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The Week in Review.

A Rate or a Charge.

A MATTER of general concern to landlords and corporations was involved in a civil action brought before the Wellington Supreme Court last week. The City Council proceeded against the owners of a private hotel for recovery of £30 odd, due for electricity supplied to the occupier of the premises. The Council claimed the right to demand payment of the sum, as a separate rate, and charge it against property. The landlords resisted the claim, hence the test case. For the defendants it was contended by Sir John Findlay that the amount due was a charge, and could not be enforced as a separate rate against the property. He pointed out that if the Council could do this, it would be far-reaching in its effect, as the landlord would perhaps have to sell his property to pay for electricity of which he had never had the benefit. Further, a mortgagee would not be protected in any way, and he might find all his security gone to pay for rates incurred through the use of electricity in the building over which he held the mortgage. Counsel on the other side argued that the Municipal Corporations Act and the Rating Act gave the council power to enforce payment as a separate rate, recoverable in the ordinary way that rates were recoverable. Decision on the point was reserved.

A Cool Demand.

A petition, purporting to have its origin in labour quarters and now being vigorously canvassed in Wellington, contains a very modest demand. It merely asks for proportional representation and the resignation of the Massey Government. So that there will be no mistake about the matter, the preamble is printed in full:—

"Whereas the Massey Government at present in power in New Zealand, and legislating and governing in the interests of the land monopolists and exploiters generally, represent barely one-third of the electorate, having polled, even with their four renegade Liberal supporters, little more than one vote out of every three cast at the general election of 1911, we, the undersigned electors of New Zealand, hereby call upon the said Government to introduce and pass during this year's session of Parliament a measure for the election of members of the so-called House of Representatives by means of a system known as proportional representation, and then resign the position of power and profit, to which, whatever the law may say, they have no moral right, so that the electors of New Zealand may have for the first time an opportunity of electing a true House of Representatives, in which each school of political thought shall be represented in direct proportion to its voting strength throughout the country."

Fortunately it is not necessary to take all labour proposals seriously.

Union in Strength.

An effort is to be made throughout Australia to bring into closer union the members of the Merchant Service Guild and the Institute of Marine Engineers. Mutual advancement and protection is sought. Reports indicate that the movement has gained ground in New Zealand, and it is notable that a conference between representatives of the two bodies of allied interests will be held in the near future. From what can be

gathered the scheme concerns the movement for the betterment of working conditions, and increases in wages on the part of those dissatisfied with the present state of affairs. This will be the first time since the inception of the two bodies that they have taken active steps to be brought closer together.

Taxing Motor Traffic.

It is claimed that motor traffic is not only a source of danger in country districts, but also that it plays havoc with the metalled roadways. Complaints in this direction are numerous. In the Manawatu joint action is being taken by the local bodies, and last week delegates conferred with representatives of automobile associations. It was resolved unanimously that the Government should impose a tax on cars, the proceeds to be handed to and expended by local bodies for roads affected by motor traffic, a special board being set up to allocate the distribution of the proceeds. A higher tax is to be imposed on cars plying for hire, and it was also resolved that a license to ply for hire granted in one district should hold good in all other districts, the fee to be uniform throughout the Dominion. Another resolution was passed to the effect that regulations under Clause 3 of the Motor Regulations Act, 1908, be issued providing that all persons plying for hire be examined and tested medically and otherwise, in order to ensure their competence to drive.

Union S.S. Company.

It was recently announced that the directors of the Union Steamship Company were considering proposals to increase the capital, which now stands at £1,000,000, of which £800,000 has been issued. All shareholders have now been offered, in proportion to their holdings, the unissued 200,000 shares at a premium of 10/ per share. The directors also intend to ask the shareholders to extend the powers and objects of the company by amending the present memorandum and articles of association. This will be brought about by liquidation and reconstruction. The company has an insurance reserve of over £500,000, represented by premiums on risks which it has taken on the fleet, while other reserves have been created by sums put aside to meet emergencies which have not arisen. The directors propose to capitalise these reserves to the amount of £1,000,000; and by way of bonus to issue to present shareholders according to holdings, one preference share of £1, carrying a fixed cumulative dividend of 5/ per cent. for each ordinary share held. The capital will then stand at £1,000,000 in ordinary shares, and £1,000,000 in preference shares. During Sir James Mills' visit to England recently arrangements were made for the purchase by the company of four steamers—the Westmeath, Roscommon, Limerick, and Tyrone, formerly owned by Messrs Houlder Bros. and Co. These vessels are now employed in the direct trade between England and New Zealand and Australia. The capital now being raised will be used to pay for these steamers and for vessels now under construction.

Wellington Tram Management.

Some time ago it was discovered that the tram system in the capital was not paying its way, and certain readjustments were made. Since then the monthly re-

turns have shown a distinct improvement, and the latest report, covering the last 10 months, discloses a credit of £7,079 to tramways revenue and £882 for power, compared with a total of £2,966 for the same period last year. The gross revenue increased by £8,167, and the working expenses by £2,321. Passengers carried over the period in question number 19,911,762, and the total mileage run 1,945,155 car miles. The average revenue per car mile works out at 15.57d, and expenditure 10.63d. Revenue from power amounted to £8,934, an increase of £933.

The Work of Educationists.

Attention was called at the inspectors' conference at Wellington to the fact that in the recognition of national service educationists were being ignored. The subject was introduced as supplementary to a resolution placing on record appreciation of the distinguished services to the cause of education rendered by Mr Petrie, late chief inspector, of Auckland, and Mr Goyen, late chief inspector, of Otago. The conference carried a resolution "expressing regret that in the distribution of honours so freely bestowed on other branches of the public service, no recognition appears to be made of the fact that men who have devoted their lives to the discharge of the highest duty and the noblest function of the State, have also deserved well of their country." Mr F. H. Bakewell, of Wellington complained that while the work of men in other branches of the public service was so liberally acknowledged by award of those honourable distinctions with which it was customary to show appreciation of devotion to duty and eminent service to the State, the men who laboured in the cause of education were persistently passed over. Though the importance of education to the very life itself of the nation was so universally admitted, year by year the most distinguished men in the profession were allowed to retire from active service without recognition of the great debt which the country owed them.

A Fifteenth Century Mansion.

A fine old Kent mansion, that at Langley Park, was recently destroyed by fire. The structure is said to date from the year 1451, but that is the date of the death of the last of the Langley family, who had acquired Langley Park in the time of Edward III. Langley Park was originally in the possession of Bishop Odo, of Bayeux. Soon after the Conquest it came into the possession of the Malmaisons, and from them passed to the Langleys, from which it has since been named. In 1510 it was the seat of John

Style, Alderman of London, and passed to his son, Sir Humphrey Style, and ultimately came into the hands of Sir Peter Jurell, afterwards Lord Gwydir. On his death it was sold by auction, and was purchased by Emmanuel Goodhart. When his son, who succeeded, died, it became untenanted, and the property has since shared the fate of many a large estate near London. The dining-room where the fire started was once the ball-room, and a former owner is said to have driven a coach and four into it. It was a large, rambling building, with rooms of all shapes, many of them large and lofty. It was complete, with its own swimming bath, with adjoining dressing-rooms and smaller baths, and at one time was described as "one of the completest domains of its extent in the kingdom."

A Big Social Tendency.

Statistics showing a steady decline in Church membership among Baptist and Congregationalists in England were brought under the notice of the Rev. Harry Johnson, a minister from Bradford, on arrival in Wellington. He admitted the accuracy of the figures, and in explanation pointed out that a big social tendency at Home had absorbed a large number of young men. They were attracted, in his opinion, not permanently, by a new sort of social gospel outside the Church, and many abstained from definite association with Churches from the false notion that the Church had lagged behind in the matter of progress. It was an attitude that did not indicate an absolute lack of religious feeling. The young people were acting conscientiously, and the visitor considers that the Churches will be put to the necessity of taking a broader view of what was going on in order to come into sympathy with the popular feeling.

Sixty Years a Missionary.

For sixty years the Rev. W. Gittos has been engaged in Church work amongst the Maoris, holding the position of superintendent of the Northern Maori Mission, but advancing years has compelled him to relinquish the active and strenuous work. He made known his decision at the Methodist Conference sitting in Wellington last week. The conference felt the pathos and solemnity of the occasion as the grey-headed patriarch stood before the gathering and referred to his long association with the Maoris. The statement was listened to with great attention, and at the close, and after highly eulogistic references by leading members to the splendid work done by "Father" Gittos, the conference stood and carried a resolution expressing its

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