

(2.) In a Canterbury case the claimant had taken his son's position for a week, the latter having obtained another situation, and it having been arranged that his father should take his place for a week instead of his giving a week's notice. The Court held that where a father took his son's place and was injured he was a worker, and entitled to succeed. (Decisions, &c., Vol. viii, 1909, p. 25.)

(3.) A claimant alleged that while employed lumping sacks of manure he had occasion to move a plank, and in so doing strained his heart. The Court held, on the evidence, that the heart-trouble from which the claimant was proved to be suffering must have been caused by a strain incurred during the course of his employment in respondent's store, and that the claimant had suffered an injury by accident within the meaning of the Act. (Decisions, &c., Vol. viii, 1909, p. 27.)

(4.) In dismissing a claim made at Wellington, the Court held that where a worker was already suffering from dilatation of the heart a gradual increase in such dilatation caused by the strain of the work in which he is engaged is not an injury by accident within the meaning of the Act. (Decisions, &c., Vol. viii, 1909, p. 30.)

(5.) The dependents of a carpenter alleged that in falling off a ladder deceased had contracted blood-poisoning, which three months later caused his death. The Court held, on the evidence, that the plaintiffs had not proved that the death of the deceased worker had been caused by the injury which he had sustained some months previously. (Decisions, &c., Vol. viii, 1909, p. 35.)

(6.) In giving judgment in a Christchurch case, the Court laid down the following principle: The question of serious and wilful misconduct is one of fact, to be determined on the circumstances of each case. In dealing with the question the Court is not bound to treat every violation by a worker of a rule in force in the factory or works as amounting necessarily to serious and wilful misconduct. Whether it is so or not depends on the nature of the rule and the circumstances in which the violation has taken place. In regard to the particular case under review the Court held, on the evidence, that the deceased worker had been guilty of misconduct, but that such misconduct was neither serious nor wilful, and awarded the plaintiff compensation. (Decisions, &c., Vol. viii, 1909, p. 49.)

(7.) In giving judgment in favour of the dependents of a co-operative labourer who was killed in the employ of the Government, the Court held that a party of Government co-operative contractors who had undertaken the formation of part of a railway-track were contractors for the purposes of section 13 of the Workers' Compensation Act, 1908. (Decisions, &c., Vol. viii, 1909, p. 55.)

COST OF LIVING.

I have given the matter of obtaining reliable information as to the cost of living some attention during the current year, but have not yet decided on the form of procedure. I am, however, in communication with statisticians in regard to the method adopted in other countries, in order to get reliable statistics on the point later.

Meanwhile a very exhaustive inquiry has been made into the question of the rents of houses occupied by workers in the four chief centres of the Dominion. This report is now being prepared, and will be submitted to you whilst Parliament is sitting. It is pleasing, however, to record that from information supplied to the Department there is undoubted proof that during the year just ended the cost of commodities in general use, and even house-rents, were somewhat cheaper than for several years past. There has been a decline of from 5 to 10 per cent. in the rents of houses in Wellington City, and, although the drop was not a general one, still the evidence before the Department shows that there was a widespread disposition on the part of landlords in most centres—with perhaps the sole exception of Auckland—to reduce rents. Exactly how long this state of affairs will last it is difficult to say.

In regard to commodities, there was a very decided drop in the price of meat, which had maintained an even price for seventeen years. This drop was experienced right throughout the Dominion, and the result is that meat can be purchased at a cheaper rate than for many years past. The best parts of beef can now be bought for from 5d. to 6d. per pound; mutton, from 3d. to 3½d.; veal, 5d. 6d.; while sundries, such as sausages, tripe, and suet, have also dropped 1d. per pound all round. The only meat not affected appears to be pork, which has remained stationary at 6d. and 7d. per pound. Other foodstuffs have also generally been lower in price than during the previous five years. Potatoes, bread, and eggs have been generally cheaper than in previous years; butter, flour, and oatmeal have remained much the same as during past years, and have been subject to the usual variations in price during the twelve months. However, taken all round, fruit, meat, breadstuffs, and rents have shown an appreciable decline over the prices ruling during the last few years. A return comparing the average prices of commodities and rents in Auckland, Christchurch, and Dunedin with those in Wellington, taking Wellington as 100, as at the 1st March, 1910, is appended hereto.