

(2.) The former requirement that notice of intention to erect any scaffolding over 16 ft. in height must be given to the Inspector was altered to provide that notice must be forwarded before any person begins to erect a scaffolding or do any building-work where there is a risk of any person falling 12 ft. or more, or begins to erect a crane, or makes an excavation more than 5 ft. in depth.

(3.) No scaffolding exceeding 25 ft. in height, nor any crane, shall be erected or altered except under the supervision of a person whom an Inspector certifies to be competent to exercise such supervision.

(4.) The Inspector is empowered, where any work is being carried on to which the Act applies, to order such safeguards as he considers necessary for the protection of the workmen or of the public.

(5.) Specific power is also given to the Inspector to condemn and brand any gear that he considers would be unfit for use.

(6.) Workers are made liable for breaches as well as employers.

Before being finally adopted the proposed regulations were discussed at a conference of representative builders and workers in the building trades; with slight exception the proposals were agreed to by the representatives of both sides.

The Senior Scaffolding Inspector has recently visited the principal towns in the Dominion for the purpose of explaining to builders and workers concerned the provisions of the new Act and regulations, and generally to co-ordinate administration.

In consequence of the passing of the Scaffolding and Excavation Act the number of Inspectors of Scaffolding is being slightly increased chiefly by filling certain vacancies with officers qualified in this work, thus gaining the extra efficiency with little extra expense.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

There are 101 offices registered in New Zealand: increase, seven. In no case was it found necessary to institute a prosecution for a breach of this Act.

FOOTWEAR REGULATION ACT.

Five hundred and nine visits of inspection were made, and stocks of footwear were carefully examined in order to ascertain whether the provisions of the Act were being complied with. Although in a few cases it was found necessary to have stocks of shoddy footwear branded to comply with the regulations, in no case was it necessary to take proceedings to enforce the law.

ARREARS OF WAGES.

Amounts totalling £5,949 2s. 4d. were collected by the Department's officers on behalf of workers who had been underpaid the wages prescribed by awards and the various Acts.

RENT RESTRICTION.

There were 567 applications received from tenants for inquiry; the following shows the number in each town, with the number (in brackets) in which the increase in rent was deemed unjustified: Auckland, 176 (90); Wellington, 207 (73); Christchurch, 12 (2); Dunedin, 103 (82); Hamilton, 4 (0); New Plymouth, 5 (4); Napier, 11 (10); Gisborne, 0 (0); Palmerston North, 6 (4); Wanganui, 1 (1); Masterton, 14 (7); Nelson, 2 (1); Greymouth, 14 (3); Timaru, 4 (0); Oamaru, 2 (0); Invercargill, 6 (2). It will be noted that the Act is not utilized in many of the towns. Of 16 cases taken to Court, 12 increases in rent were held to be unjustified; in 267 out of 346 settled by Inspectors without recourse to Court the owners agreed to reduce the rents demanded; 29 cases were found to be outside the scope of the Act; and no action was taken in 157 cases for miscellaneous reasons, such as tenants having left, owners having sold to new owners for latter's own occupation, &c. The remaining 19 cases were not completed at the close of the year.

This year's totals reveal a substantial reduction of 255 in the cases dealt with—namely, from 822 to 567.

The rent-restriction provisions were continued by the Finance Act, 1922, until the 31st July, 1923.

A large amount of house-building is now going on, and with the proposed increase in the amounts that may be advanced to workers to enable them to build for themselves the total number of houses in the various towns will no doubt rapidly increase, and the need for the law restricting rents and evictions will diminish. In any event many people are still not aware that the Act does not apply in any respect to houses built or first let since November, 1920, and further that even in respect of those to which it still applies the rent permissible is 7 per cent. net (viz., for interest, and exclusive of depreciation, rates, insurance, and maintenance).

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES.

As mentioned in my last report, the inspection of weights and measures was transferred from the Department of Internal Affairs to this Department, it being considered that this Department's Inspectors could attend to that work while carrying out the inspection of factories, shops, &c. Two of the former Inspectors of Weights and Measures have been permanently taken over, one as an Inspector of Factories as well as Weights and Measures, and one in the Head Office at Wellington, where a great deal of the distribution of weights and measures, &c., is done by the importing firms.