

ARREARS OF WAGES

Amounts totalling £15,663 15s. 11d. (last year, £12,481 15s. 4d.) 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 £17,852 13s. 6d. (last year, £15,082 12s. 3d.) were paid by employers at the instance of the Inspectors directly to the workers concerned: total, £33,516 9s. 5d. (last year, £27,564 7s. 7d.).

Inspectors of Factories also took civil proceedings in twenty-nine cases for recovery of wages due to workers, judgments being secured to the amount £506 5s. 2d.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT

During the year 114 cases were heard and determined by the Compensation Court (previous year, 107).

WORKERS' COMPENSATION AMENDMENT ACT, 1943

This came into operation on 1st November, 1943, and applies to accidents happening on or after that date. The following is a summary of the principal changes in the law as a result of this measure:—

Section 3 provides that where an injured worker has so far recovered as to be able to perform light work, his weekly payments of compensation are not to be ended or diminished on the ground that he is able to perform light work unless he is actually engaged or employed in some employment or business or suitable light work is provided or found for him by the employer by whom he was employed when he met with the accident. Previously the fact that a worker had so far recovered as to be able to perform light work was sufficient ground to reduce his compensation, even although there may have been no light work available for him.

Under *section 4* where an employer is required *by statute* to pay an injured worker his wages for some period after the accident—for example, in the case of seamen up to three months, see Shipping and Seamen Amendment Act, 1911, section 6 (1)—payment of compensation is to be postponed until the expiration of the period for which wages are paid and that period is to be deducted from the period for which compensation would otherwise be payable. The amount so paid as wages is not, however, to be deducted from any compensation payable in respect of the accident, as was previously the position under section 61 of the principal Act.

The object of *section 5* is to provide that the loss of the lens of an eye shall be a Second Schedule injury for which compensation shall be 30 per cent. of full compensation as for total incapacity. In the event of the worker suffering total loss of the eye by a subsequent accident, payment will then be as for 20 per cent. incapacity. Previously 50 per cent. was payable for the total loss of the sight of one eye.

Section 6 provides that in certain conditions incapacity resulting from hernia shall be deemed to be incapacity resulting from injury by accident arising out of and in the course of the worker's employment. The section also contains authority to order compensation to cease unless the worker undergoes a surgical operation for a cure of the hernia. If, however, the worker undergoes the operation within the time specified, compensation is to continue for twelve weeks from the date of the operation or, if recovery is not then wholly complete, for such further period or periods as the Court or Magistrate may think fit.

Under *section 7* a worker is able to recover compensation if he meets with an accident causing personal injury while travelling to or from work by a means of transport other than a public passenger-transport service and the employer has provided the means of transport or has expressly or by implication authorized its use for the worker to travel to and from his work.

Where a doctor certifies that an injured worker should receive medical or surgical treatment that is not available in the town in which the worker resides or which is nearest to his place of residence, the employer is required under *section 8* to pay, in addition to the compensation, reasonable expenses incurred (a) for the transport of the worker to and from the nearest town where the treatment is available on each occasion on which it is necessary for the worker so to travel; and (b) for meals necessarily obtained by him away from his place of residence on any such occasion, except where they are provided by the employer. The transport expenses are to be based on the lowest rate for any available public passenger-transport service, and the expenses payable for both transport and meals are not to exceed £25 in any case.

Section 9 requires employers to insure and keep insured against their liability under the Workers' Compensation Act in respect of the workers employed by them in any employment to which the Act applies. Where two or more employers are jointly liable in respect of the same workers, they may take out a joint policy. The Crown, also any employer included in a scheme of compensation, benefit, or insurance approved by the Compensation Court under section 64 of the principal Act, and any employer granted a certificate of exemption by the Compensation Court where the Court is satisfied that such employer has adequate financial resources to meet all probable claims, is exempted from the requirement to insure.

AGRICULTURAL WORKERS ACT, 1936, AND SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT, 1919,
ALSO SHARE-MILKING AGREEMENTS ACT, 1937

REMUNERATION AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Rates of wages for adult agricultural workers employed on dairy-farms were increased from £2 17s. 6d. a week to £3 a week on 1st August, 1943 (where board and lodging is not provided by the employer an additional amount of £1 a week is payable to the worker): see Serial number 1943/125. For adult agricultural workers employed on farms and stations used for the commercial production of wool, meat, or grain (including seed) the rate remains at £2 17s. 6d. a week.