

The Department has again dealt with numerous inquiries from farmers and workers in regard to the provisions of the Act and regulations. Complaints were received respecting 1,180 alleged breaches of the Act, and these resulted in 19 prosecutions and 485 warnings. Fines imposed amounted to £13 15s. Apart from the above, 1,024 inspections of dairy-farms and 192 inspections of farms and stations were made, it being necessary in 521 instances to draw attention to failure to observe the statutory provisions.

SHARE-MILKING AGREEMENTS ACT, 1937.

The object of the Act is to provide minimum standard terms and conditions for inclusion in share-milking agreements between share-milkers and farm-owners. Minimum standard terms and conditions which had been agreed to on behalf of the New Zealand Farmers' Union and the New Zealand Workers' Industrial Union of Workers are set out in the Schedule to the Act, but these are applicable only in those cases where the farm-owner provides the herd. Provision is made, however, for extending the provisions of the Act to other classes of share-milking agreements—for example, where the share-milker provides the herd—if standard terms and conditions have been agreed to by representative organizations of farm-owners and share-milkers. The provisions in the Schedule may be revoked, varied, or added to by the Governor-General in Council by agreement of the organizations concerned.

In the case of every share-milking agreement made between a farm-owner and a share-milker where the herd is owned or provided by the farm-owner, the agreement shall on and after the 1st day of August, 1938, operate not less favourably for the share-milker in any respect than if the terms and conditions specified in the Schedule to the Act were incorporated in the agreement on that date, and any terms and conditions in the agreement that are inconsistent with the terms and conditions of the Schedule shall, on and after the 1st day of August, 1938, or the date of the agreement, whichever is the later, be deemed to be null and void in so far as they would operate to the disadvantage of the share-milker.

Without limiting any other remedies that a share-milker may have against the farm-owner, any Inspector under the Agricultural Workers Act, 1936, may, acting in the name and on behalf of the share-milker, take proceedings for the enforcement of the rights of the share-milker under any share-milking agreement to which the Act applies.

SCAFFOLDING AND EXCAVATION ACT.

During the year 5,594 notices of intention to erect buildings and scaffoldings and to commence excavations were received (previous year 5,475), and 10,240 inspections were made.

There were thirty-one prosecutions, convictions being recorded in twenty-nine cases, and fines amounting to £60 being imposed.

The number of accidents to workers during the year ended 31st December, 1937, was 250 (of which 8 were fatal). It should be mentioned that the total includes not only accidents to workers on scaffolding or in connection with gear or excavations, but also all other accidents occurring in connection with building operations. Taking into consideration the hazardous nature of the work, the greatly increased activity in the building industry, and the number of workers involved, the number of accidents due to falls from scaffolds, ladders, or roofs is small—viz., 63. The number of accidents according to occupations were: labourers, 150; carpenters, 68; painters, 6; plasterers, 5; unclassified, 21.

Information as to time lost and compensation paid shows in regard to the cases in which details are available that a total of 5,179 days were lost and compensation to the amount of £8,750 0s. 4d. was paid.

The following are particulars of the fatal accidents reported:—

A labourer employed on demolition work was operating a hand-winch mounted on a platform. The platform collapsed under the strain applied, and the worker fell to the ground, sustaining fatal head injuries. Notice of intention to commence this work had not been given to the Department.

A carpenter working on a ladder some 6 ft. from the ground fell and sustained fatal injuries as a result of the ladder slipping when he leaned sideways to drive in a nail.

Two workmen employed on the construction of a temporary bridge for the driving of piles for the main bridge were thrown into the river, apparently as a result of the vibrations caused by a large wooden beam being dropped into position. Both men could swim, and had almost reached the bank when they were caught in a current and were drowned.

A workman had mounted a 17 ft. ladder for the purpose of dusting some interior paintwork when he overbalanced and fell on to the floor, sustaining fatal injuries to his head and chest.

A painter working on a fire-escape overbalanced and fell 20 ft. to the ground, sustaining fatal injuries.

During a high wind a portion of a chute broke away from a portable concrete-hoist tower and struck a labourer on the head, causing injuries which later proved fatal.

A foreman carpenter working on a scaffold fell a distance of 14 ft. to the ground, sustaining fatal head injuries. It is not known how the accident occurred, but it appears to have been in no way due to any defect in the scaffolding.

In the following case the accident was to a person who was not a "worker" within the meaning assigned to that term by the Workers' Compensation Act, 1922:—

A bridge-building contractor was manœuvring a concrete pile into position when the knot in the rope around the pile became unfastened. The contractor was crushed beneath the pile, and subsequently died in hospital.