

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT.

Sixty-nine cases were heard and determined by the Court of Arbitration.

The only case calling for notice is that of *McLagan v. Blackball Coal Company*. The Act entitles workers that meet with accidents without fatal results to a sum not exceeding £1 for medical or surgical expenses incurred. In this instance the worker belonged to a medical club from which he was entitled to sick benefits in return for certain contributions. It was held that as no expenditure had been incurred for this particular accident, payments to the club surgeon being at a fixed annual salary, the amount prescribed in the Act was not payable. This discloses an apparent defect in section 14 of the Act, which aimed directly at giving the worker the right referred to.

INDUSTRIAL DISEASES.

This question arises from time to time when allegations are made that certain workers have suffered illness through disease contracted from their employment. The Act already specifically provides that in the case of such well-known industrial diseases as anthrax and poisoning due to the use of lead, arsenic, and phosphorus, the usual compensation shall be payable, and an Order in Council may also be gazetted extending this section to any other diseases. It is, of course, still necessary, however, for each claimant for compensation to prove that the disease in question was due not only to the nature of the claimant's occupation, but also to the employment for the particular employer or employers from whom the compensation is claimed. These requirements, especially the latter, naturally present considerable difficulty. This difficulty would be obviated if all compensation claims were dealt with through one channel.

A more important step in connection with industrial diseases and accidents lies, however, in the direction of endeavouring to prevent these injuries from taking place. Under the Scaffolding and Excavation Act the regulations and their administration are specially designed to prevent accidents in connection with building operations, and this report, page 14, shows that the number of accidents from such work is considerably less than in previous years, notwithstanding that building-work becomes more dangerous as the sizes of the structures increase; moreover, none of the serious accidents was due to faulty scaffolding or gear. Similar precautions are being taken to safeguard employees in factories, and to assist in this work opportunity is being taken, when vacancies occur, to appoint as Inspectors men with experience in the handling of machinery and factory appliances. The paragraphs on page 16 show what is being done respecting lead poisoning. In response to complaints of diseases occurring in tanneries and woollen-mills inquiry showed that the disease was due to chrome ulceration; precautionary notices were therefore issued to all tanneries and woollen-mills, and chrome ulceration was also added by Order in Council to the diseases to which the Compensation Act shall apply. Similar precautionary measures were taken regarding poisoning following upon cuts occurring to slaughtermen in freezing works, and the adoption of these measures has resulted in a reduction in the number of septic cases.

SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT.

The administration of this Act has again been carried out by the Department of Agriculture, whose Inspectors have greater facilities for carrying out country inspections.

AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT (INCLUDING ACCOMMODATION FOR FLAX-MILL AND SAWMILL WORKERS).

A special Inspector has again been appointed to supervise the accommodation provided at flax-mills, sawmills, &c., and as a result a large number of general inspections have been made of such places, and 367 requisitions have been served on proprietors for increased or improved accommodation; when complied with these should result in better conditions being provided for the workers affected.

SCAFFOLDING AND EXCAVATION ACT.

During the year 6,421 notices of intention to erect buildings and scaffolding were received (previous year 6,023), and 20,706 inspections were made (previous year 16,760). A rigid inspection of all building-works where there is a risk of workers falling 12 ft. or more has been carried out by the Inspectors. The tightening-up of the Act and regulations three years ago and the better understanding of the requirements by employers are largely responsible for considerable improvements in the types of scaffolding and gear used, and in the extra precautions taken for the safety of workers on buildings.

It is pleasing to report a decrease of sixty-five in the number of accidents—viz., 254, as against 319 last year. There was only one fatal accident (a worker falling into a river from a bridge which was being dismantled), as against six during the previous year. This accident was not due to faulty scaffolding or gear, nor was there any evidence of negligence on any one's part. The number of accidents according to trades is as follows: Labourers, 130; carpenters, 85; plasterers, 15; bricklayers, 5; painters, 4; unclassified, 15; total, 254.

There were forty prosecutions taken for breaches of the Act and regulations. Convictions were obtained in thirty-six cases, and fines were imposed totalling £92 9s.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

There are eighty-four offices registered in New Zealand—a decrease of twenty-nine. The usual visits of inspection were made during the year to see that the Act is generally complied with.