

The present demand for fresh flat fish in New Zealand exceeds the supply, and there should be scope for further enterprise by trawling companies.—*Mr. J. J. Allen, Napier Manager N.Z. Trawling Co.*

The Greater Auckland question cannot be shelved indefinitely, and the sooner it is dealt with the better; and the same may be said of the housing problem. The need for a Greater Auckland was strikingly exemplified in the transactions leading up to the inauguration of the drainage scheme, the necessity for obtaining the co-operation of so many independent local bodies adding immensely to the difficulties of the undertaking.—*Mr. A. M. Myers, Mayor of Auckland.*

The Hon. James Page, a member for Queensland of the Federal Parliament, has publicly stated that he was formerly an inmate of the homes, and that it is to Dr. Barnardo's philanthropic work he owes his start in life.—*Rev. W. E. Rice, Secretary Dr. Barnardo's Homes.*

The Opposition party was now coming to its own. Never for the past 15 years had he seen so much interest in public affairs as at the present time. In going through the country he found a cunning and systematic attempt to slander and libel the members of the Opposition, whose speeches had been misrepresented. The motto of the Opposition was: "We fight on for ever and ever." They fought the Government, not unsuccessfully, on the land question, against the improper expenditure of borrowed money, and against the dairy regulations.—*Mr. W. E. Massey, M.P.*

The condition of life underwriting in the Dominion gives cause for grave consideration. It stands to reason that, in view of the heavy risks we carry, and the conflagration hazard which is always with us, the rates ought to be put on a basis which will allow of a proper provision being made for such a contingency, and also for a fair profit after paying current losses.—*Hon. S. Thorne George, M.L.C., chairman N.Z. Insurance Company.*



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The Club Smoking Room

By HAVANA

I BELIEVE," said the Socialist member, as he returned a paper to his pocket, "that we are going to have a bad winter as far as employment is concerned. I have just been studying the returns of the Labour Department, and I find that there are over 900 workers on the books of the Department who have registered themselves as being out of work. There are a great many more who are idle, but who have not put their names on the books. In the summer it is not so bad, as there are a good many odd jobs offering, but in the winter the matter may easily become more serious. Many workers are depending entirely on casual work and assistance from relatives. Men employed in the building trade seem the worst off. Unless something is done there will be a good deal of suffering when the cold weather sets in."

"You Socialist people," replied the manufacturer, "are partly to blame for this sort of thing. You try and hamper capital in every conceivable way, and, as a consequence, capital is invested elsewhere. Look at the way in which employers are fined for the most trifling and unintentional breaches of awards. There was a big batch of cases in Wellington the other day, and in nearly every case a fine of £10 was inflicted. The worker who is guilty of a breach either gets off scot free or else he is fined a few shillings. I reckon both classes should be treated alike, and if £10 is a right and fitting fine for the master, the same fine should be imposed on the man. Nowadays there are so many penalties and risks attached to the employment of labour that many people are naturally chary of giving work."

"That may be true to some extent," answered the first speaker, "and I admit that in some cases awards press a little harshly on a few, but that is true of nearly all laws. They are framed in the interests of the majority, and no one can deny that the majority of our workers are far better off as the result of our labour laws. In the old days you had sweating in its worst form, and the labour market was overstocked with the labour of boys and girls displacing that of grown people. If an award is made, it must, of course, be enforced, and the best way to enforce it is by making the fine heavy enough to make an evasion unprofitable. The employer is usually in a far better position to pay his ten pounds than the worker is to pay his ten shillings."

"It is perfectly ridiculous," protested the country member, "to talk of unemployment when there are thousands of acres of good land lying idle, and when the resources of the colony are only beginning to be developed. The truth is that we have too small and not too big a population. But somehow or other we aren't getting quite the right class of immigrant. Mr Tregear says the men won't leave the town for the country; they prefer the chance of picking up odd jobs about the wharves to the certainty of steady work and good pay on a farm. Whilst the Labour Department has 900 men on its books as out of work, it has vacancies for several hundred farm hands that it is unable to fill. If there is any labouring work going in the towns you will get hundreds of applicants; when you want a man to help on a farm you

may whistle for him. A lot of men get assisted passages as farm hands after they have taken a job on a farm in England for a week or two in order to get the passage, and when they come out here they are quite useless for country work. We want really skilled farmers if we are to go ahead. In England agriculture is decaying, and there is a grand opportunity for some of those who have a taste for country life to do well in the colony. But we don't want more workers in our cities. Of course, at Home the congestion is in the large towns, and naturally enough it is the town worker who wants to get away. These men might just as well stay in England for all the good they are likely to do here. One of them said he would sooner go to gaol than go on the land, and people who feel like that are likely to have their wish granted."

"You see," put in the cynic, "the worst of country life is that you can't go on strike. The thing is rather the other way on. If you don't cultivate the ground properly, the soil goes on strike and refuses to produce enough to pay your wages. You can't sue it either, for breach of award, and fine it a tanner on the ground that it has compelled you to work more than the statutory eight hours. Nature is the most inexorable taskmaster, and the Government stroke doesn't pay with her. If you don't weed your garden, or if you neglect your stock, you can't appeal to any trades union to make good your loss of wages. People have an idea that nationalising the land would be as good as ploughing and harvesting it, but dame Nature is not going to be had that way, and even the all omnipotent State would find that nationalised land took just as much working to make it productive as land that was privately owned. You can't make wheat grow by simply passing an Act of Parliament, though I daresay we shall be found trying the experiment some day."

"Talking of strikes," put in the journalist, "I see that they have had a miners' strike on the West Australian goldfields that is quite unique in its way. The sandstone miners have struck against drinking beer. This is not owing to any no license principles or slaking of thirst, it is one rather to a thirst that is found to be too expensive with beer at its present price. The brewers and hotelkeepers have entered into a wicked combination to raise the price of the long sleeper to a shilling instead of ninepence as heretofore. An emergency of this kind called for powerful and energetic action. A meeting of the Miners' Union was hurriedly summoned, and all the men were called out of the pubs, and forbidden to have another drink till the price was reduced. The hotels will, I suppose, be picketed, and any blackleg found sneaking round to the back door will be severely dealt with. The temperance people are jubilant, and are actively supporting both sides. They are urging the brewers not to yield to intimidation and reduce the price, and they are urging the men to stand firm at all costs and resist to the death this iniquitous imposition. The brewers, however, have a powerful ally in the pub. thirst that is bred by the summer heat of the West Australian desert, and if they hang out long enough they will probably win in the end. Why can't our people get up a strike against beer? It would be a most effective form of temperance crusade, but you would want an awful lot

of pickets to keep the blacklegs in check. Instead of a medical examination for pneumoconiosis, you would have periodical examinations for alcoholiosis, with, in all probability, some pretty vigorous protests against this latest form of medical inspection."

THE INVENTOR OF STAIRS.

Here's to the man who invented stairs
And taught our feet to soar;
He was the first that ever burst
Into a second floor.
The world would be downstairs to-day,
Had it not found the key;
So let his name go down to fame,
Whatever it may be.

DR. A. CAMERON OWEN
HAS RETURNED TO TOWN.

And
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APANUI Every Monday, at 2 p.m.
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PAEROA Tuesday, 9th February.
- For Great Barrier.
WAIOTARI Every Wednesday, midnight
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ROTOHAKANA, Thurs, 9th Feb., 3 p.m.
ROTOHAKANA, Thurs, 11th Feb., 4 p.m.
LEAVE COROMANDEL, VIA WAIHEKE.
ROTOHAKANA, Wed., 10th Feb., 6 a.m.
ROTOHAKANA, Fri., 12th Feb., 7 a.m.
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FEBRUARY.

4th—Prev. day.	9 a.m.	7 a.m.	6 a.m.
4th—Prev. day.	9.30 a.m.	No str.	9 a.m.
9th—9.15 a.m.	11 a.m.	9 a.m.	No str.
11th—9.15 a.m.	1 p.m.	11 a.m.	1 p.m.
13th—9.15 a.m.	11.45 a.m.	No str.	Noon
16th—9.15 a.m.	1 p.m.	Noon.	No str.
18th—11.45 a.m.	3.15 p.m.	2 p.m.	4 p.m.
20th—Prev. day.	9 a.m.	No str.	9 a.m.
23rd—8.15 a.m.	11 a.m.	9 a.m.	No str.
25th—9.15 a.m.	11.45 a.m.	10 a.m.	Noon
27th—9.15 a.m.	1 p.m.	No str.	1 p.m.

*Goods outward by steamer leaving on following dates, viz.:—4th, 8th, 9th, 20th, and 23rd, must leave previous day stations by afternoon train previous day.

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