

SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION.

During the year a considerable amount of inspection and other work has been carried on by the Inspectors of the Department throughout New Zealand in conjunction with their factory and other duties, with the result that a further improvement in the accommodation provided for shearers generally has taken place. Since the general inspection made in 1907 by the three Inspectors especially told off for the purpose, a vast amount of work has been done by both inspection and correspondence, in order to see that, where accommodation was reported unsatisfactory, adequate improvements have been made. I referred in my report of last year to the great difficulty experienced by the Department in enforcing compliance with our notices, whereby delay has taken place for as much as three years in some cases; and I trust that you will see your way this session to authorise the introduction of a Bill to consolidate the existing law on the lines of my recent recommendations. Under the proposed provisions it will be possible for the Department to take proceedings for failure to comply immediately after the notice expires, so that at most there will be only one season's delay instead of two or three as at present. I have suggested that station-holders should have an opportunity of lodging any objections by filing an appeal within one month of the issue of the notice. It is not anticipated, however, that there will be a large number of such appeals filed, as the Department is always prepared to consider any reasonable objections made, and also to make every allowance that is possible for difficulty in getting timber on ground, &c. The greatest part of the difficulty is always experienced with a few station-holders who make little or no effort to comply. The proposals submitted will also give Inspectors some discretionary power to allow a modification in any special cases that may arise.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

The Inspectors report that this Act is working satisfactorily, and the Department is given little or no trouble. The scale of fees gazetted in 1907 is reported to be faithfully observed, and no cases have been taken by the Department during the year for charging fees in excess of scale. However, several instances have come under the notice of the Department where a fee has been taken from a worker who found on application that the position for which he was selected had already been filled. Some of the cases reported during the year showed that men had been sent considerable distances to work, only to find that the posts had already been taken. The amount of fee and expenses was refunded on representations being made by the Department. Although I think that in most cases the blame must rest with the registry-office keepers through being over anxious to do business, I consider that the employers themselves are also largely to blame for this state of affairs, as they fail to notify the registry-office keeper of the vacancy being filled; and something should be done so that workers may obtain redress from the parties responsible for the mistakes. Through its various labour offices, the Department engages, during the year, several thousands of men for private employers, and it is indeed rare for men to be sent needlessly to jobs, as precautions are taken to see that the positions are not already filled.

The only case taken under the Act was against an Auckland registry-office keeper for making engagements without possessing a license under the Act. A fine of £5 was imposed, as he had been convicted for a similar offence previously.

STATISTICS.

The statistics in the report are given much on the same lines as in previous years.

In regard to the statistics of persons employed in shops, however, a change has been made from the lines followed last year, in that the totals for the various cities are not given in quite the same detail as formerly, although the information printed is very complete, and likely to meet all requirements. A division of districts was made in regard to Otago and Southland. This year the Southland statistics are published apart from Otago, as a desire was expressed for this to be done.

NEW OFFICES.

The headquarters of the Department are now located in the Te Aro Post-office building, Ghuznee Street. Two floors of the building were specially fitted up for the purpose of our officers, and it is anticipated that the quarters now provided will be at the disposal of the Department for many years to come. Not only are the premises more roomy and better lighted, but the building belongs to the Government, and this saves a considerable expenditure in rent per annum. Since the inception of the Department there have been no less than ten changes of quarters.