

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT.

One-hundred and one cases were heard and determined by the Court of Arbitration.

The Commission appointed during the recess to investigate the law relating to compensation for workers has now completed its inquiries. Its report is being presented as a separate paper.

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

A total of 293 inspections were made under this Act at sawmills, flax-mills, &c., and 73 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 60 hop-gardens were also visited and the attention of growers has been drawn to matters that in the Department's opinion should be remedied.

EMPLOYMENT OF MAORI FEMALES IN CHINESE MARKET GARDENS.

During the year a Committee was set up by the Government to inquire into the conditions of employment and living-conditions of Maori females employed in Chinese market gardens. The report of this Committee has been received, and consideration is being given to its recommendations.

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 953 inspections were made, and 180 requisitions were served to provide better accommodation (the previous year's figures were 909 inspections and 162 requisitions). Steps are taken in due course to see that the requisitions are complied with. There were three prosecutions.

SCAFFOLDING AND EXCAVATION ACT.

During the year 7,503 notices of intention to erect buildings and scaffoldings and to commence excavations were received (previous year, 7054), and 28,355 inspections were made (previous year, 24,832).

There were 30 prosecutions for breaches of the Act and regulations: convictions, 28; fines, £72.

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.

The number of accidents that occurred during the year ending 31st December, 1928, is 525 (of which 3 were fatal), as against 485 for the previous year (of which 10 were fatal). Careful inquiry has been made by the Department into each accident, and efforts have been made to prevent similar occurrences. Of the 525 accidents, 505 were of a minor nature. It should be mentioned that the total includes not only accidents to workers on scaffolding or in connection with gear or excavations, but also all other accidents occurring in connection with building operations. Taking into consideration the hazardous nature of the work and the large number of workers involved, the number of accidents due to falls from scaffolds, ladders, or roofs is small—viz., 47. The numbers according to occupations are: Labourers, 248; carpenters, 178; steelworkers, 19; plasterers, 17; bricklayers, 12; plumbers, 11; painters, 6; unclassified, 34.

The following are particulars of the more serious accidents reported:—

Bitumen was being hoisted in buckets to the seventh floor-level of a building when a bucket fell and struck a labourer who was working on the ground, causing fatal injuries. The bucket was of fairly substantial material and it was not clear whether the handle became loose at one end or whether the bucket slipped off the hook.

A carpenter was engaged in filling the mould of the cornice of a building with concrete when he apparently tripped and fell through the ceiling-joists, receiving injuries to his neck.

Four workers were dismantling scaffolding when one, who was directing operations, was crushed and killed by a beam which was being lowered. The deceased, who could not be seen by the other workers, had given the signal to lower, and no satisfactory explanation could be obtained as to how he came to be beneath the beam.

Two workers were standing on a plank which was resting on a dwang fastened only with nails. Their combined weights caused the nails to draw and the workers had to jump to the ground, a distance of 6 ft. One, who had recently recovered from a fractured leg, broke his leg again at the same place.

A worker who was painting a gantry disregarded the instructions given him to use a boatswain's chair. He was blown off the gantry by a sudden gust of wind, and fell a distance of 19 ft., fracturing his left leg. The fracture was a simple one, but the leg became septic and had to be amputated.

A worker was ascending a ladder, when he fell a distance of about 6 ft. and fractured his skull. No one witnessed the accident, but it is presumed that he had a seizure and fell.

A carpenter, who was working on a scaffold without a guard-rail, 8 ft. 6 in. from the ground, fell to the ground, sustaining injuries to his head. He died later. The regulations do not require guard-rails to be provided unless the scaffold is more than 10 ft. from the ground.