

WAR LEGISLATION AMENDMENT ACT.

Rent-restriction.

In order to prevent increases in rent on the part of landlords on account of the abnormal conditions caused by the war, legislation was passed during the 1916 and 1917 sessions of Parliament establishing a basis on which rents should be fixed.

The provisions of the Act have had most effect in the Wellington District. Undoubtedly in Wellington City the need for legislation of this nature was greatly felt. From the 1st November, 1917 (the date when Inspectors were empowered to investigate), to the 31st March, 1918, upwards of two hundred inquiries were received in this city, and, arising out of these, 102 applications for reduction of rent were made to Inspectors. Of these applications twenty-seven were settled favourably to the applicants by the Department without recourse to the Court; forty-three applicants were advised they had no cause of action; twenty-four applications were filed in the Court, seven of which were then settled out of Court by a reduction of rent, three were withdrawn owing to the tenants leaving the houses before the cases were heard, nine were decided in favour of the landlord, and five in favour of the tenant. This left eight cases still under consideration at the 31st March.

There were only twenty-seven applications received by the Department in other parts of the Dominion, twelve of which were in Masterton. Of these, twenty-one applicants were advised that they had no ground for action; in five cases the rent was reduced (four without making application to the Court), and one case was still unsettled on the 31st March. From various parts of the Dominion expressions of appreciation and approval of the legislation have been received, and it is apparent that even in those districts where no definite action is necessary it will prove to be an effective deterrent from exploitation on the part of the owners of dwellinghouses.

A number of complaints have been made that the Act loses its effect to some extent by the fact that a prospective tenant is sometimes required to pay a bonus in order to secure a dwelling. Action cannot be taken in such cases unless it is found that the bonus is received by the owner. So far as can be ascertained the outgoing tenant is generally the recipient.

Complaints have also been made that excessive rents have been charged for dwellings in business portions of the city. In this connection section 20 of the 1917 amendment provides for a valuation by the Valuation Department of a dwellinghouse "as such," but does not require the Court to base its decision on that valuation, although it shall "take it into account." The Court has under this section accepted other expert evidence, and it may be said that experts have differed considerably in their opinions of values. It should be pointed out also that the rates on dwellings in business areas (and in many cases fire insurance also) are higher than they would be in a residential area; such items are fair charges to include in the rental.

COST OF LIVING.

Those who are interested in the statistics and figures which were formerly published monthly in the *Labour Journal* will find the information in the *Monthly Abstract* published by the Government Statistician.

DETAILS OF THE EXPENDITURE OF THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT DURING THE YEAR.

Salaries, war bonus, temporary clerical assistance, allowances to officers performing higher duties, and allowance to police and other officers acting as departmental agents* ...	£	19,311
Advertising and publications ...		192
Fares (at reduced rates), board and lodging, &c., advanced to persons proceeding to employment (see refunds of same below, £230) ...		233
Fares (proportion of) contributed by Department to persons proceeding to employment (viz., 25 per cent. on railway fares) ...		191
Fees paid to assessors of Conciliation Councils ...		1,688
Legal and witnesses' expenses (see refunds of same below) ...		146
Postage, telegrams, telephones, and rent of letter-boxes ...		1,403
Printing and stationery ...		1,079
Office requisites, fuel and lighting ...		333
Travelling allowances and expenses of Inspectors, members of Arbitration Court, Conciliation Councils, &c., bicycles and motor-cycles, and maintenance of same ...		4,302
Workers' dwellings—		
Administrative and travelling expenses } charged for in rents and instalments {		412
Fire insurance, rates, and repairs ... }		1,400
Miscellaneous expenditure—		
Arbitration Court and Conciliation Councils ...	£	56
General ...		280
		336
		31,026
Less refunds of—		
Fares ...		230
Legal and witnesses' expenses ...		50
		280
		£30,746

* Exclusive of the salaries of the Judge and members of the Court of Arbitration, £2,800, which are appropriated by special Act of Parliament.