

AGRICULTURAL WORKERS ACT, 1936, AND SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT, 1919.

There was no variation of the Agricultural Workers Act, 1936, or of the extension orders under it during the financial year ended 31st March, 1941.

During the year complaints were received respecting 752 alleged breaches of the Act, and these resulted in 19 prosecutions and 407 warnings. There were 10 other prosecutions (total 29). Fines imposed amounted to £25 7s. Apart from the above, inspections were made of 468 dairy-farms, 50 farms and stations, 74 market gardens, hop-gardens, or tobacco-gardens, and 232 orchards, it being necessary in 95 instances to draw attention to failure to observe the statutory provisions.

Inspections of accommodation were also made as follows: Farm workers, 153; dairy-farms, 374; shearers, 186.

SHARE-MILKING AGREEMENTS ACT, 1937.

Minimum standard terms and conditions are applicable to every share-milking agreement where the farmowner provides the herd. These conditions are contained in the Share-milking Agreements Order 1939 (Serial number 1939/86), which was in substitution for the Schedule to the Act. A share-milker's rights under the terms of his agreement are supplemented by the power given to the Inspector of Factories who, acting in the name and on behalf of the share-milker, may take proceedings for the enforcement of the rights of a share-milker under any share-milking agreement to which the Act applies. It has been necessary for the Department to resort to Court proceedings once only since the measure was enacted, and these proceedings, which were during the period covered by this report, were withdrawn following a satisfactory settlement out of Court. During the year the number of inquiries received has shown an increase, but the number of complaints remains small. Share-milking is practised chiefly in the North Island.

SCAFFOLDING AND EXCAVATION ACT.

During the year 5,206 notices of intention to erect buildings and scaffoldings and to commence excavations were received (previous year 5,546), and 8,488 inspections were made.

There were twenty-three prosecutions, convictions being recorded in twenty cases, and fines amounting to £37 being imposed.

Preliminary figures for the number of accidents to workers during the year ended 31st December, 1940, are 276 (of which 4 were fatal). It should be mentioned that the total includes not only accidents to workers on scaffolding or in connection with gear or excavation, but also all other accidents occurring in connection with building operations, such as faulty use of tools, falling objects, and errors of judgment. If due regard is paid to the hazardous nature of the work due to height from the ground and the limited space for workers to operate, the numbers of accidents due to falls from scaffolds, ladders, or roofs is small—viz., 58. The number of accidents according to occupations were: Labourers, 115; carpenters and joiners, 114; steelworkers, 8; painters and signwriters, 5; electrical engineers, 5; others, 29.

Information as to time lost and compensation paid shows in regard to the cases in which details are available that a total of 5,357 days were lost and compensation to the amount of £5,670 12s. 6d. was paid.

The following are particulars of the fatal accidents reported:—

A painter fell from a plank at a height of 5 ft. 9 in. and fractured his skull.

While engaged on bridge work a labourer slipped and fell into the stream below.

During roof-repairing operations a carpenter fell 15 ft. to the floor when a purlin on which he was standing pulled away from a rafter.

As a result of overbalancing while hosing out concrete boxing a labourer fell 15 ft. on to a concrete floor, and suffered head injuries.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

There are 52 offices registered in New Zealand (last year 67). Four warnings were necessary during the year for breach of this statute.

FAIR RENTS ACT, 1936.

The shortage of housing rendered necessary the continuance in operation of the Fair Rents Act, 1936, for a further year to the 30th September, 1941, this being effected by the Statutes Amendment Act, 1940, which also amended the definition of dwellinghouse by deleting the reference to "attendance" in paragraph (a) of section 2 of the principal Act. The number of cases calling for intervention by the Department's officers varies from town to town, but a comparison indicates that the protection afforded under the Act is availed of by tenants to a degree bearing a marked relation to the acuteness of the housing shortage as disclosed by the results of the Housing Survey.