

Act, which shows that as a general rule, the community is well content to leave the problem to the State.

#### PARLIAMENT AND THE TARIFF.

It is so many years since the New Zealand Customs tariff was revised that the coming session promises to be especially interesting, for this is the biggest task on its programme. When the late Hon. J. A. Millar, as Minister of Customs, undertook the tariff revision, he had less aid than the present-day Minister of Customs, who is well fortified with the comprehensive report of a Departmental Committee which has thoroughly investigated the conditions of New Zealand industries. This proceeding suggests that the Government will adopt a policy of increased protection where local industry can benefit. With the development of cheap hydro-electric power there is undoubtedly a chance to develop the secondary industries, especially those which will utilise the Dominion's products as their raw material, but it is to be hoped that the well-organised protectionist element will not be allowed to go too far under the impression that New Zealand can speedily become a manufacturing country.

#### THE WORLD'S HOUSING SHORTAGE.

It was suggested to the Government by the Labour deputation already referred to that intending immigrants should be told the truth about New Zealand's housing shortage and the extent of unemployment. We heartily concur, but we do not believe that the truth would stop one Britisher from emigrating. Conditions could hardly be worse than they are in Britain to-day, both in regard to housing and employment. Prior to the war, about 80,000 dwellings for working men were built annually in Britain, at a cost enabling them to be let at an average rent of ten shillings weekly. Hardly a house was built during the war, and by the end of 1918 the shortage of dwellings in Britain totalled between 300,000 and 400,000, to say nothing of the thousands of so-called houses which are only allowed to remain in use because their condemnation means turning the tenants into the street, with no chance of obtaining a roof elsewhere. Canada is experiencing the same difficulty of shortage due to the leeway during the war. In Winnipeg during two pre-war years, 3,302 houses were built, but the sum total during the whole war period was only 258 new houses. We are so near to Australia that the details of the shortage in its principal cities are well known. The United States figures on the question show that whereas the pre-war increase in the number of dwellings averaged between 350,000 and 400,000, only 70,000 new houses were built in 1919. It is estimated that the nation requires a million and a quarter new homes. In the face of these figures, it is evident that New Zealand's housing shortage is far from being exceptional, and that the position is not likely to

deter intending immigrants. Once conditions become sufficiently normal in New Zealand to warrant the resumption of much-needed immigration on a reasonable scale, a selection of artisans by the High Commissioner will help us to overcome the problem, which is one of the most important in relation to the national life.

#### THE ARBITRATION COURT.

The resignation of the workers' representative on the Arbitration Court owing to the reduction in shearers' wages awarded by a majority of the Court, despite the stabilisation agreement made last May, has raised the big question whether the arbitration system is sufficiently successful to be maintained. At first, it seemed as if the trade unions were aiming at making the Court ineffective by refusing to nominate a successor to Mr. McCullough, but this was only a passing phase. More consideration has evidently satisfied the men's leaders that it would be a doubtful gain to get rid of the Court during a very difficult and dangerous economic era. Mr. McCullough held a view of the stabilisation agreement which his colleagues on the Court contend was never intended, as they expressly mentioned that exceptional conditions might warrant reconsideration of an agreement, which otherwise would stand until May, 1922. The majority of the Court hold that the wool producers are in an exceptional position, which involves the economic stability of their operations. Like many others, they are working on a falling market. If the Arbitration Court was done away with, some method of settlement of trade disputes equally well backed by Statute should be substituted, otherwise on a falling market the Dominion would be involved in an endless series of industrial disturbances, big and little. The Wages Board method, successfully adopted in the settlement of a dispute between the railwaymen and the Railway Department, seems a fair arrangement. The parties are directly represented at a round-table conference, presided over by an independent chairman, selected by mutual agreement. Special care has to be taken over the appointment of the chairman because his decision, in the event of a disagreement, carries great weight. This system was tried with the Judge of the Arbitration Court as chairman, but did not satisfy the railwaymen. They were, however, more content when a businessman of wide experience controlled a subsequent meeting of the Board, and the agreement then arrived at is working satisfactorily to-day. Possibly the Wages Board system could be conducted in New Zealand as well as the Arbitration Court with a lawyer at its head. Whatever the system, the results should have the force of law, otherwise cut-throat competition between individual workers, and by employers capable of making a hard bargain with their employees, would add to the situation a series of troubles from which we have been free for many years.