(*e.*) A worker standing on a gantry lost his balance as the result of a crane-jib falling on to the gantry. The crane was fitted with interlocking-gear, which failed to act, owing to a bolt working loose, allowing the barrel to run free and the jib to fall down. The worker fell a distance of 39 ft., causing internal injuries from which he died. Arrangements have been made to strengthen this gear by means of a stay.

The following accidents also occurred, but as the Act does not apply to excavation work carried out by local bodies, the cases did not come under the Inspectors' jurisdiction :—

(1.) A gang of men were engaged in excavation work for drainage-pipe laying, and the work was being done by digging holes 2½ yards long by 1 yard wide every 6 yards ; a tunnel was then being driven under the portion not excavated. One of the men was working in one of these holes at a depth of 12 ft., the sides of which were timbered for about 5 ft., when the ground suddenly caved in, burying the worker, whose neck was found to be dislocated when he was extricated.

(2.) At Opunake a spectator was watching the erection of a derrick which was being put up by the Electric-power Board. The onlooker was warned by the engineer to keep out of the way, but disregarded the warning. The derrick had been lifted some distance from the ground when it fell and, striking the spectator, killed him.

(3.) Two men were working in a drain in a street at a depth of 10 ft. In this case the sides of the drain were not timbered, and one side fell in, crushing one of the workers, who sustained an extensive fracture of the right side of the skull and also had several ribs fractured, causing death. The job was being carried out by a contractor for a local body, which is exempt from the Act. The question whether the contractor or the Borough Council is liable is to be decided in the law-courts. No notice of the intention to do the work was given to the Inspector.

The prosecutions under the Act numbered fifty-six (previous year twenty-nine) and in fifty-three of these fines were imposed. These cases are in addition to cases taken by the Inspection of Machinery Department, which supervises the use of power-driven machinery on buildings.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

There are 110 offices registered in New Zealand : increase, 9. In one case only it was found necessary to institute a prosecution for a breach of this Act.

ARREARS OF WAGES.

Amounts totalling £8,567 14s. 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 568 applications received from tenants for inquiry (last year 567). The following shows the number in each town, with the number (in brackets) in which the increase in rent was deemed unjustified : Auckland, 202 (115) ; Wellington, 248 (185) ; Christchurch, 7 (4) ; Dunedin, 26 (8) ; Hamilton, 2 (1) ; Gisborne, 0 (0) ; Napier, 43 (32) ; Masterton, 4 (1) ; New Plymouth, 6 (5) ; Wanganui, 0 (0) ; Palmerston North, 6 (1) ; Nelson, 0 (0) ; Greymouth, 6 (6) ; Timaru, 0 (0) ; Oamaru, 4 (3) ; Invercargill, 14 (8). Of 63 cases taken to Court, 60 increases in rent were held to be unjustified ; in 242 out of 365 settled by Inspectors without recourse to Court the owners agreed to reduce the rents demanded ; 47 cases were found to be outside the scope of the Act ; and no action was taken in 72 cases for miscellaneous reasons, such as tenants having left, owners having sold to new owners for latters' own occupation, &c. The remaining 21 cases were not completed at the close of the year.

The rent restriction provisions were continued by the Rent Restriction Continuance Act, 1923, until the 31st July, 1924.

It is pointed out by many of the Inspectors that while the cessation of this legislation would no doubt have the effect of giving freer scope to building activities, great hardship would for some time yet be caused to many tenants, particularly those with young children. If it is decided to continue the legislation the Act should be amended to meet the difficulty that arises in ascertaining what was the rent charged so far back, in most cases, as 1914. This it is now almost impossible to do. It is therefore suggested that the rent charged in 1914 or such other time as is fixed by the Act be disregarded, and that the standard rent be based on the two remaining factors only—viz., 8 per cent. gross or 7 per cent. net on the capital value as at the date specified—whichever is the higher. It is in any event likely that the rent paid at the previous time would be less.

Since the decision of the Supreme Court that where the tenant has agreed with the landlord as to the capital value the standard rent must be computed on that value, it has become an increasing practice of owners and agents to require tenants to agree on such a value as will entitle the owner to the rent charged, and in most cases the tenants are naturally unaware of the effect of signing such an agreement. An example of such a case quoted to me is as follows : Two old houses were purchased about eighteen months ago for £950 ; the former rent was, it was stated, 14s. a week ; the owner entered into an agreement with the tenant that the capital value of one of the houses was £1,400, and charged two guineas a week (approximately 8 per cent). On a capital value of, say, £500 the maximum rent to which the owner would be entitled, at 7 per cent. net for interest, plus depreciation 3 per cent., rates £5, insurance £2, and repairs £10, would be about £1 6s. per week. It is therefore recommended that an agreement as to the capital value of a house should be disregarded, and the value fixed by the Court.

FOOTWEAR REGULATION ACT.

There were 555 inspections made throughout the Dominion under this Act, and stocks of footwear were carefully examined. There were five prosecutions.

It may be said that almost without exception the soles (which include the insoles, heels, and heel-stiffeners) of New-Zealand-made boots consist entirely of leather, while a certain percentage of