

You will be asked to consider an amendment to the Niue Act and also a Bill to amalgamate the Department of Island Territories with the Department of Maori Affairs.

In their endeavours to advance further the welfare of the Maori people my Ministers will continue to place the main emphasis on those measures which have already proved their worth. Special attention is being given to housing and education and to steps to widen employment opportunities for young Maori workers, including apprenticeship training schemes and city pre-employment courses.

In the field of education, both primary and secondary schools are going through a period of unprecedented development in curricula, teaching methods, and internal organisation. The programme for the extension of the period of training of primary teachers from 2 years to 3 is now well on the way to completion. The teachers' colleges are soon to be governed by their own councils after 90 years of direct control by Education Boards. These changes, and other developments in the secondary schools, technical institutes, and the universities, are being carried forward at a time when larger rolls are exerting growing pressures at all levels of the educational system.

A Bill will be introduced to establish a Vocational Training Council to replace, with wider functions, the present Council for Technical Education.

My Ministers will place before you several important measures in the field of family law. One will remove the remaining legal inequalities of children born out of wedlock. A Domestic Proceedings Bill will revise the law and procedure governing separation, maintenance, and paternity orders; it will also provide improved procedures for conciliation in domestic cases. Two other measures will deal with the law relating to custody and guardianship, and with the capacity of persons under 21 years of age to make contracts and wills.

In addition legislation has been drafted to extend the Ombudsman's jurisdiction to acts and decisions by officers of Hospital Boards and Education Boards. There will also be a consolidation of the Licensing Trusts Act and its amendments.

My Government has announced increases in the rates of most Social Security benefits, economic pensions and war veterans' allowances. The necessary amendments to the Social Security Act and the War Pensions Act will be submitted for your approval.

Following the recent decision of the Court of Arbitration on the application for a General Wage Order, my Government has also taken steps to prevent increases in the prices of most goods and services for a period of two months.

In the field of public health you will be asked to consider a Mental Health Bill, following the wide discussion and review of the measure introduced last Session. The reconstitution of the Medical Council and the establishment of a Medical Education Committee, responsible to the Council, will be among the changes proposed in a consolidation of the Medical Practitioners Act. There will also be Bills to promote the study of the reasons for maternal mortality and to revise and consolidate the food and drugs legislation.

A revision of the Local Authorities (Members' Contracts) Act will be submitted for your consideration together with amendments to the Municipal Corporations Act and the Counties Act. In accordance with the recommendation of the National Anti-Litter Council a Bill is being prepared to draw together the present legislation dealing with litter.

A Royal Commission is at present examining wage-fixing procedures in the State Services and other bodies supported by public funds. When the Royal Commission submits its report, my Ministers will discuss its recommendations with the employee organisations and any other interested parties before deciding whether legislation needs to be introduced.