

Zealand town planners, were very thoroughly ventilated, and placed on record, at the last Town Planning Conference in Wellington. Mr. Morton's experiences serve to force home the lesson that our municipal and harbour administrators should be regularly sent around the world for the extension of their knowledge, and to spread any available particles of New Zealand's enlightenment to the dark patches of the earth.

A New Zealander's Ideals.

Mr. Hurst Seager, the enthusiastic New Zealand Town Planner, who is spending a long holiday in the centres of the Old World for the purpose of further equipping himself with experience of practical town planning and housing matters, seems to have stirred up the Inter Allied Housing Congress quite thoroughly over a motion in favour of properly equipped children's playgrounds. It was certainly a counsel of perfection to urge the authorities of thickly populated centres to have a playground within a quarter of a mile of every home. If there had been town planners in England as enthusiastic as Mr. Seager a century ago, the motion which he failed to carry by only eight votes would have been accepted as quite a reasonable thing, and passed simply to remind backward communities of their duties. But we really think that our New Zealand friend was too regardless of the hard facts to be faced in the older countries in pushing forward so fine but impracticable and extravagant an ideal. It is the kind of thing which has led people of the type of Wellington's City Engineer—immersed as they are in the actualities of municipal life—to label the Town Planning movement a fad. The reception of town planning ideals, properly and reasonably put forward at the Government's congress of Town Planning in Wellington last year, proved that municipal administrators thoroughly appreciate the wisdom of suitable planning for future requirements. Had this been adopted as a systematic science in New Zealand only a generation ago, this prosperous country would have been an example to the world in the provision it made for its best asset, the children. But we are far behind in these things, and Mr. Hurst Seager's ideals are worthy of attention here because the Dominion has a population scarcely one twentieth of what it could carry without overcrowding. Now is the time to set up these ideals, for it will be easy and comparatively inexpensive to follow them. We suspect that the defeat of Mr. Hurst Seager's motion for children's playgrounds was due, not so much to lack of appreciation of his ideal, but to the practical consideration that housing is the imperative vital requirement, which must come first, and that anything else, however worthy, must be regarded for the time being as a red herring drawn across the trail.

State Steamships.

The Australian Commonwealth steamship purchase is a proved success, and Canada has embarked upon an even more ambitious marine undertaking. While our producers are much concerned over the future freights, and no comfort can be gained

from the shipping magnates, New Zealand opinion seems divided over the wisdom of running a State line of refrigerated vessels to England. The Prime Minister is one of the doubters. He has said nothing recently on the subject, but in 1917 he was only disposed to suggest that if private enterprise could not provide the facilities, the State should come in. In other words, if private enterprise sees ample profit in the business, the element of security for the Dominion in reaching the world's markets for its products need not be considered. Freights, on present lines, do not encourage trade, but trade simply goes on in spite of the handicaps imposed by high freights. The Canadian Government in order to develop its overseas trade, has taken the wise step of providing easy and reasonable facilities, which will do more than all the protective duties ever invented to encourage the building up of its industries. It found—as we find in New Zealand—that the State could provide cheap freights to the seaboard, but that the benefit to the community was absorbed by shipping interests, which, profiting by the lowness of the cost of land transit, could load upon the products of the country a good deal more than otherwise could have been borne. New Zealand carries its primary products to the seaboard at a freight which does not meet the working expenses of the traffic, but the overseas shipowner then gets a fine innings, and New Zealanders have to put up with it. They have no alternative. Canada, faced with this position, connected up its great trunk railway lines with overseas lines of steamships. Its fleet to-day aggregates 300,000 tons deadweight, twenty-five steel ships being already in service. They ply to Britain, New Zealand, Australia, the West Indies, South America, and Cuba. The Hon. C. C. Ballantyne, Minister of Marine, is authority for the statement that so far there has been a handsome profit on the operation of these ships, and that the Government is now considering the addition of several 15,000-ton passenger ships to its fleet. To the freighters already in commission or on the stocks a number of others will be added, contracts having been let for sixty in all, including the finished ships. The total cost to the country of these will be about \$70,000,000.

A Second Benefit.

All these ships were built, or are being built, in Canada, at ten different shipyards. If the Government does decide on the building of the passenger vessels mentioned, they also will be constructed in Canadian shipyards, which, since the days when wooden ships were the only kind known, have never experienced a boom equal to that of the war period and since. It is the hope of those directly concerned, as well as of all who wish for continued Canadian prosperity, that shipbuilding will become a stable industry of the country. If New Zealand set out upon a national ship-building programme, there might be some hope for early development of our rich resources of iron ore. We seem, as a community, to be awakening to the necessity of developing secondary industries, and if the Government showed similar enterprise to that of its British neighbours on the Pacific, our prosperity would in time become more broad based than it is to-day.