

on the pavement, but at the inquest a verdict was returned that deceased died from a fractured skull and ruptured liver preceded by a heart attack.

A clerk of works went on to a scaffold, and in order to make certain measurements stopped with his legs astride one of the handles of an empty barrow which was hooked on to a hoist. A labourer on the ground, unaware of the presence of the clerk, started the hoist, with the result that the clerk was thrown backwards from the scaffold and fell a distance of 45 ft. to the ground. His injuries proved fatal.

A contractor was glazing in a sun-porch 15 ft. from the ground when the nails holding a wooden scaffolding bracket to the wall drew out, causing him to fall, with fatal results. The scaffolding was found to be constructed in a haphazard manner and had not been inspected.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

There are 110 offices registered in New Zealand (last year 107). Three complaints were received regarding alleged breaches of the Act, but in no case did investigation disclose that a breach had been committed. The offices appear to be satisfactorily conducted.

RENT RESTRICTION.

As mentioned in last year's report, the previous legislation regarding rent restriction—viz., Part I of the War Legislation Amendment Act, 1916, and the several amendments thereof—expired on 31st October, 1936, and has been replaced by the Fair Rents Act, 1936.

FAIR RENTS ACT, 1936.

This Act, which has currency to 30th September, 1937, was passed on 11th June, 1936, and applies to dwellinghouses that are let at a rental not exceeding £156 a year. The Act, which binds the Crown and which does not apply to any dwellinghouse first let after the passing of the legislation or to blocks of residential flats, prevents any increase in a tenant's rent during the tenancy, except where a fair rent is determined in accordance with the Act, this provision being retrospective to 1st May, 1936. Any such increase can be enforced only pursuant to a Magistrate's order or pursuant to an agreement in writing between the landlord and the tenant and approved by the Inspector of Factories.

A Magistrate may determine a fair rent for any dwellinghouse, on the application of either the landlord or the tenant. The fair rent is to be such rent as in the opinion of the Magistrate it is fair and equitable for the particular tenant to pay, having regard to any hardship likely to be inflicted on the tenant or the landlord and to all other relevant considerations. The fair rent is not to be higher than the rent paid by the tenant on 27th November, 1935 (the date of the last general election), or any lower rent that has been payable since that date, unless the landlord proves that that rent is, in the circumstances, too low. Regulations may be made providing for the fixing of the fair rent at an amount equal to a percentage of the capital value of the dwellinghouse (not less than 4 per cent. nor more than 6 per cent. per annum), together with the outgoings for rates, insurance, and repairs, and the amounts (if any) to be allowed for depreciation and as rent of furniture. Such regulations may apply generally or in respect of specified parts of New Zealand or specified classes of dwellinghouses. No such regulations have been issued to date.

The fair rent may be altered from time to time, and applies only so long as the tenancy lasts, but a new fair rent may be determined for any subsequent tenancy.

Other provisions empower the Court to order a refund of what it considers to be excessive rent paid during the six months immediately before a fair rent is determined, declare any rent in excess of the fair rent to be irrecoverable, enable a tenant to recover (or deduct from future rent) any rent that he has paid in excess of that payable under the Act, and prohibit the charging of fines or premiums for letting houses to which the Act applies.

It is required that fourteen days' notice be given to the tenant before proceedings for possession are commenced, while the grounds on which possession of a dwellinghouse may be obtained are restricted, and the Court is authorized to refuse an order for possession where it is not satisfied that the landlord would suffer greater hardship from the refusal of an order than the tenant would suffer by reason of the grant of an order. The Court also has discretionary power to suspend any such proceedings for as long as it thinks fit, with or without imposing conditions. The right of the landlord to distrain for rent is also restricted.

The Inspector of Factories is empowered to act on behalf of any tenant in proceedings under the Act, and the following table indicates the extent to which tenants have availed themselves of the services of the Department's Inspectors.

Town.	Total Number of Applications.	Agreements approved by Inspectors under Section 21.	Cases taken to Court.		Tenant represented by Inspector in Eviction Proceedings.		Other Cases.*
			Rent reduced.	Rent justified.	Section 13.	Section 14.	
Auckland	841	293	18	55	24	6	445
Wellington	1,010	91	29	20	80	23	767
Christchurch	565	70	9	50	..	..	436
Dunedin	128	64	4	..	..	..	60
Other towns	589	314	48	21	11	1	194
	3,133	832	108	146	115	30	1,902

* These were cases where the Inspector considered that the rent already being paid was justified, or applications which were withdrawn as a result of the tenant vacating the premises, or for other reasons.