

should be passed this session repealing the Act and making provision for the following objects:—

“(a) For continuing in force until December 31, 1921, all awards of the Court of Arbitration and all industrial agreements in force on the date of the passing of such Act; (b) for empowering the Board of Trade, upon the Government Statistician reporting to it that there has been a serious rise in the cost of living, to make an order, to be published in the Gazette, increasing the rate of wages fixed by all or any of such awards or industrial agreements on the principles laid down by the Court of Arbitration; (c) for vesting in the Supreme Court all the judicial powers and jurisdiction now exercisable by the Court of Arbitration, either under the provisions of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act or under the Workers' Compensation Act; (d) for empowering the Minister of Labour to summon mandatory conferences to deliberate upon the subject of the relations between Capital and Labour, such conferences to comprise representatives of the consumers, of industrial unions and trade unions and associations of employers, and for empowering the Governor-in-Council to make regulations for the election of such representatives, for the appointment of a chairman of any such conference, and generally for the conduct of the proceedings.”

Current Topics.

It is understood (states a Greymouth Press Association telegram) that the Great Western Timber Company, which was formed to exploit a large bush area in the Okarito district, has applied for protection of the area it is intended to operate on. It is also understood that the Crown opposes the application, on the ground that the company has not complied with certain sections of the Mining Act.

Australia needs a large amount of soft-wood, and now is the time to plant, and so shorten the period of importation of these timbers on a large scale. There are many arguments to advance in favour of softwood growing, and when the vast depleting effect the war has had on the softwood-producing countries of the world is considered, it must be realized that the prices will still increase, and the source of supply become less and less, and finally a serious outlook will have to be faced, unless some steps are taken to replace the areas already cut over.

The Board of Trade has reason to believe that some persons engaged in the distribution of cement, bricks, and timber are infringing the regulations recently gazetted for the purposes of preventing the use of such materials for non-essential building operations. The board will press for the prosecution of such offenders, who are liable to a fine up to £200 or to imprisonment up to three months. The persons particularly affected by these regulations are those who supply direct to building contractors, and other users. The responsibility is on the ultimate supplier to ascertain whether the materials ordered are to be

used for work which authority has been obtained under the regulations, which apply to all works of which the completed cost exceeds £20. Local authorities throughout the Dominion have been authorised to issue permits for dwelling-houses and essential farm buildings within their districts. Applications for other kinds of buildings must be also lodged with the local authority, which will forward them on through the local inspectors of factories to the Board of Trade for its consideration and decision.

The Commonwealth Government is considering a new scheme for payment of bounties on paper pulp produced in Australia. It is expected that the scheme will be adopted. It is designed to encourage manufacture on an extensive scale.

A few of the uses made of sawdust and forest waste in America: “Silk” socks, which look like and feel like silk but are cheaper than the real thing; sawdust sausage casings, in which wood, converted by chemical processes into viscose is used instead of the old type of sausage casings, produced from the by-product of the slaughter-house; wood-flour phonograph records compressed under enormous power, to help make music from sawdust; tanbark shingles, made from the waste hemlock bark after it has been through the tannery; and paper cork bottles to help fight the high cost of living.

“Steps are being taken to increase the rolling stock with the least possible delay,” said the Minister of Railways in the House of Representatives, in reply to a question by Mr McNeol. “Tenders have already been invited from abroad for two thousand five hundred trucks and twenty-five locomotives. Offers are also being invited from local manufacturers, and these will be supplementary to the rolling stock programme to be undertaken in other countries. The necessity for making improvements at the stock-yards is being investigated, and improvements will be made if found necessary.”

The shares of the Kauri Timber Company have had a sharp rise recently, and the reason for it appears to be a circular sent out to shareholders by the directors in respect to the redistribution of capital. The directors propose (1) that a dividend of 5 per cent. be declared, making with the dividend just paid a total distribution in respect of the financial year ending August 31, 1920, of 10 per cent. on the capital of the company as at present constituted; (2) to return to the holders of the paid-up shares in the existing company the sum of 18/- per share, being the amount paid-up on those shares in excess of the contributing shares, so as to have one class of shares, all of which will be fully paid-up; (3) that the new company shall have a capital of £750,000 shares, consisting of 600,000 shares at 25/- each fully paid-up; (4) that one fully paid-up share be allotted to every member of the existing company for every share, whether paid-up or contributing, held by such member in the existing company on August 31, 1920.