

believes that the subject is too intricate and of too far-reaching importance to be dealt with hurriedly and without due caution. Negotiations between the New Zealand Government and the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia will be continued with a view to bringing about, if possible, a closer trade relationship between the two countries. The Canadian Minister for Trade and Commerce will be visiting Australia in March of next year, and the New Zealand Government will propose that at the time of his visit the Ministers for Trade and Customs of the four oversea Dominions—Canada, Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand—should hold a conference to discuss the question of inter-trade relations.

From information in possession of the Customs Department it would seem to be both necessary and desirable that an officer of the Department should be sent Home for the purpose of safeguarding the interests of New Zealand. The Commonwealth of Australia has three officers to represent it in London, and it is felt that great saving would be effected if we followed its example. The Customs Department has reason to believe that foreign-made shoddy goods are being imported into New Zealand as British; hence in addition to safeguards afforded by the advice that such an officer might be able to tender to the New Zealand Government, it is proposed to introduce a Trade Descriptions Bill which shall effectually prevent the importation of shoddy goods unless such goods have an accurate trade description disclosing, if necessary, the quality of the material of which the goods are made and the country of origin.

OIL-BORING MACHINERY.

In the Financial Statement of 1911 the Government promised to admit free of duty machinery for the development of the oilfields, or to make provision on the estimates for the remission of the duty on such machinery. No definite indication was given as to the time during which free admission was to continue, nor was the nature of the articles to be embraced by the term "plant" definitely specified. This promise the Government desires to announce will be carried out so far as it relates to all machinery and all plant declared for oil-boring purposes, provided it can be shown to the satisfaction of the Collector of Customs to have been ordered since the 8th September, 1911, and prior to the 26th July, 1912.

PREFERENCE TO BRITISH MANUFACTURES.

As no duty is paid upon goods imported by the Government, or supplied by tenderers to the Government at the ship's side, the advantage to British manufacturers which it was intended to afford by the rates of duty prescribed in the Customs Duties Act can, in the case of Government contracts for goods to be imported, only be provided by the establishment of a special rule applicable to all Departments. It has already become the practice in some Departments, when deciding upon the acceptance of tenders for Government supplies, not necessarily to accept the lowest tender if offering goods of foreign manufacture where the amount of such tender, with the addition of the extra duty payable upon the same goods imported for private purchasers, would not be less than the lowest tender offering goods of British manufacture. The Government now thinks it advisable to lay down a general rule governing all purchases of Government supplies and the acceptance of all Government tenders. A direction has been issued that in all such cases there shall be added the equivalent of the excess duty to the price of all goods of foreign manufacture, and unless the price to be paid for the goods of British manufacture then considerably exceeds the price for the foreign goods the British tender is to be accepted. Where there are special advantages in the quality or character of the foreign goods the rule may be departed from; but in such cases, before the tender is accepted or the purchase is completed, a report is to be made to the Minister detailing the special reasons for the departure.

SHIPPING AND SEAMEN AMENDMENT BILL.

Prior to the passing of the Imperial Maritime Conventions Act, which deals with matters relating to collisions and salvage, the Secretary of State forwarded copies of the International Maritime Conventions relating to these matters for the