

In and Out of Parliament.

Notes on Public Men and Affairs.

Mr. J. W. Shackelford will contest the Eden seat in the Government interest.

Mr. Massey declares that there will be Opposition candidates for sixty seats.

The gross public debt of New Zealand on March 31 last was £66,453,897.

The second reading of the Loan Bill, authorising the raising of £1,250,000, was carried on July 9th.

The question of placing Government steamers on the Waungaiti River is under consideration.

It has been decided to send an expert to Kararotonga to investigate the conditions of the fruit industry there.

There will probably be three candidates for the Taranaki seat—the sitting member and Messrs. C. E. Bellringer and W. G. Malone.

Mr. A. R. Crane, managing director of the Auckland Farmers' Union, has been asked to contest the Marsden seat in the Government interest.

Dr. Chapple is anxious that the Government should take steps to have children attending public schools medically examined periodically.

A drop of £80,847 in the Customs revenue, which is shown for the June quarter, is attributed by the Prime Minister to the reductions in the tariff.

There was a net increase in revenue for the three months ended June 30 last, as compared with the corresponding period for last year, of £6892.

Opinions on the Budget.—Mr. Massey: "A policy of plunge." The "Dominion": "A job-lot Budget." The "N.Z. Times": "A Budget of common sense, of legitimate hope, of scope unprecedented."

Sir Joseph Ward is confident that a national superannuation fund could be carried out successfully with great advantage to the people and safety to the country.

Ministers state that before the establishment of a branch of the Royal Mint in the Dominion would be feasible a larger local output of gold would be necessary. The loss at present would exceed £20,000 annually.

The number of old age pension payments last year was 158,782, as compared with 152,502 in the previous year, an increase of 6,280, or 4.12 per cent. The total amount of the payments was £325,220, as against £314,204 paid out in the preceding year.

Mr. John Hunter, a well-known contractor, is definitely announced as the Opposition candidate for the Masterton seat, against Mr. Hogg, the present member.

On July 7th, on the motion of the Prime Minister, the following committee was set up to go into the question of the new Parliamentary Buildings, and to report on the proposed sites: Messrs. Barclay, Baume, W. Fraser, Izard, Massey, the Hon. Hall-Jones and Guinness, Sir Wm. Stewart, and Sir J. Ward.

There is said to be strong opposition to the Second Ballot Bill even in the Ministerial ranks. These objectors say there may be a chance for an Absolute Majority Bill, but there is very little for a Bill embodying the principle of a second election in cases where the leading candidate has not polled an absolute majority of the votes.

Notice of motion has been given by Dr. Chapple "That in the opinion of the House the time has arrived when the necessary community of interest within each electorate requires that the present number of electorates in the South Island remain, and that a proportionate number of new members be given to the North Island, in order to preserve the representation on a population basis."

"While a lot of good work has been done in the North," said Mr. C. H. Poole during the night debate on the Loan Bill, "there is a strong feeling that in many instances the money spent in road-making is simply thrown away, because there has not been a close system of inspection. The work is being scamped, and the money, instead of being expended in work of a permanent nature, is just being wasted."

The annual report of the Post and Telegraph Department shows that the total receipts for the past financial year amounted to £822,639, and the expenditure to £709,204. The revenue from the postal branch was £478,388 and the expenditure £351,443. The telegraph and telephone revenue was £344,251 and the expenditure £357,851. The total revenue exceeded that of 1906-7 by £76,389 and the expenditure by £89,903.

PREVENTION OF QUACKERY.

Mr. Hornsby's Quackery Prevention Bill can be set out in a very few lines. Briefly, it is this: It shall not be lawful to advertise or supply any preparation of medicine or appliance alleged to be for the prevention, alleviation, or cure of any human ailment or physical defect that is declared by a judge of the Supreme Court, on the application of the chief health officer, to be harmful to health, or of such a nature or such a fraudulent character that it cannot have the effect claimed for it, or cannot effect the purpose for which it was supplied.

THE MANAWATU RAILWAY.

A bill dealing with the State purchase of the Wellington-Manawatu railway is rendered necessary by the fact that the existing legislation on the subject does not provide for the railway vesting in the Crown on maturity of the notice of intention to purchase. In view of this, it is proposed to introduce a bill to provide for the vesting of the line in the Crown on the expiry of notice of intention to purchase, namely, on December 7 next. If the bill passes, it will have the effect of placing the whole of the railway between Auckland and Wellington in the possession of the Government in time for the commencement of the fast through mail service, and will at the same time leave the company entirely unharmed as to when it will take the necessary steps to bring the question of the assessment of price to be paid for its line before the arbitration tribunal provided for in the Act.

INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION.

The Government measure to amend the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act proposes important changes in the law. It provides that every worker who is a party to a strike shall be liable to a penalty of £10, together with a further penalty of £1 for every week during which he remains a party to a strike. The penalty on employers for a lock-out is £200, together with a further penalty of £50 for every week during

which he remains a party to a lock-out. Every person inciting, aiding, or abetting a lock-out shall be liable to a penalty in the case of workers of £10, and in the case of industrial unions, employers, or persons other than a worker, of £200. It is also made unlawful for any person to make a gift in aid of persons who are parties to strikes or lock-outs, or to publish any expression of approval of such lock-outs or strikes in any newspaper.

A penalty of £50 or a term of three months' imprisonment is provided in the case of any striker who (without giving his employer not less than 21 days' notice in writing of his intention) strikes when employed in industries connected with the manufacture of gas, electric light, bread, supply of milk, sale or delivery of coal, working of tramways or railways, or other industries affecting the public health or safety. The penalty for inciting an offence against this section is three months' imprisonment or a fine of £10 in the case of a worker or £200 in the case of a person other than a worker. Any union convicted of an infringement of this section shall be liable to have its registration suspended for any period not exceeding three years.

Councils of Conciliation, consisting of a magistrate and two expert assessors, are to take the place of Boards of Conciliation, and the Arbitration Court is also to have two expert assessors added to it. In making awards the Court shall have power to provide for a "needs" wage, and also an "exertion" wage. The Bill, which consists of 67 clauses, has been referred to the Labour Bills Committee.

SECOND BALLOT BILL.

Amongst the bills circulated is the Second Ballot Bill, which aims at the amendment of the electoral laws by introducing the system of a second ballot. The system is already in force in Germany in substantially the same form as that proposed by the bill, and is designed to prevent any candidate at a Parliamentary election being returned by a minority of the total number of votes recorded. If at any election no candidate obtains an absolute majority of votes, a second ballot is to be held between the candidates who obtain the first and second places at the first ballot; the other candidates being excluded. The system is essentially simple and easily worked, and the length of the bill is due to the inclusion of a number of clauses dealing with contingencies which would seldom occur, but for which it is necessary to make due provision.

THE ACCOUNTANTS' BILL.

Some discussion ensued when the Accountants' Bill came up for consideration in committee. Under sub-section (c) of clause 7, persons who have been practising continuously in New Zealand for five years are entitled to registration. Mr. Wilford urged that the word "five" should be struck out, and the period reduced to two years. He also asked that the words "New Zealand" should give place to "any part of the British Empire." Mr. Baume said the question of character should also be considered in the matter of auditing. The Prime Minister said he would agree to substitute a three years' term of continuous practice, but thought it wiser to restrict the qualification to New Zealand. The provision of the Act was accordingly amended from five to three years. Several minor amendments were effected, and a division was taken on the proposal to strike out the provision making it illegal for an unregistered accountant to call himself a "public accountant." The clause passed the committee by 43 votes to 16.

FRIENDLY SOCIETIES.

In the Friendly Societies' Consolidation Bill, the greater portion of the 1882 Act is re-enacted, and a number of provisions from the latest English law are included. Several recommendations of the Friendly Societies' Conference find a place in the measure. The benefits of registration are extended to some new classes of societies, which have come into existence since the passing of the previous Act, and provision is made to secure that the fees chargeable by societies be registered in future, and that new branches of existing societies shall be adequate to provide the promised

benefits. The former office of Public Valuer of Friendly Societies is superseded by that of Actuary of Friendly Societies, and new proposals are inserted providing that societies shall submit their accounts to auditors appointed under the Act. Actuarial valuation of friendly societies is made compulsory in the registrar's department, and it is provided as a further safeguard of friendly society members that no more than two-thirds of the value of any lands or buildings may be advanced upon them by way of mortgage. Restrictions are also posed in regard to friendly societies' investments in meeting places. Another important clause affords to societies or branches having an adequate rate of contributions an actuarial certificate that effect free of charge.

ATTACK ON THE DOMINION'S CREDIT.

In the course of the debate on the Loan Bill, the Prime Minister made serious allegations on the subject of attempts to damage the country's credit.

"A strong general effort has been made for some time past to weaken the general finance of this country," said the Premier. "For some time past there has been a sustained and organised campaign to weaken the financial position of this country. These are weighty words to use, but I speak deliberately and advisedly." Sir Joseph added that he possessed evidence to prove this allegation which would surprise members, and he proposed to divulge it in the course of the financial debate. "I will do it," he said, "in a manner that will astonish the House. If I can get permission to use correspondence that I have in my hands, I will prove it up to the hilt."

LAND SETTLEMENT FIGURES.

The number of new settlers in the Dominion during last year under all tenures totalled 2235, and the total number of Crown tenants of all description now on the books is 24,096.

During the year the purchase of 16 estates was completed under the Land for Settlements Act, comprising 126,868 acres, the price paid being £565,728. The total area acquired to the end of last year was 1,122,135 acres, at a cost of £4,807,369. For the year 1908-9 the commitments include eight estates, containing 101,634 acres, for which about £336,155 is to be paid. Several other large estates are under consideration.

From their inception to the present date the Native Land Boards have leased on behalf of native owners 165,587 acres, and sanctioned the private alienation of 1,089,020 acres. This makes a total of 1,254,605 acres rendered available for settlement, and it is expected that the area will be largely augmented on the completion of the work of the Native Land Commission.

THE MUSICIANS' BILL.

The Musicians' Bill, which was brought down last session and subsequently referred to the Conference of Musicians, was again introduced by Mr Sidey during the week, and read a second time, pro forma. The bill has slight modifications and amendments on the measure brought down last year, and has been referred to the Education Committee.

THE HOLIDAY QUESTION.

A bill has been circulated, aiming at a better provision for the observance of certain days as public holidays. Labour Day shall hereafter be deemed to be on the third Monday in October, and not on the second Wednesday in October. The reference to the Prince of Wales' Birthday in the third schedule of the Banking Act of 1908 is repealed, and Dominion Day, September 20, is substituted. The Act also provides for the observance of bank holidays falling on any other day than Monday, being observed on the following Monday. Shops and offices will observe the birthday of the Sovereign upon the next succeeding Monday. When Christmas Day and New Year's Day fall on a Sunday, and when the birthday of the reigning sovereign falls on any other day than Monday, the holiday shall be observed on the succeeding Monday.