

deputation from the Institute that in Australia, the law requires that every local body with a revenue exceeding £9,000 must be advised by a qualified engineer if it wishes to receive Government subsidies. This is quite reasonable, for the waste which can take place as a result of inadequate consideration of expenditure, or the patch-work jobs of the "rule of thumb" planner, would come to a great deal more than the difference in the salaries of a competent and an incompetent engineer. There is an important national aspect to this question, for the local bodies of New Zealand have a total loan indebtedness exceeding 28 millions sterling. How much of this is represented in really good assets? How much has been frittered away on ill-considered experiments? Whatever the result of practical operations, the debt, at any rate, is permanent. The taxing power of local authorities in New Zealand is now well in excess of seven millions sterling per annum. Much of this large sum is expended by the engineering staffs, and a good deal can be wasted by a penny-wise, pound-foolish policy in administrative control. So long as the Institute of Civil Engineers suggests a fair and reasonable method of entering the profession and reaching the standard required to comply with the Act, there should be little trouble in securing the consent of Parliament to its wise measure.

THIS "REFORMED CONVICT" COLONY.

Now and again, New Zealanders receive a severe jolt to their national pride by reading references to their country which show that the outside world hardly realises that they exist. One of the worst instances of the sort has just come under our notice. The "Literary Digest" of New York, which we regard as a particularly well-informed journal in the main, devotes an article in a recent issue to the island nations of the Pacific, and the operation of the mandates under the Peace Treaty. Following its usual course, it works in several clippings from other journals, and then goes on to comment on its own account thus:—"New Zealand, founded as a penal colony by Great Britain, has of recent years gained a reputation as one of the most carefully and completely governed territories in the world. A law passed by this reformed convict colony, and made effective on May 1st of this year, orders that 'no motion picture film depicting thieving, robbery, murder or suicide shall be permitted to be shown in the Dominion.' The population, in 1919, was estimated by 'The Statesman's Year Book' at 1,139,014, exclusive of some 50,000 native Maoris. The total area is 103,581 square miles, not including the Dominion's new mandate over the former German Samoan Islands, now the Territory of Western Samoa, which adds an area of some 1,200 square miles." Obviously the "Literary Digest" is about 1,500 miles out in its learned comment. Its references apply in a measure to New South Wales, for this

Dominion was never used as a penal settlement. Great Britain only turned to New South Wales as a dumping-ground for convicts when it found the American colonies closed to this form of compulsory emigration. Many of the convicts who went to New South Wales had committed offences which, according to our present-day code, were mild, though there was an admixture of the worst class of criminal. However, the original convicts have long ago departed to, we hope, a happier land, and New South Wales can afford to complacently regard outside references to "a reformed convict colony." If its public men really troubled about ill-informed American comment on these lines, they could with every justification turn the tables by some references to the early history of many of the Eastern States of America, for they, too, are "reformed convict colonies."

CONTROL OF TRADE.

Further evidence of the gradual return to normal conditions in business is afforded by the ending of the coal control arrangement in New Zealand. Thanks to heavy importations from distant South Wales, and an improvement in the Newcastle output, coupled with a diminished demand for overseas bunker coal, the supply in the Dominion has slightly exceeded the requirements, enabling the Railway Department—to the detriment of its current revenue account—to build up its coal reserves in winter. Butter will be the next commodity to pass from official control. The producers, who were glad of Imperial purchase of their outputs when the markets were practically non-existent owing to war conditions, are equally pleased with the prospect of a free market, locally and abroad, at the end of August. Sugar seems likely to remain subject to an agreement with the only important supplying company. As for wheat, the probability is that New Zealand growers will feel less inclined to turn to alternatives, such as fat stock raising, under present conditions, so that there is every prospect of this cereal being produced next season under free market conditions. The New Zealander's fear is always in connection with competition from Australia, in times of glut. The Commonwealth production of wheat fluctuates so badly that it would be unwise to rely on that market for supplies. To ensure a steady yield of wheat for the food of the New Zealand population, it seems reasonable to protect the local grower from outside competition at least to the extent of imposing on imported wheat and flour the same tariff burden as is placed on New Zealand products by the Commonwealth. As for subsidies, we should imagine that the Government will firmly decline to continue such a policy. Its efforts to steady the local winter price of butter cost the overburdened taxpayer something like a cool million sterling, which was badly required for things which would have further relieved unemployment.