

Owing to the State owning the means of transport and communication, New Zealand cannot suffer as other countries have where trusts have got control of railways, canals, and telegraph-lines. The position is, however, sufficiently grave to warrant drastic legislative provisions to keep them in check, and such will be submitted to Parliament this session.

The evils of monopolies are not confined to the countries where the trust originates. Their baneful influence may be world-wide. An example is the American Standard Oil Trust. There are others. Such organizations have been levying toll on the inhabitants of the Dominion to an incredible extent, and have by their monopolistic power been able to prevent the full advantages of the recent tariff concessions reaching the consumer. By such rapacity every man, woman, and child in New Zealand has been injured.

BEET-SUGAR.

There seems no reason why this country should not produce beet-sugar in large quantities. Such an industry would give employment to a great number of workers, and Parliament will be asked to consider legislation with a view to the establishment of the beet-sugar industry in the Dominion. Any aid given towards such a project must be conditional upon the country preserving the right to acquire and control it after a given period of years. The matter is an important one, and worthy the careful consideration of honourable members. Full details will be submitted in the Bill that will be introduced this session.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

The necessity for a carefully considered system of local government has long been apparent. The multiplicity of local authorities in the Dominion, and the absence of uniformity in their administration, the overlapping of duties, and general waste of money and effort consequent thereon, are well known, and require remedying. Full opportunity will be given to Parliament to discuss the contemplated reforms, with a view to placing the whole matter on a sound and extended basis. It must be remembered that the present condition of things has been so long in existence that radical reforms must be cautiously proceeded with.

There are, altogether, more than five hundred County Councils, Borough Councils, Town Boards, Road Boards, River Boards, Water-supply and Drainage Boards in this country. Of 168 of these Boards the revenues are less than £500 per annum, and the proportion of expense to revenue of these varies from 17 to 26 per cent., as against less than 10 per cent. for counties and 5 per cent. for boroughs.

A Local Government Bill consolidating and amending the existing law will be introduced this year. It will remove existing difficulties disclosed by experience in our local-government statutes, and will, moreover, extend and facilitate the present powers of local bodies. It is recognized that the areas of many local authorities in this country must be redefined. In certain cases these areas must be reduced, in other cases they must be substantially increased. The aim of the proposed Bill is to make these areas as practicable and suitable for the purposes of local government as possible, regard being had, of course, both to population and geographical conditions. This proposal necessarily involves the extinction of a number of existing local bodies, but this principle of extinction will be carried no further than is plainly necessary to secure the best results. Effective provision will be made for the subdivision of the new areas into wards or districts, and a further safeguard furnished that rates raised in particular districts will be spent in them and not elsewhere. The Bill will also provide for a transfer to the new Councils of all the work and functions of our existing Education Boards, care being taken that this important branch of the country's work is to be carried out by a divisional committee and under more effective conditions than exist at present. Under the extended jurisdiction of the local authority the Government proposes to transfer the work of the building and maintenance of schools, providing the whole of the money for the former and a contribution for the latter.

To insure the decentralization of maintenance votes now annually passed by Parliament, I propose to provide a sum at the beginning of the system of £250,000 per annum. This will require to be done upon a proper basis. Those