

News of the Dominion

Cixborne Flourishing.

CIXBORNE appears to be having prosperous times just now, and properties are changing hands at advanced prices. Quarter-acre sections in the suburbs are realising up to £200. One builder, in the last three years, has erected over 70 houses, many of which were sold before the timber was on the ground. There is a keen demand for house property in the vicinity of the town, which is evidently on the up grade just now.

A Radical Change.

The Minister for Education is anxious to see some radical changes made in the junior cadet system. He wishes to see the boys "demilitarised." He told a Press representative that he was opposed to military drills, gold lace and honours for boys of tender years. There was time enough for the lads to learn an elaborate military system when they joined the senior cadets. He believed in character formation, and mental and physical development, the boys to be kept under the control of the Education Department. "If the fellows in knickerbockers," he said, "do not want a lot of military drill. A uniform system of physical culture and deep breathing is far better, and the girls, too, can be developed on similar lines." His idea is to carry out the physical exercises in conjunction with the scheme for medical inspection and continue miniature rifle range shooting.

Some Difficulties.

Cabinet has accepted an offer for a block of land at Nelson for the erection of workers' homes. "There is a large demand for homes in Nelson," said the Minister for Labour to a Press representative, "and the site Cabinet has decided upon will be capable of carrying eighteen to twenty dwellings. During the last few days we have purchased several sites at Island Bay. In Wellington the Department is faced with many difficulties. The drawback here is that the land offered is either not in a suitable place, or if it is the price is out of all reason, it being impossible to pay high prices for land which is to be used for workmen's homes." Nine homes are being erected in Timaru and eight in Teukuha, while negotiations are being carried out in regard to the acquisition of land for homes at Franklin Junction.

The Oira Tunnel.

The contract time for the completion of the Oira tunnel, the huge work that will link up Canterbury and Westland (illustrated in a double-page in last week's "Graphic") will be up in a few months' time, but the contractors are barely half-way through yet. They were delayed for nearly a year in procuring machinery and plant. The chief trouble, however, has been the scarcity of labour offering for the work. Practically all the time only about half the number of men that the contractors could have employed have been procurable. No idea can be given when the contract will be finished. If the proper labour could be obtained it would not take very long to finish the job.

Handy Telephones.

The Hon. H. G. Ell, Postmaster-General, told a reporter that in regard to the cities it is essential that telephones, if they are to be of the greatest service, should be installed in places where they can be readily availed of by the public. "I have had plans of 'call cabinets' prepared," he said, "and in about a fortnight's time three of these will be installed as an experiment in Christchurch. These 'call cabinets' will contain slot machines, and will be open to the public night and day. If the Christchurch experiment proves a success the system will be extended to other places, and I am convinced that the departure will prove a great boon to the public."

Incidental.

A female teacher whose appointment to a school in the Marlborough Sounds was approved by the Education Board last week is a full-blooded Maori.

Mr. Cuddie, Chief Dairy Commissioner, said the special feature of the Taranaki Winter Show was the level quality of

the butter. This he attributed to the fact that pasteurisation has now become so general in Taranaki.

At the annual meeting of the B.N.Z., the chairman drew attention to the prospect of an early opening up of large areas of native lands, and added that it was to the undeveloped and unsettled portion of the North Island that we must look in the near future for any large expansion in the export trade of the Dominion.

Auckland as the Naval Base.

Auckland has been definitely fixed upon as the site of the new naval base, necessitated by the removal of the centre of affairs from Sydney, following on the establishment of the Australian navy. The ships to be stationed in New Zealand will be all new, and are now being constructed at Home. There will be two cruisers of the Bristol type—4,800 tons, 22,000 horse power, speed 25 knots—three destroyers, and two submarines, the last-mentioned being quite new to this part of the world. The destroyers will differ from those in the Australian navy, in the fact that they will carry coal only, whereas the Australian boats will carry oil as well. The submarines will burn petrol, and sub-bases for the storage of this fuel will probably be located at Wellington and Port Chalmers or Dunedin. The fleet will be known as the New Zealand Division of the China Squadron, and the officer in command will probably be a Commodore—but this and other similar points are matters of detail. As an indication of what the change will mean to New Zealand from a business point of view, it may be mentioned that the fleet represents between 11,000 and 12,000 officers and men, who will be stationed in New Zealand waters always, so that, although the number of ships will be less than that which composed the old Australian Squadron, the change means a decided permanent increase for New Zealand.

The arrival of the division next April will have additional eclat lent to it by the fact that the New Zealand, the Dreadnought presented to the Motherland by the Dominion, will also arrive at the same time, on her visit to the people who presented her, before she takes her place with the fleet to which she has been appointed in Home waters.

In reference to the shore equipment in connection with the establishment of the base, no details are at present available, as this and other matters are points upon which Captain Rolleston has come across the Tasman Sea to report upon, but the shore buildings will probably be on a fairly extensive scale. At any rate, the Admiralty reserve near the Calliope dock gives ample room for all the possible requirements of both the ships and men. There was a good deal of talk about the need of an Admiralty House in view of the new base, but it is probable that no such residence will be necessary, at least on anything like so generous a scale as the mansion in Family Place, which was erected for the admiral who never arrived.

Magistrates and Laws.

A new Supreme Court-house in Masterton was opened last week by the Hon. J. A. Hanan, Minister for Justice, in the presence of a large gathering. Addresses were given by the Minister, Mr. G. R. Sykes, M.P., Mr. L. G. Reid, S.M., the Mayor (Mr. J. M. Coradine). In the course of his speech, Mr. Hanan stated that the best brains of the country were required for the magisterial bench; and to secure these higher salaries would have to be paid. The Minister was afterwards entertained at luncheon by representatives of the legal profession, and in responding to the toast of his health, he said that amendments of the Companies, Bankruptcy, and Copyright Acts were required to bring them into line with the English laws. Something should also be done to assimilate the laws of New Zealand with those of Australia.

Parliamentary.

Ministers and members of Parliament are assembling in Wellington for the opening of the session, which takes place Thursday afternoon. The Prime Minister and his colleagues have ex-

pressed themselves confident as to the solidarity of the Liberal-Labour party, and Mr. Massey and members of the Opposition insist that they will present an even more compact body than at the prorogation last year. The question at the strength of parties will not be long in doubt, as it is Mr. Massey's intention to seize the first opportunity of moving a vote of no confidence in the Government. The Premier and other Ministers have been enthusiastically received throughout their northern tours and, generally speaking, have created a most favourable impression, especially in the country districts.

Abortive.

The conference arranged between the Federation of Labour and the Mine Owners' Association to discuss the Waikato and Reefton strike ended, as was anticipated, without any advance towards settlement of either dispute. As a preliminary to discussion of any terms the mine owners' representatives insisted that any settlement should be held to be as binding as an award of the Arbitration Court, and any breach thereof subject to the penalties provided under the Arbitration Act. The Federation representatives protested and finally declined to give any such undertaking. Mr. Semple, before retiring, said that the employers had thrown down the gauntlet and the federation would take it up and make a bitter fight to the end. Mr. Rhodes' only remark was: "Very well. We will leave it at that." At a mass meeting of unionists held subsequently the delegates presented their report. Mr. Semple stated that the question of a general strike or continuing a sectional strike at Waikato would be considered by the executive, but it is generally understood that there is at present no intention of extending the operation of the strike. It appears that the amount contributed through the federation strike levy is less than was expected, and strike pay originally fixed has been reduced. There is no new developments in connection with the Reefton strike. The trouble at the Hikurangi coal mines, which was of a trifling character, was settled at a conference between delegates of the miners and the directors of the company, and work is going on as usual.

Arbitration Court and Farmers.

At a meeting of the executive of the Auckland branch of the Farmers' Union held on Thursday several members expressed the opinion that farmers should have representation on the Arbitration Court, inasmuch as they were affected by awards which increased wages in various trades. It was urged by other speakers that it had hitherto been the policy of the farming community to keep aloof from the Arbitration Court, and that it would be unwise for the union to in any way bring itself within the scope of the Act. A resolution was passed affirming the desirability of farmers and others similarly interested having representation on the Arbitration Court.

New Freezing Works.

A happening of considerable importance took place at Whangarei on Wednesday, when the large freezing works recently built by the Whangarei Freezing Company, Limited, were officially opened. It is felt in Whangarei that the freezing works will provide an outlet in the frozen meat trade for that large northern district, which has hitherto been without any facility of a like character. The Shaw-Savill steamer Kumara loads the first cargo of meat sent from the new works.

The Cost of Living.

The Cost of Living Commission has not so far revealed anything very startling. The evidence for the most part goes to show that there is a very considerable profit going to somebody in nearly all the necessities of life. The consumer apparently pays about a hundred per cent. more than the goods cost to make, but each person concerned in the distribution of these goods lays the blame on the other fellow. Some witnesses seemed to think that we were altogether too luxurious, and one witness thought we used too much hot water. But whether we are luxurious or not, there can be no doubt that the cost of the necessities of existence has gone up fully 80 per cent. during the last few years, and it seems likely that the cost of Royal Commissions will go up still more. At present we have three. If the increase continues, we may soon have half-a-dozen. Their existence may throw some light on the much vexed question of the cost of living, seeing that we have to pay pretty dearly for them.

Arts and Crafts Club.

The newly-formed Auckland Arts and Crafts Club was encouragingly inaugurated on Friday evening at the rooms in the Artists' Flats, Palmerston Buildings, about two hundred people being present by invitation. The president (Mr. R. A. Armstrong), the secretary (Mr. E. Warner), and the committee and other officials looked after their guests admirably.

In the course of some interesting remarks explaining their aims and objects, the president said the club had inaugurated a movement that might be of benefit to the whole Dominion, and he emphasised the fact that it embraced all forms of art. There must be a constant creation of vacancies in the ranks of artists, and it would only be by making practical the following of art and providing at least a decent living for art workers that we could hope for the future generation of artists. Commerce and industry almost completely occupied the public mind, but by the application of its highest principles to craft productions art would gradually insinuate itself into the daily lives of the people, uplifting and refining the public taste. Mr. Armstrong urged members to endeavour to extend the membership of the club.

Several of the studios on the flat were thrown open, and there was also in an adjoining room a very fine collection of work by the members of the club. Sketches in oil and water-colour, modelling, etchings, photographs, the more artistic processes, stencil work, jewellery, cartoons, black and white work, architectural drawings, stained glass, etc., were inspected with much interest, and most favourably commented upon by the guests. During the evening songs were rendered by Miss McLean and Mr. Barry Coney, and Mr. L. Abraham gave a musical monologue.

Elephants in Siam.

It is estimated that there are 3,000 domesticated elephants in Siam; but there is a fear that the elephant is showing a tendency to disappear. The price, so we learn from a French source, is £500 for a male and £300 for a female. The animal, an adult at twenty-five, is not in full vigor until ten years later, and the longevity of the elephant is well known. The capture of the wild elephant is both dangerous and costly. Elephant hunting is under the control of the State, which imposes a duty of £30 on each animal taken. According to an official return the value of ivory exported from Siam last year was £4,400.

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