

The regulations applying to the sale of coal, coke, and firewood have continued to engage attention particularly during the winter months. A great improvement has taken place during the past four years in the manner of retailing these articles. In some districts it was formerly the custom to guess the weight or measurement of these goods, and many retailers did not even possess weighing-appliances. The regulations now provide that coal must be sold only by two standard weights—viz., 1 cwt., or $1\frac{3}{4}$ cwt. (viz., twelve bags to the ton), or multiples thereof. This restriction was agreed to by coal merchants. Provision is made, however, allowing for the sale of quantities of less than 1 cwt. if sold and delivered to the purchaser on the premises of the seller.

NIGHT BAKING.

A private member's Bill has been submitted to the New Zealand Parliament on several occasions proposing that the baking of bread should be prohibited between the hours of 5 p.m. and 8 a.m., with an exception to meet the cases where more than one day's bread is required. No overtime work was provided for. Subsequently a modified proposal was suggested by the New Zealand Association of Bakers (employees) that the prohibited hours should be 9 p.m. to 4 a.m., with earlier hours of work before Sundays and holidays, &c. The Labour Bills Committee decided, at the suggestion of the Minister, to refer the proposal to another conference of the parties concerned.

LEAD POISONING.

Regulations were issued in August, 1925, providing for safeguards in factories where lead paints are manufactured or prepared, and in places where painting operations are carried on. Regular inspections have again been made during the year to see that the regulations are being complied with. The principal cause of lead poisoning in the painting industry is dust, and the practice of dry pumicing or sandpapering of painted surfaces is therefore now abolished. There is a certain amount of risk from the splashings from the painter's brush, though according to certain expert authorities abroad this risk is small; care and cleanliness on the part of the worker is regarded by them as the surest protection against lead poisoning. The regulations prescribe that washing-facilities shall be provided to enable the workers to wash their hands before taking meals and on completion of the day's work; the workers must also wear overalls, and provision must be made to store the overalls when not being used.

Proceedings were taken against a dealer for selling paint containing more than 5 per cent. of soluble lead without the containers being labelled as required by the regulations.

Under the Health Department's regulations lead poisoning is a disease that should be notified. The number of cases reported to that Department during the year is three. Two were of a minor nature and one proved fatal. In this case it was found that the worker had been employed by the same firm since commencing his apprenticeship as a painter—viz., for twenty-two years. He was engaged chiefly on outdoor work. Washing-facilities were provided, and the worker was considered to be sufficiently careful in the use of lead paint. It is not possible to say when or where he contracted the disease.

Regarding the movement for the prohibition of the use of white-lead, a report has been issued by the International Labour Office, Geneva. It is stated that sixteen countries have ratified the Geneva Convention of 1921, which proposed the ultimate prohibition of the use of lead paints for interior work. Four countries have such legislation under preparation, whilst thirty-five countries have either refused to ratify or have not come to a decision in the matter. As mentioned in the Department's Annual Reports 1926, page 16, and 1927, page 17, the Government of Great Britain has also considered the question of prohibition, but has found that the substitutes for lead were not very satisfactory, and moreover that British experts had advised that the danger of lead poisoning could be largely overcome by regulations controlling the use of lead paints. Regulations on the lines of those already adopted in New Zealand were therefore decided on. As stated below, the Department's own experiments in the use of zinc in place of lead support the conclusion of the British experts.

The question of the use of spraying or atomizer painting-apparatus has received further attention during the year. These appliances are chiefly used in motor and coach building, also furniture-making. As mentioned in the last annual report, it is not considered necessary for the present to recommend the adoption of regulations governing the use of such apparatus, as occupiers of factories have already taken precautionary measures. Special instructions have, however, been issued to Inspectors regarding the precautions that should be taken by both employers and workers, and Inspectors report that there is no difficulty in obtaining compliance therewith. These comprise the use of booths in which the work is to be done with exhaust fans to draw the fumes or dust away from the operators. Respirators, protective overalls, and washing-facilities are generally required as an additional precaution. The use of spraying-apparatus for the painting of buildings, both internal and external, has not advanced in the Dominion. Several trials have been made, but the results have not proved commercially satisfactory, generally on account of the small surfaces to be dealt with on New Zealand buildings. The position is being closely watched in conjunction with the Health Department, and, if found necessary, steps will be taken to provide the safeguards necessary.

As mentioned in the three previous reports, tests have been carried out on three houses adjoining one another to discover whether zinc is a satisfactory substitute for white-lead; one was painted with three coats of white-lead (carbonate of lead), the second with one coat of zinc compound upon two coats of carbonate of lead, and the third with three coats of zinc compound. A recent inspection discloses that the white-lead is proving more durable than the zinc compound; indeed, in the case of the cottage painted solely with zinc compound the indications after four years are that the paint is of no further utility either for decorative or protective purposes.