

culture and Education—took a great deal of evidence of a varying character in different districts, and is now preparing a report for the Government. It is hoped that this focussing of opinion will clear the way for early action, in improving our educational system as regards agricultural science. Appreciative reference may be suitably made here to the continued general work of the Board of Agriculture, under the chairmanship of Sir James Wilson, who has presided since the constitution of the Board in 1913.

For some time past the Department of Agriculture has been investigating the deterioration of grass-lands, chiefly on hilly bush country, in the mid-western districts of the North Island. The problem is one closely related to the settlement of Crown lands in the large area referred to, and during the year a special Committee appointed by my colleague the Minister of Lands conducted an exhaustive inquiry into all phases of the subject. The Committee (on which this Department was represented by its Agrostologist) has since presented a valuable report. It is proposed to take early steps dealing with this important matter in the interests of settlement and production, both Departments co-operating in the work. Another present point of co-ordination with the Lands Department is in connection with the development of the gum-land areas of North Auckland. The Agriculture Department, again, is acting in close touch with the Public Works Department regarding irrigation in Central Otago. Officers are now investigating irrigation systems in North America, with a view to applying the latest knowledge and practice to New Zealand conditions. The pumice and swamp-drainage areas are similarly providing useful points of liaison between this and other branches of the Service.

Although the present position in connection with the realization of our great staple exports is satisfactory generally, prudence, foresight, and economy on the part of the farming community are none the less called for. The necessity for studying quality of produce and reducing costs of production (including those caused by inflated land-values where such exist) is as great as ever. Surplus income in good times should be applied to reducing liabilities. Only in this way can lean years be met with comparative security.

The accompanying reports of the Director-General and heads of the various branches of the Department afford a comprehensive review of the work of the Department in its many ramifications. Excellent service has been rendered by the staff—admittedly often with limited resources and over-extensive districts. The officers engaged in instructional and research work, no less than the farming community, will welcome the strengthening of these services which it is the intention of the Government to effect in the immediate future.

W. NOSWORTHY, Minister of Agriculture.

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