

It is to be noted that the visits of Inspectors accounted for more breaches disclosed (63 prosecutions + 5,867 cases otherwise disposed of = 5,930) than did complaints (221 + 5,633 = 5,854). A high proportion of the complaints (1,827 out of a total of 7,681, or 24 per cent.) disclosed after investigation no breach of the law.

The Fair Rents Act, 1936, and the provisions as to rents of the Economic Stabilization Emergency Regulations 1942, have been separately treated in Tables XVII and XVIII. The tables show that a diminution in breach investigation under the main Act has been to some extent offset by an increase in investigation into matters coming within the scope of the regulations.

(4) PROSECUTIONS

The statistics of investigations show that 284 prosecutions were conducted by the Department during the year. Tables XIX and XX analyse these by the way in which they were disposed of, and detail the penalties imposed. These tables exclude action taken under the Fair Rents legislation, and separate those for enforcement of the Weights and Measures Act, 1925, from the remainder. Both weights and measures proceedings, and those under the "industrial" legislation proper, show a decline from the previous year. The proportion of convictions secured in the latter (185 out of a total of 276 cases) was 67 per cent., a slight decrease from the previous year's proportion of 68 per cent.

(5) CIVIL PROCEEDINGS FOR RECOVERY OF WAGES ON BEHALF OF WORKERS

Besides prosecuting to secure convictions and fines for breaches of the law the Department is empowered to seek recovery of wages which have not been paid, on behalf of the workers concerned, thus relieving the workers of the burden and expense of conducting litigation for themselves. During the year 58 such cases were taken, and judgment for the Department was given in 24 of these. The amount of wages for which judgment was obtained was £616 12s. 1d., a considerably greater amount than that of the previous year, in spite of a slight decrease in the number of cases (Table XXI).

(6) REQUISITIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Inspectors of the Department effect compliance with the provisions of a number of Acts and regulations by the serving of requisitions. The numbers so served are set out in Table XXII. They show an increase over the previous year of 17 per cent. (1945-46, 1,151; 1946-47, 1,351). A single requisition may contain reference to more than one improvement, a factory-occupier being required, for instance, to provide a lunch-room and a fire-escape in the one requisition. Reference has already been made (Section 3 (6)) to difficulties of supply which hinder the carrying-out of improvements. It will be seen that the Factories Act accounts for most of the improvements required.

(7) ARREARS OF WAGES

As a result of complaints and inspections the Department is instrumental in securing each year the payment of large sums which represent arrears of wages to workers. The amount of £57,276 16s. 11d. paid during the year is analysed in Table XXIII. It is shown to what extent payment is made directly at the instigation of Inspectors and to what extent the money is collected by the Department and paid out to the workers subsequently. Minimum wages stipulated by awards and agreements made under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act account for the greater part of the arrears. The amount exceeded that paid in 1945-46 (£49,860 18s. 11d.) by 13 per cent.