

A general inspection has also been made in the Waikato flax-mill district, and in some cases it was necessary to issue notices for improved accommodation.

A considerable number of sawmills in the various districts has also been inspected, and where the accommodation was insufficient or unsatisfactory notices were served on the occupiers to provide the necessary accommodation.

ARREARS OF WAGES RECOVERED FOR WORKERS UNDER VARIOUS ACTS.

Arrears of wages amounting to £1,688 11s. 7d. were collected from employers and handed over to the workers concerned.

SCAFFOLDING INSPECTION ACT.

During the year 937 notices of intention to erect scaffolding were received.

Seventy-three accidents were reported under this Act, five of which were fatal and nine serious. The fatal accidents were caused by falls from scaffolding, &c., and were not due to faulty construction of gear.

There were twelve prosecutions laid under the Act, and a conviction was obtained in each case except one.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT.

During the year fifty-two cases were dealt with under the Act, as compared with sixty-five during last year. Of these twelve were considered sufficiently important to be published. The following decisions are of special interest:—

(1.) *Stuart v. The Christchurch Tramway Board*.—A tramway conductor claimed compensation in respect of an attack of facial paralysis. It was held that though such paralysis might be an accident within the meaning of the Act, yet it was due to a normal cause, and in order to obtain compensation the plaintiff must show that the cause of the injury was an accident "arising out of and in the course of" his employment.

(2.) *Williams v. The New Zealand Sulphur Company (Limited)*.—This case was a result of the volcanic disturbance at White Island. The husband of the plaintiff was engaged in the quarrying of sulphur on the island, and for this purpose resided on the island. All the inhabitants of the island were engulfed or swept away by the volcanic disturbance, but nothing was definitely known as to the time of the disturbance or the manner in which the inhabitants met their death. It was therefore not proved that the accident arose (1) out of, and (2) in the course of, the employment.

(NOTE.—Such information as could be gathered tended to show that the disturbance happened at night-time, that the workings where the worker was employed were practically unharmed by disturbance; and the Court also found that it was an express condition of the employer's contract with the worker that the employment commenced only on his actually beginning work and was coexistent with his hours of work, which were usually from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

COST OF LIVING.

Each month the *Labour Journal* published by the Department has contained lists of the average prices of commodities ruling in the four centres and in the principal smaller towns, and every quarter a similar list of rents has been published.

In these tables a series of price index numbers has been compiled by the Government Statistician and used to illustrate the rise and fall in the prices of various commodities. The increases in prices due to conditions caused by the war were specially dealt with in the October issue.

An interesting experiment designed to lower the price of bread has been reported by the Inspector at Wanganui, where the master bakers have formed themselves into a company, and have reduced the number of delivery-carts from twenty-two to twelve. The company has divided the district into twelve blocks, and one cart is allocated to each block, thereby doing away with the overlapping that has previously occurred.

FOOTWEAR REGULATION ACT.

In terms of the Footwear Regulation Acts, 1913 and 1915, four experts in the boot trade have been appointed Inspectors of Footwear and stationed in the four centres. In order to facilitate the work in other towns all Inspectors of Factories have also been appointed as Inspectors of Footwear. Brief summaries of the reports of the Inspectors covering that period of the year since their appointment appear below.

Extracts from Reports of Footwear Inspectors appointed in November, 1915, to Administer the Footwear Regulation Act.

Auckland.—I have visited 164 retail boot-shops, sixteen factories, and eight wholesale warehouses. I found that there was a large stock of women's and children's imported footwear—all classes—in many of the retail boot-shops and wholesale warehouses, containing cardboard insoles and stiffeners, with either compo. or wooden heels, also a number of men's slippers and tennis-shoes with compo. stiffeners and insoles, not branded in conformity with the Act. Some of the lines in women's and children's footwear contained all cardboard with the exception of the outsole, which was of very inferior leather, and steps were taken to secure stamps for the purpose of branding the footwear. Since the Act came into operation there has been a considerable improvement in this class of footwear, as many shopkeepers are replacing the shoddy boot and shoe with one of solid leather—heel excepted—whilst others in ordering next season's goods have specified that the soles, insoles, and stiffeners must contain all leather. The stock in thirty-one of the retail boot-shops and all the footwear in sixteen local factories visited is made of all leather. Prior to the Act coming into operation there were a few small firms manufacturing cheap lines of footwear with compo. stiffeners, but this has been discontinued. Visits have also been made to the shops in eleven country towns.