

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES AND EXPERIMENTAL FARMS.

It has been decided that the question of establishing an agricultural college and experimental farms shall be referred to the proposed Advisory Board of Agriculture as soon as the Board is established, and it is hoped that its recommendations will be available in time to permit of provision being made in the supplementary estimates for giving effect to the proposals.

INDUSTRIAL MATTERS.

It is pleasing to note that no industrial troubles of any magnitude have arisen since the miners' strikes at Waihi and Reefton took place. It is believed that during the past year there has been engendered a more earnest desire amongst the workers of New Zealand, as well as amongst all other classes of the community, to find some method by which industrial disputes may be settled in a manner equitable to the parties concerned. With this object in view, the Government has given careful consideration to the Conciliation and Arbitration Act. It is proposed to effect a number of amendments in the machinery provisions of the Act, and to embody these amendments in a consolidating measure to be placed before honourable members for their approval. As the present Act cannot, however, be regarded as complete, inasmuch as it applies to only those disputes that affect registered unions of workers, it is proposed to include in the measure some provisions which it is hoped will enable the parties to all industrial disputes to arrive at a peaceful settlement of their difficulties, and in this way to, so far as possible, prevent strikes and lockouts from taking place.

A Bill to consolidate the Shops and Offices Acts has already been submitted for the consideration of honourable members.

WORKERS' DWELLINGS.

There has been considerable activity in the purchase of suitable land for the erection of workers' dwellings. Land has been purchased and set apart during the past year, and eighty-one have been erected, while arrangements are well advanced for the erection of eighty-four additional dwellings. A total of 235 acres is now available for the purposes of this Act, and applications for the erection of dwellings thereon are being dealt with as rapidly as possible. It is also hoped shortly to complete the necessary negotiations on the lines indicated last year for the purchase of a number of blocks of suitable land in the country districts for agricultural labourers' dwellings. Legislation will be introduced this year extending the powers of local bodies in the direction of enabling them to acquire land and erect homes for workers.

NATIONAL PROVIDENT FUND.

The National Provident Fund during the year has made a distinct forward movement, as a result of an active lecturing campaign. At the present date the membership numbers over 3,800, whilst the fund amounts to approximately £15,000. A recent analysis of the occupations of contributors gives the following result :—

	Percentage.
Clerical	19
Domestic	5
Industrial, farming, labouring, and kindred occupations ..	59
Shops (retail)	10
Miscellaneous	7
	—
	100

Experience shows that there exists a desire on the part of employers that the functions of the fund should be extended in the direction of enabling them to effectively co-operate with the State. In England the co-operation of employer and State is an essential feature of the national scheme.