

This Act does not in any way touch the question of the sales of dwellinghouses at an unreasonably increased price, and the scarcity of houses has caused a great many complaints of this kind to be made. This is a matter that might receive attention. The Department has, under the Housing Act, made a number of purchases of houses for applicant workers where it has not been possible to build for them immediately at a reasonable cost. Care has been taken in every case to see that the dwelling is one that is not likely to fall in value below the price paid.

GENERAL.

An increasing amount of work is being performed by officers of this Department for other Departments of the service, the Department's Inspectors being in many cases in a position to obtain the information desired. On behalf of the Census and Statistics Office the Department collects monthly from wholesale and retail dealers in the chief towns the prices of commodities for the purposes of the cost-of-living statistics, and in connection with the industrial census is responsible for the service and collection of returns from manufacturers. The investigation of profiteering complaints and inquiries in connection with the standardization of boots are dealt with on behalf of the Board of Trade; applications to local authorities for permits under the regulations respecting the restriction of non-essential building are reported on by Inspectors of Scaffolding; and on behalf of the Coal Control Committee investigations are made into complaints of coal-hoarding.

STAFF NOTES.

The additional appointments to the staff of the Department referred to in my report of last year have now been made, viz.: (1) Four women Inspectors of Factories; (2) a Dominion Inspector of Accommodation for Shearers, Flaxmill and Sawmill Employees, and Agricultural Labourers; and (3) a departmental Librarian.

All the officers who have served abroad with the Expeditionary Force have now returned to duty.

Housing Branch.—On the passing of the Housing Act last session a separate branch of the Department was established to deal solely with the administration of this Act. Additional appointments provided for in the Act—viz., Architect, Housing Inspectors, besides clerks—have been made, and these officers have taken up their duties. A separate report on housing is printed as H.-11A.

EXPENDITURE OF THE DEPARTMENT DURING THE YEAR 1919-20.

Salaries, temporary clerical assistance, allowance to officers performing higher duties, and allowance to police and other officers acting as departmental agents*	£	23,656
Advertising and publications		364
Fares (at reduced rates), board and lodging, &c., advanced to persons proceeding to employment (see refunds of same below)		164
Fares (proportion of) contributed by Department to persons proceeding to employment (viz., 25 per cent. on railway fares)		146
Fees paid to assessors of Industrial Councils		1,997
Legal and witnesses' expenses (see refunds of same below)		167
Postage, telegrams, telephones, and rent of letter-boxes		2,346
Printing and stationery		1,750
Office requisites, fuel, and lighting		394
Purchase of dwellinghouse for official use, including insurance, rates, and repairs of same ..		859
Travelling allowances and expenses of Inspectors, members of Court of Arbitration, Conciliation Councils, &c., bicycles and motor-cycles, and maintenance of same		5,547
Workers' dwellings—		
Administration and travelling-expenses } charged for in rents and instalments { ..		743
Fire insurance, rates, and repairs } (ten months only) { ..		1,563
Miscellaneous expenditure—	£	
Arbitration Court and Conciliation Councils		291
General		287
		578
Less refunds of—		40,274
Fares		149
Legal and witnesses' expenses		109
		258
		<u>£40,016</u>

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