

The Public Trustee *v.* G. A. Macdonald and Co. was a case involving the question of compensation to dependants domiciled outside the colony. The Court decided that compensation which has to be paid to members of a worker's family is irrespective of their allegiance, domicile, or residence. ("Decisions," p. 38.)

I beg to suggest that the Act may be widened to include compensation to the sufferers by industrial disease. If it can be proved that disablement has followed from the conditions of employment or the nature of the business carried on, the person injured is as much entitled to compensation as if his or her incapacity had been caused through the agency of machinery, scaffolding, or any other risk to life or health.

MINOR ACTS.

The Servants' Registry Offices Act has been well observed all over the colony. There is, however, complaint made from several places that only the servant is charged fees by the registry-office keeper. This makes the employer careless how often the servant is changed, and throws the whole expense of hiring on the person least able to bear it. In the chief towns the matter rights itself, as good servants are scarce and valuable; but in the country the trouble to a young girl who has paid fees for a situation and finds herself out in the world again in two or three days, in a strange place, perhaps far up country, and without means, is a deplorable one. Any regulation that would assist, or any exertion necessary to guard one so helpless, is worthy of fullest consideration. I recommend that fees should not be wholly charged to the servant, but partly to the employer, who is far better able to pay for the cost of being accommodated than the person who is being hired can possibly be.

The Shearers' Accommodation Act is observed in a satisfactory manner. 686 shearing-stations have been visited and inspected during the year. In forty-nine cases improvements have been ordered to be made before next season. The general accommodation has been greatly bettered since the institution of the Act. If similar provisions of inspection could be extended to the sleeping accommodation of farm-labourers and station-hands it would benefit many hardworking men, whose lives are now bare of even easily provided comfort. It appears far from impartial that statutory instruction should be given to make provision for the health and safety of men who occupy their dwellings for a few weeks only, while those who have to live for long periods in similar habitations have sometimes to put up with accommodation which requires stoical endurance to suffer.

WORKMEN'S HOMES.

The legislation of last year, allowing the voluntary or compulsory resumption of land on which workers' homes can be erected, and also the necessary pecuniary arrangements for the erection of such homes, has had its result in action being taken. A Board has been set up, land acquired in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin, plans prepared, and tenders called for the erection of suitable dwellings for workers. The liberal terms and the opportunities presented of bringing up families in decency and comfort offer the strongest contrast to the conditions which are fast obtaining a hold on the towns—conditions which have the germs of the evil slum in them, and of "rabbit-warren" dwellings housing many families, such as are to be found in London and New York. The Board will probably present a return of its proceedings to Parliament, and therefore no further remark is necessary here.

CONCLUSION.

During the year the staff of the Department has had to be increased. Even with the reinforcement thus received the duties of each officer in the large towns (and especially at the chief office, Wellington) have been arduous to fulfil. I have to acknowledge the valuable services of the Department's officers, who, from the Assistant Secretary downward, have expended cheerful and continuous efforts to cope with the difficulties the growing needs of a young colony present in its development.

DETAILS of EXPENDITURE of the DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR during the Year ending 31st March, 1906.

	£	s.	d.
Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act	3,603	0	0
*Factories, Shops, Shearers' Accommodation, and other Acts (inspection, &c.) ..	2,738	0	0
*Fares (departmental and advanced to workmen)	1,009	0	0
*Stores, board, and lodging (for workmen sent to employment)	12	0	0
Salaries	5,423	0	0
Sundries	109	0	0
Refund costs Seamen's Union in case for which penalties, &c., were paid to Government ..	50	0	0
	12,944	0	0
* Less refunds of Court costs, fares, stores, board, and lodging	725	0	0
	<u>£12,219</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>