

PROGRESS

With which is Incorporated
THE SCIENTIFIC NEW ZEALANDER.

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BEST WISHES FOR 1906 TO OUR
READERS NEAR AND FAR.

BRIEF FOREWORD.

WE may safely claim for this issue of PROGRESS a greater variety and higher interest attaching to its contents than were manifest in any previous number. From every quarter congratulations keep coming thick and fast, and which, owing to lack of space in this issue, we have been obliged to hold over. Nevertheless, it may be here stated that the consensus of opinion in regard to this newspaper is that its quality has no rival in Australasia.

ANTI-TRUST BILL.

It has been the privilege of this newspaper to inaugurate the only consistent and unequivocal attack on the International Harvester Company's doings in New Zealand. When taking up this course it was fully realised that the question was acute enough to admit of the arousing of the criticism which usually supervenes on the presentment of undue partisanship. However, to those who hold that our prejudices are misplaced—and there are, we believe, few—it has still to be averred that the matter of the Combine in New Zealand admits, so far as PROGRESS is concerned, of one side only, viz —It must go. There is no prophecy in such a statement, indications on every hand point to it. We regret that the passive demeanour of a large section of the colony's press is largely responsible for the postponement. Instead of dealing summarily with the Combine, our representatives in Parliament have been led to believe, through the press, that the farmer must not be interfered with; consequently, we have had to submit to the humiliation of countenancing the Trust's operations in our midst for another year, and, further, of being surpassed by the Commonwealth in an attempt at progressive legislation having for its object the annihilation of the very trouble which we have so far been unable even to regulate. Sir William Lyne recently moved in the Federal Parliament the second reading of the Anti-Trust Bill. This measure provides for the complete extermination of the Combine, so far as Australia is concerned, by defining "unfair competition" as follows:—

"If the competition would probably or does result in greatly disorganising an Australian industry or throwing workers out of employment; if imported goods have been purchased abroad at prices greatly below their ordinary cost of production where produced or the market price where purchased; if the goods are being sold in Australia at a price less than gives the importer or seller a fair profit upon a fair foreign market value or cost of production, together with all charges after shipment from whence the goods are exported directly to Australia; if the importer or seller directly or indirectly gives agents or intermediaries a disproportionately large remuneration for selling or recommending the goods."

A provision is also made that "any person who attempts or combines to monopolise any part of the trade amongst the several States, or with other countries, with the desire of controlling to the detriment of the public supply or price of any merchandise or commodity, becomes liable to a penalty of £500 or twelve months imprisonment. Any one aiding and abetting a contravention of the Act is held equally guilty and equally punishable with the contraveners. The Board of Investigation is invested with powers equivalent to those of a Royal Commission."

Are such clauses too drastic for dealing with the concern which has a predilection for the now world-known practices dealt with in previous issues of PROGRESS; a concern that is at the present moment reducing the price of its harvesters to the extent of losing, by its own showing, £12 10s. od. on every machine sold in Melbourne in order to keep its business together, and which flagrant breach of fair trading is causing the discharge of hundreds of men in the Australian implement trade? We think not. Unless the International Harvester

Company can be made to compete on the same plane as the home manufacturers, by paying identical prices for raw material and labour, the outlook is certain to be a very serious one for the bravely struggling industries of our young colonies. We therefore look forward to the passing of Sir William Lyne's Bill next session as the initial step in the control, if not annihilation, of Rockefeller's Harvester Trust in Australia.

STATE CONTROL OF WATER POWER

THE Premier of New Zealand recently made a proposition to the effect that the State should find money to harness water powers and bring the electric lines within a given distance of the centre or centres to be served, whence the power centres be supplied to local bodies, corporations, or private individuals, at rates fixed by the Government; and any buyer who in turn becomes a seller of the power must not charge more than a given rate fixed by the Government. The power would be supplied for lighting, traction (railways, tramways, etc.) general power, heating, pumping, drainage, etc. Cheap power was essential to make permanent industries in competition with cheap wage countries. In 1896 the Government passed the Electrical Energy and Power Act, which prevented local bodies from delegating their powers in respect of such water supplies except with the consent of the Governor-in-Council. The American expert (Mr. Hancock) had estimated that 5680 horse power could be generated from the Manawatu (which vitally affected this district), and that from Lake Coleridge could be got 92,677 h.p., which would cost only about £5 per horse power per annum. "At £5 per horse power—that is about what it would cost us—the Government should ask Parliament to spend one million for this purpose; it would be the best and most profitable investment the colony has made for years." Light, traction, and heating should be provided necessarily out of the funds of the State, and should be municipalised. Dunedin had had to pay a pretty stiff price—twenty or thirty thousand—to a syndicate that had received rights over Waipori falls. Over a 200 miles stretch, the loss of power in transmission was only one-eighth. The distance between Pahiatua and the Manawatu was short, and there would be very little loss, and there would be as much power as Palmerston North, Woodville, and Pahiatua would require for the next 999 years. In view of the number of settlers, the difficulty of getting metal, and the cost of transit, he thought a good case had been made out for a narrow gauge loop railway from the main line at Eketahuna, through the back country, and joining the main line again at Dannevirke or some other town along the line; he believed they could make it cheaper than they could metal the roads. Judging by the cost of such lines in Tasmania, they should be able to build it for not more than £1000 or £1500 a mile. Electric traction—power generated from the Makuri falls or the Manawatu stream as proposed—would provide cheaper running than steam. This scheme was practical, and it would be a test of the Opposition's sincerity whether they would support him in getting one million to bring motive power within reach of the towns at a nominal cost. It would be the life-blood of settlement in this back country and in the back blocks; they should get surveys made and details prepared, and he would take the view of the people on this scheme for harnessing rivers, lakes, and waterfalls in the colony for motive power.