

## ARREARS OF WAGES.

Amounts totalling £4,294 12s. 7d. were collected by the Department's officers on behalf of workers who had been underpaid the wages prescribed by awards and the various Acts, while further amounts of such arrears totalling £4,671 9s. 4d. were paid by employers, at the instance of the Inspectors, directly to the workers concerned: total, £8,966 1s. 11d. (previous year £8,070 8s. 3d.).

## RENT-RESTRICTION.

There were 605 applications received from tenants for inquiry (last year 656). The following shows the number in each town, with the number (in brackets) in which the increase in rent was deemed unjustified: Auckland 164 (91); Wellington, 246 (81); Christchurch, 53 (27); Dunedin, 59 (39); Hamilton, 1 (0); Gisborne, 0 (0); Napier, 29 (23); Masterton, 4 (2); New Plymouth, 4 (2); Wanganui, 5 (2); Palmerston North, 15 (6); Nelson, 3 (0); Greymouth, 0 (0); Timaru, 1 (0); Oamaru, 8 (0); Invercargill, 13 (10). Of 60 cases taken in Court 9 increases in rent were held to be justified, 18 partly justified, and 33 unjustified. Of 296 settled by Inspectors without recourse to Court, 72 increases in rent were considered to be justified, 101 partly justified, and 123 unjustified. Forty-nine complaints were withdrawn, 41 because the increase was justified and 8 because the owners reduced the rent demanded. 128 cases were found to be outside the scope of the Act, and no action was taken in 44 other cases for miscellaneous reasons, such as, tenants having left, owners having sold to new owners for latter's own occupation, &c.; the remaining 28 cases were not completed at the close of the year.

The rent-restriction provisions were continued by the Rent Restriction Continuance Act, 1924, until the 31st August, 1926.

## FOOTWEAR REGULATION ACT.

There were 1,922 general inspections made throughout the Dominion under this Act, and stocks of footwear were carefully examined. There were thirty prosecutions, and fines totalling £85 11s. were inflicted.

## WEIGHTS AND MEASURES ACT.

The new Weights and Measures Act passed by Parliament last session, which will come into force in January next, gives extended powers to deal with weighing and measuring appliances. The existing Act enables the Department merely to see that weighing and measuring appliances used for retail trade are accurate and are of a suitable type; it does not make it an offence to sell short weight or measure. Provision to this effect is contained in the new Act. This is a very necessary amendment, which has already been adopted in New South Wales, South Africa, and some of the United States of America, and is being considered in Great Britain. The new Act should be specially effective in the case of goods already made up in packages, as it will require the net weight or measure to be clearly shown thereon, except in special cases exempted by regulations.

Another important feature of the Act is that relating to the practice that has grown in late years of selling goods in packages containing what would appear to be, for example, a pound in weight, while the actual weight of the goods and the marking on the package may be only, say, 15 ozs. The Act authorizes the making of regulations requiring packages of any classes of goods specified to be sold by prescribed weight or measure; and, moreover, it stipulates that the weight or measure shall not include the tin or other container. These provisions are on the lines of those in New South Wales and South Africa, which have been in force for some years. The new regulations under the amending Act are now in course of preparation.

It might be mentioned that the New Zealand Act will now be in line with those of the most advanced countries of the world. The law on this subject in Great Britain is similar to that hitherto in operation in New Zealand, although it is interesting to note that the Food Council set up by the British Board of Trade recently recommended that certain foodstuffs should be required to be retailed only by net weight. This Council also recommended a similar provision to section 23 of our new Act—viz., that the weight or measure of any articles sold shall not be less in weight or measure than that demanded of or represented by the seller.

The work of administering the existing Act and regulations has proceeded smoothly throughout the year. Traders now generally recognize that periodical testing and verifying of their appliances is as much in their interest as in that of the purchasers.

The number of inspections made during the year is 9,067 (previous year, 8,439). The total fees collected for testing and verifying appliances are £4,849 15s. 10d.—an increase of £906 17s. 5d. over last year.

Proceedings were taken against fifty traders for offences; and forty-nine convictions were obtained, and one case was dismissed. The total penalties imposed were £67 11s. 6d.

Thirteen appliances presenting novel features were submitted for approval under clause 5 of the regulations, which requires that this course shall be followed before such appliances shall be used for trade purposes. Three of them were rejected as unsatisfactory.

The adoption by oil-merchants of bulk storage and delivery of petrol by means of tank wagons in lieu of the sealed tins has recently produced a new problem. So far as the delivery of petrol to the consumer by means of the kerbside or automatic pump is concerned the Department has taken steps with a view to ensuring that the measuring instruments are accurate and reliable. No petrol-measuring pump should be used for trade purposes unless it has first been approved as being of such a type and construction as will not facilitate fraud. These petrol-pumps are submitted to a rigid test before being stamped, and the adjusting arrangements are sealed by the Inspector with a view to preventing manipulation. The method of measuring petrol delivered in bulk by merchants to retailers and garage-owners—viz., by means of calibrated tanks—is much the same as used in Great Britain, Australia, and the United States of America. The calibrations are being checked by Inspectors,