

time, with fifteen days' annual holiday and uniform; or a storeman or packer at £4 5s. and £4 7s. 6d. per week without lost time, with statutory holidays and a week's annual holiday. Again, the engineers' award rate is 2s. 3d. per hour, while a metal-worker's assistant's is 2s. 1d. It is noteworthy that in many of the unskilled or semi-skilled occupations the employment is weekly, without deduction for lost time, while in most of the skilled trades it is hourly only.

CONFERENCE OF APPRENTICESHIP COMMITTEES.

During the year a conference of representatives of the various Apprenticeship Committees was held. This is the first conference since the Act was brought into operation in 1924. As separate committees are generally appointed in their respective trades in the different centres in order that members might be enabled to watch the progress of the apprentices in their own districts or localities, the conference was thought desirable to enable the members to consider together the experience of the past five years' work and to make suggestions for improvements in the Act and its administration. A large number of remits were submitted for discussion, and a separate report of the conclusions is being printed (as H.—11A). The conference asked that a Bill be introduced to carry into effect those items upon which agreement was reached.

ARREARS OF WAGES.

Amounts totalling £8,113 0s. 9d. 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 £5,911 were paid by employers, at the instance of the Inspectors, directly to the workers concerned: total, £14,024 0s. 9d. (previous year, £12,757 5s.).

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT.

Ninety-nine cases were heard and determined by the Court of Arbitration.

SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT.

The administration of this Act has again been carried out by the Department of Agriculture, as the Inspectors of that Department have opportunities of inspecting the accommodation provided for shearers during the performance of their various duties in the country districts. The records of the work done show that during the year 909 inspections were made, and 162 requisitions were served to provide better accommodation (the previous year's figures were 960 inspections and 159 requisitions). Steps are taken in due course to see that the requisitions are complied with, and a further improvement in the accommodation generally has been effected.

AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT (ACCOMMODATION FOR FLAX-MILL AND SAWMILL WORKERS, ETC.).

A total of 285 inspections were made under this Act at sawmills, flax-mills, &c., and 62 owners were required to carry out improvements to buildings, to provide new or to improve existing conveniences, to provide first-aid outfits, bathing-facilities, or to comply with other provisions of the regulations. Some 70 dairy factories were also visited, and 11 companies were called upon to provide bathing-facilities and 2 to improve the workers' accommodation.

As a result of the supervision much has been done towards improving the living-conditions of workers at these places and to bring those that have been deficient into line with the general standard.

SCAFFOLDING AND EXCAVATION ACT.

During the year 7,054 notices of intention to erect buildings and scaffoldings and to commence excavations were received (previous year, 7,037), and 24,832 inspections were made (previous year, 25,519).

There were 32 prosecutions for breaches of the Act and regulations: convictions, 32; fines, £66 5s.

The Senior Scaffolding Inspector paid the usual visit to all centres of the Dominion during the year, and reports that he found the Act and regulations were generally well observed. As a result of the close supervision thus exercised throughout the Dominion the inspection work has been uniformly brought to a high standard.

The number of accidents that occurred during the year ending 31st December, 1928, is 485 (of which 10 were fatal), as against 345 for the previous year, an increase of 140. Careful inquiry has been made by the Department into each accident, and efforts have been made to prevent similar occurrences. Of the 485 accidents, 463 were of a minor nature. It should be mentioned that the total includes not only accidents to workers on scaffoldings or in connection with gear or excavations, but also all other accidents occurring in connection with building operations. The number of accidents due to falls from scaffolds or ladders is small—viz., 44. The numbers according to occupations are—Labourers, 221; carpenters, 180; plasterers, 8; painters, 16; bricklayers, 6; steelworkers, 19; plumbers, 10; unclassified, 25.

Particulars of the more serious accidents that occurred during the year are as follow:—

(1) While a plumber was reconditioning a roof he fell through a glass skylight, a distance of about 25 ft.; he was removed to the hospital, but died later in the day.

(2) While assisting in the fixing of malthoid roofing, a labourer was caught by a gust of wind and fell through a glass skylight a distance of 27 ft. to the ground; he died almost immediately.

(3) A carpenter came into contact with a crusher that had become electrified through a defect in the wiring and was electrocuted.