

HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,—

The legislation of the two preceding sessions of Parliament relating to the control of trade and the prevention of undue profits has proved in some respects to be defective, and proposals will be laid before you for amendments of the law in this respect. Though there is substantial evidence that further abnormal increases of prices have been prevented by the existing legislation, and that under its influence trade is gradually becoming established on a more reasonable basis, there are strong indications that if the existing prosperity is to be continued extravagance must be avoided, and industry and economy must be encouraged by every possible means.

The date for the coming into operation of the Legislative Council Act, 1914, has been fixed by Proclamation since the last session of Parliament. The Act will come into force on the 31st January, 1921; and you will, in accordance with the promise of my Ministers, have an opportunity of reconsidering its provisions during your present session, when some amendments will be submitted in the form of a Bill by my Government.

Since the consolidation of our statute law in the year 1908 many amendments of the various statutes have been passed. My Ministers think it desirable that compilations of the more important Acts, especially those relating to local government, should be effected to enable those interested to have in their hands the whole law on the subject in one Act in lieu of the present necessity for correction of the original law by the various amending provisions. During the recess compilations of the Municipal Corporations Act and the Counties Act have been prepared, and an opportunity of amendment of the existing law on both subjects and of extending the powers of Municipal Corporations and of County Councils is also thereby provided.

The Public Trustee at present has charge of numerous trusts of Native lands and moneys in addition to his duties as a trustee of public and private European trust estates. My Ministers consider it desirable that a complete separation of the Native from the European trusts should be effected, and that the Native trusts held by the Public Trustee, and also the trust-moneys held by Maori Land Boards, should be vested in a special Native Trustee with a separate Board. A Bill will be submitted to you with this object, and with the further object of enabling Native trust-moneys to be utilized for the benefit of the Natives in a manner which is not at present possible under the statutory powers of the Public Trustee.

Under the powers conferred by the Mandate of the Treaty of Peace with Germany, and by your legislation of last session, the Government of Western Samoa has been initiated in succession to the military rule which has controlled those islands since the occupation by New Zealand troops in the early months of the war. The Orders in Council which have been issued, providing a basis of law for the islands and for their government under New Zealand, will be placed before you.

Bills amending the laws relating to land, education, local government, pensions, taxation, undesirable immigrants, the Public Service, and other matters have been prepared, or are in course of preparation, and will be submitted to you during your present session.

My Ministers invite your serious consideration of methods to obviate the recurrence of industrial unrest. It is becoming apparent that the present provisions of the law for the settlement of industrial disputes are not altogether satisfactory to the unions of workers, who refuse in many instances to adopt the settlement proposed.

It is the desire of the public and of the Government, which holds the public authority, that public employees, whether paid by salary or by wage, should be satisfied as far as is possible with the conditions of their service; and in most cases of private employment the employers are equally desirous of the establishment of methods which will enable friendly discussion of the relations of employer and employed, and a better understanding by each party to the dispute of the difficulties of the other.