

Lead Poisoning.—Of the cases of lead poisoning reported to the Department of Health during the year, only one appeared to be industrial in origin. This related to an employee of a paint-manufacturing concern, and the working-conditions in the factory involved are now being closely investigated.

Visit by English Specialist in Industrial Hygiene.—An Inspector of Factories from the English Service is at present visiting this country under arrangement with the Department of Health. This Department is collaborating with the Department of Health in the investigations now being made. In the meantime proposed amendments to the Factories Act, 1921–22, are being held over pending the results of these investigations.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT

During the year, 10,926 inspections were made disclosing 348 breaches of the Act. In addition, investigations were made into 251 complaints received in respect of alleged breaches. Warnings were issued in 348 cases, and prosecutions, resulting in fines totalling £78, were instituted in 47 cases. Ninety-five requisitions were served on occupiers of shops to comply with various requirements of the Act such as sanitation, ventilation, heating, and lighting.

From the information available it is estimated that shops operating during the year numbered 26,140, of which 12,559 were carried on without assistants. In the shops where assistants are employed it is estimated that 19,051 males and 25,999 females were engaged.

ANNUAL APPOINTMENT OF STATUTORY CLOSING-DAY

Except where the closing-day has been fixed by a poll of electors, the closing-day is appointed each year by resolution of the local authority or, in the absence of a decision by a local authority, by the Minister of Labour. The following changes of day occurred in 1944: Wednesday to Saturday, boroughs of Eastbourne and Raetihi, town districts of Mangaweka and Onerahi, counties of Cheviot and Waipawa. Thursday to Saturday, Borough of Taihape, County of Waiapu.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT

Awards of the Court of Arbitration 54 (last year, 96)

The awards and industrial agreements actually in force on the 31st March, 1944, total 532 (last year, 533).

The Court also issued 4 apprenticeship orders and 79 miscellaneous documents (interpretations, enforcements, &c.).

WORK PERFORMED BY COMMISSIONERS AND COUNCILS OF CONCILIATION

Industrial agreements made under the Act	7 (last year, 19).
Disputes where recommendations were substantially accepted or agreements reached and referred to the Court to make awards	35 (last year, 41)
Disputes where partial settlement was arrived at and referred to the Court to make awards	30 (last year, 30)
Disputes withdrawn	4 (last year, 6)
Disputes where no settlement was arrived at	3

MINIMUM WAGE-RATES FIXED BY AWARDS AND AGREEMENTS

A pronouncement of the Court of Arbitration (see 1937 Book of Awards 1648) contained standard minima for casual labour as follows: skilled, 2s. 9d. per hour; semi-skilled, 2s. 5d. to 2s. 7½d. per hour; unskilled, 2s. 4d. per hour. These rates have, with variation, been written into awards issued subsequently. The following table gives the minima for a number of the principal industries. Where there is no Dominion award or agreement in operation, Wellington rates have been taken. All the wage-rates shown below, except those indicated by a section mark (§), are subject to an increase of 5 per cent. as from 12th August, 1940, in accordance with the general order of the Court of Arbitration dated 9th August, 1940, and all are subject to the increase of 5 per cent. (maximum: adult males, 5s.; adult females, 2s. 6d.; juniors, 1s. 6d.) from 7th April, 1942, in accordance with the general order of the Court dated 31st March, 1942.

The Economic Stabilization Emergency Regulations 1942 (Serial number 1942/335) provide that the Court of Arbitration shall not, during the present war, vary the minimum rates of remuneration or the principal conditions of employment as contained in awards, industrial agreements, and apprenticeship orders. It was, however, unrestricted in respect of cases pending at the date of the regulations, and may adjust anomalies, but where it does so it is to have regard to the general purpose of the regulations. Further, the Court may permit increases up to £5 5s. a week for male workers or £3 a week for female workers or such lower rate as the Court thinks fit in the case of junior workers or in the case of workers whose ordinary hours of work are less than thirty-eight a week (the amounts quoted are inclusive of increases under the Rates of Wages Emergency Regulations 1940). Where the Court so increases rates, the increase shall not be deemed to create any anomaly for the purpose of the regulations. Increases made since the date of the regulations have been noted in the following table.

The Economic Stabilization Emergency Regulations 1942, Amendment No. 4 (Serial number 1944/93), revoked the provisions referred to in the preceding paragraph and substituted a requirement that in exercising its powers and functions in relation to the making or amendment of awards and apprenticeship orders the Court of Arbitration shall have regard to the general purpose of these regulations. In respect to fluctuations in the cost of living, the Court's powers are referred to in a later paragraph in this report. Amendment No. 4 also provides that in considering any application for an allowance or an increased allowance in respect of tools, bicycles, motor-vehicles, protective or special clothing, or special footwear the Court shall have regard, in addition to the general purpose of these regulations and all other relevant considerations, to any increase or reduction in the cost of the tools, bicycles, motor-vehicles, clothing, or footwear; or in the replacement, repair, or maintenance thereof.