

Many visitors from the Dominion avail themselves of the details concerning the distribution of New Zealand produce in this country that they are able to obtain from the Produce Branch, and many expressions of satisfaction with the assistance afforded them have been received.

An important part of the work of the branch lies in the arrangement at exhibitions, shows, &c., of displays of New Zealand products and manufactures, and demonstrations of the scenic and other attractions of the Dominion, with the view not only of fostering trade with the Mother-country and the outside world, but also of bringing to the notice of the public the advantages of New Zealand as a field for the settler, tourist, and sportsman.

The new offices in the Strand are being used for displaying samples of our products, &c., and furnishing information in respect thereto. At present, owing to the war, our range of goods is limited. The future possibilities of enlarged trade are being carefully watched and developed.

The Produce Commissioner also undertakes lectures throughout the country in connection with the Emigration Branch, and at the request of the Victoria League gives lectures under their auspices on the Dominion. By means of these lectures considerable interest is aroused which is of benefit to the Dominion.

EFFECT OF THE WAR.

The outbreak of war has considerably affected the work of the branch. Though certain of its normal activities have for the time become less urgent, the amount of purely "war work" added to its duties has more than made up the difference, and the whole energies of a somewhat increased staff have been required to cope with the altered situation.

In the produce-markets wool, hemp, and grain have enjoyed steadier markets on account of conditions brought about by the war, but kauri-gum has fallen into disuse for the same reason. The importation of hops is now forbidden, except under license. No shipments of apples on commercial lines have come to hand, although a few for exhibition purposes have been dealt with. The export of timber is at a standstill. No exhibitions, except of fruit, have been held since 1914.

Under the direction of the High Commissioner the Produce Branch has undertaken the following extra duties, which may generally be described as "war work":—

1. Distribution of gifts in kind and money sent from New Zealand for the relief of distress amongst the peoples of this country and of all the allied nations.

Taking the two classes of relief work separately, and dealing first of all with the gift goods, the branch has had to deal up to date with 202 separate shipments from the Dominion. These have comprised—

Mutton	10,888 carcasses.	Barley	66 sacks.
Lamb	583 "	Wheat	15 "
Beef	122 quarters.	Peas	27 "
Rabbits and hares ..	152 crates.	Clothing	2,864 cases.
Bacon	9 cases.	Blankets	57 bales.
Butter	136 boxes.	Toys	2 cases.
Cheese	92 crates.	Jam	73 "
Flour	18 sacks.	Books	1 case.
Gerstena	20 "	Hospital gifts ..	203 cases.

It is only by careful organization that the branch has been able to cope with the work involved. Considerable correspondence has been necessary with the donors and the Government in Wellington, with various agencies undertaking relief work in this country, and with dock and transport companies, &c. In every case care has been taken, by inquiries through official and other channels, that only organizations of good standing and individuals of unimpeachable character have been entrusted with gift goods from the Dominion. The majority of the cases of clothing, &c., received have been specially earmarked for distribution in certain channels—*i.e.*, British relief, Belgian relief in England and in Belgium, and so on—but in other instances the greatest discretion has had to be exercised in choosing the recipients for the distribution of the gifts.

The total sum of money remitted to the High Commissioner from New Zealand for war relief purposes amounts to £761,466 17s. 6d. This was allotted as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
For British distress	163,662	17	7
For Belgian	575,602	12	3
For Allies	22,201	7	8
	<u>£761,466</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>6</u>

In nearly every case the donors or subscribers express a desire as to the purpose for which their contributions are intended, but in many instances the distribution is left entirely in the hands of the High Commissioner. Here again many inquiries have had to be made to ensure that the money should be disbursed to the best possible advantage, and much work has been necessary in effecting satisfactory distribution of this large sum.

2. Representing to the Ministry of Munitions and the Admiralty the needs of New Zealand firms in regard to both raw material and manufactures from this country, and obtaining permits to enable their agents to purchase and their suppliers to proceed with such orders under the various Priority Classification regulations issued by the controlling authorities.

It will be recalled that for the better prosecution of the war the British Government have taken control of all works and factories capable of being employed in the manufacture of munitions, and have also built many others for the same purpose. They have also taken control of practically all