

As regards the question of increasing the maximum of the death and permanent incapacity benefits to correspond with Queensland we beg to report as follows :—

Fatal Accidents.—The compensation under the New Zealand Act where death results from the injury and the worker leaves total dependants is three years' earnings, not to be less than £200 nor greater than £500. Under the Queensland Act the compensation is three years' earnings, not to be less than £300 nor to exceed £600. The main benefit is three years' wages, and the maximum and minimum have little effect on the amount of compensation payable under the scheme. For example, three years' wages at £1 18s. 6d. per week would amount to £300, and, happily, there are very few married men whose earnings are less than this sum. The compensation for total dependants, therefore, is in the vast majority of cases greater than £300, and increasing the minimum to this amount would have little effect. An increase of the maximum from £500 to £600 would only affect the compensation where the wages are in excess of £3 4s. per week, and as the standard of wages has lately been increased some allowance will have to be made for this fact, and we think an increase in the maximum to £600 would necessitate an addition of about 5 per cent. to the rates.

Permanent Incapacity.—The New Zealand Act provides for half-wages, not to exceed £2 10s. per week and £500 in the aggregate, the payments not to extend over a longer period than six years. The Queensland Act provides for half-wages, not to exceed £2 per week and £750 in the aggregate. In New Zealand, therefore, all cases of permanent disablement would be settled on the basis of 313 weeks' (six years') payments where the average weekly wages do not exceed £3 4s. per week, and from this period down to 200 weeks where the wages lie between £3 4s. and £5 per week or over. In Queensland, apparently, all compensation can be drawn until the amount received is £750, but the effect of this is considerably modified by the introduction of a new schedule (*vide* Queensland Government Gazette of 24th August, 1918) providing for cash payments for permanent injuries—viz., £750 for loss of two eyes, down to £37 10s. (viz., 5 per cent. of the maximum) for the loss of a joint of a finger. This would considerably reduce the liability, and is, of course, quite a different thing from drawing a small payment until the maximum is reached.

As the law in Queensland is somewhat obscure, and we do not know how far it is suggested that the New Zealand Act should be modified, we are unable to give any estimate of what the increase in the premiums would be to provide for the Queensland benefits for permanent incapacity. If the six-year limit is retained, however, the increase would not be great. The Queensland Act contains no allowance for medical expenses except in the case of death; and the trade diseases anthrax, lead, mercury, phosphorus, and arsenic poisoning, which under the New Zealand Act are regarded as accidents, are not included. The £1 medical expenses payable under the New Zealand Act represents about 7 per cent. of the total compensation.

As regards the question of the New Zealand and Queensland premium, the rates per £100 of wages compare as follows :—

	New Zealand.		Queensland.	
	s.	d.	s.	d.
Farmers	12	0	15	0
Builders	20	0	35	0
Bricklayers	20	0	35	0
Carters	40	0	35	0
Saleyard employees	25	0	50	0
Clerks	4	0	5	0
Commercial travellers	12	0	20	0
Drapers	4	0	5	0
Grocers	8	0	12	6
Harbour Boards	30	0	30	0
Hotels	10	0	15	0
Pastoralists	12	0	20	0 (sheep).
			25	0 (cattle and horses).
Woollen-mills	6	0	15	0
Mines	(Gold) 40	0	42	6 (underground).
	(Coal) 60	0	27	6 (surface).

Some of the Queensland rates are on a personal basis—viz., from 2s. 6d. to 40s. per head—which introduces unnecessary complications. The rates should as far as possible always be a percentage of the wages.

According to the New Zealand experience (including that of the companies as well as that of the Department) for the years 1901 to 1917 the relative importance of the different occupations, according to the total wages paid, was as follows :—

Occupation.	Total Wages.	New Zealand Rate.	Queensland Rate.	Difference in Total Charge on Wage-sheet.
	£			£
Farmers	33,638,422	12s.	15s. to 25s. (say, 20s.)	+ 134,553
Clerical	13,004,798	4s.	5s.	+ 6,502
Builders	10,314,053	20s.	35s.	+ 77,355
City Councils	9,523,707	25s.	20s.	— 23,809
Drapers	6,096,490	4s.	5s.	+ 3,048
Excess charge according to the Queensland rates				£197,649