

family allowances. The amounts paid out have never, however, been heavy enough to place establishments at a disadvantage in comparison with places where the allowances are not paid.

#### EMPLOYMENT OF DISABLED MEN.

A conference of experts was called by the International Labour Office at Geneva in July and August of 1923 for the purpose of inquiring into the world-wide problem of finding employment for disabled men, a subject towards which the attention of Governments has been compellingly directed by the presence of as many as ten million disabled ex-service men in their midst. The statistical reports of pensions departments in sixteen countries show that there are 6,854,000 who, because of their disabilities, are receiving pensions in accordance with the legislation of the countries of which they are nationals. The inability of many of these men to compete against uninjured workers is becoming more marked as the war recedes into the years. Permanently disabled men in large manufacturing concerns are often at a disadvantage where quickness and accuracy in machine work are called for, and often, too, they are objects of suspicion on the part of their fellow-workers, who fear that their being in receipt of a pension will induce the disabled men to accept wages at a lower rate than the trade-union one and so gradually bring about a general lowering of the wages-rates. While considering the special case of the disabled ex-service men, the Conference did not overlook the equally urgent problem presented for their consideration by the presence of a large body of men injured in industry, who in many countries where a pension scheme in connection with workmen's compensation has not been introduced are seriously handicapped in their efforts to keep above the bread-line. Legislative action has been already taken by some European countries with the express purpose of dealing with the problem of disabled ex-soldiers, and Germany, Austria, Poland, Italy, Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, France, and Hungary have passed Acts and decrees according to the method followed to give effect to parliamentary resolutions, or else have Bills under consideration. In Germany, Austria, Poland, Italy, and France the measures contemplated lay down a complete system of organization for the finding of employment by disabled men. A number of resolutions containing the findings of the experts who sat on the Commission were forwarded to the International Labour Office to be laid in the form of proposals before the 1924 International Labour Conference.

#### STATISTICS OF ACCIDENTS, WAGES, ETC.—INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS.

For remarks respecting international statistics of industrial accidents see page 3.

During the year the question of making a comparison between the wages of various classes of skilled and unskilled workers in New Zealand and other countries formed the subject of a discussion with the Government Statistician. To make a nominal comparison was of course a simple matter, but recognition had to be given to the fact that no method of comparing wages would be of any value which did not include a survey of the standards of living, the retail prices of food, clothing, and other necessities, and considerations of climate, industry, seasonal work, &c., which would be likely to influence the real value of wages to the average worker. The nominal wages of workers in several countries were readily obtainable, but no information was available to enable the Department to show how the standard of living in those countries compared with that of New Zealand. In October and November of 1923 a conference of labour statisticians was called at Geneva by the International Labour Office, one of the subjects set down for investigation being that of wages and hours. The special committee which was set up to investigate the wages problem issued their report in December. The reporting body point out that there is a marked meagreness of available statistics of wages and hours of labour, the admission being made that this was apparently due to the expense involved in collecting and compiling data of a comprehensive character. Steps to place the matter on a sound footing were discussed, and it was decided that the International Labour Office should draw up a programme indicating the minimum of information which each country should be asked to publish, this to include current rates of wages and normal hours of work of typical categories of time-workers, and at least once a year the actual and full-time earnings and hours of labour of similar categories of workers, especially those on piecework. Averages would be calculated from these data, and index numbers of real wages based on money wages and on statistics of the cost of living would be published. In addition to the minimum programme it was decided to indicate an ideal programme which, while difficult to realize, would point out the direction towards which the efforts of all countries should tend. The report makes the practical admission that the problems presented for solution in compiling international wage statistics bristle with so many difficulties as to make any group of figures at present unreliable.

#### STAFF NOTES.

The Department now consists of the following officers (permanent staff): Head Office—administrative, 3; clerical, 18. District Offices—Inspectors, 48; clerks, typists, &c., 32. Conciliation Commissioners, 3. Court of Arbitration and its officers, 5. Total, 109; besides 180 officers of other Departments and other persons acting as part-time agents in various capacities.

The work of Inspectors comprises the administration of the various Acts mentioned in the report, some of them requiring expert or technical knowledge, such as the Scaffolding and Excavation Act, the Weights and Measures Act, and the Footwear Regulation Act. Examinations of Inspectors are now instituted in knowledge of scaffolding-work, conducted by a Board set up under the Act; in knowledge of weights and measures (for which the syllabi of the English Board of Trade examinations are taken); and in knowledge of the remaining labour legislation and departmental work generally.