one complaint of a breach of the Act was received, and generally the businesses are conducted in a satisfactory manner. There were no prosecutions.

FOOTWEAR REGULATION ACT.

A large number of inspections have been made under this Act in both town and country districts by the footwear inspectors, in conjunction with their other duties as Inspectors of Factories, Shops, &c. Inspectors report that the requirements of the Act have generally been well observed and that very few complaints have been received. Although a small amount of shoddy material was detected it was in most instances stamped as required by the law. The absence of shoddy stocks is attributed to the fact that during the war and up to the present time New Zealand goods have largely taken the place of imported footwear.

WAR LEGISLATION AMENDMENT ACT (RENT RESTRICTION).

—	Number of Cases taken to Court.		Number of Complaints settled by Department without Recourse to Court.		Number of Complaints withdrawn.		Number of Cases in which no Action was taken.		Total.
	Decision.		(a.)	(b.)	(a.)	(b.)	(a)	(b.)*	
	Increase justified.	Increase not justified.	Where Increase justified.	Where Increase not justified and Rent reduced.	Where Increase justified.	Where Increase not justified but Owners reduced Rent.	Outside Scope of Act.	For Miscellaneous Causes.	
Year ending 31st March, 1919 ..	1	8	72	77	27	23	4	22	234
1920—									
Wellington	3	2	34	76	9	5	14	31	174
Other places	..	4	38	68	1	2	3	30	146
	3	6	72	144	10	7	17	61	320

* Left locality, and so on.

These figures show an increase of eighty-six over the total number of applications received last year, and an increase of twenty-six for Wellington. It will be seen that in 157 of the 320 cases filed the inquiries made by the Department resulted in the reduction of the rents.

The Act has continued to prove of considerable benefit to tenants, especially in Wellington, and also to returned soldiers.

As the rent-restriction law is a war measure it is of a temporary nature, and will, unless revived, cease to operate in August next. It is recommended that it be continued for a further twelve months.

Some comment continues to be made on the fact that in numbers of instances tenants who are protected by the rent-restriction law have made undue profits by subletting parts of their houses, even to the extent of enabling themselves to live rent-free or to make a profit above that. It does not appear to be generally known yet that the Act applies to a part of a house that is let for residential purposes as well as to the whole of it, although, for various reasons, it may be somewhat difficult to give effect to this provision. The Department makes careful inquiry into any case of this kind that is brought to its notice.

Complaints continue to be made respecting the payment and receipt of bonuses for obtaining the rental of dwellinghouses. The existing law provides sufficiently against such sums being received by owners, but as these bonuses are usually paid to other persons—for example, to the outgoing tenants—I would recommend that the receipt by any person of such amounts be made unlawful.