

SESSION I (23RD PARLIAMENT).

1928.

NEW ZEALAND.

REPORT ON THE RECENT WORK OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Laid on the Table by Leave of the House.

A MARKED feature of the recent progress of the Department of Agriculture lies in the extension of its instructional and scientific services, with a gradually lessening volume of work necessary for the carrying-out of restrictive measures. This last is consequent upon the instructional activities having given farmers a greater appreciation of the advantages of themselves adopting and carrying out the precautionary and preventive measures necessary for combating animal and plant diseases dealing with insect pests, rabbits, noxious weeds, &c. Some of the objects to which the instructional services of the Department have been specially directed may be summarized as follows:—

- (a) The improvement of grasslands, and of grain and seed crops; the intelligent and properly systematized use of fertilizers forming a marked feature of this;
- (b) Improved methods of feed and management of farm-animals, and of disease-control;
- (c) Better methods of production and manufacture of dairy-products;
- (d) Improvements in methods of fruit-culture and of preparation of fruit for marketing purposes;
- (e) Progress in the improvement of the average quality of wool produced;
- (f) Advice and assistance to the flax, poultry, bee, and tobacco industries, and to horticulture generally.

Some credit may also fairly be taken for helping, by instruction and advice, towards the gradual increase in the output of primary products which has taken place of late years, as shown by the following statistical figures, showing the increase in volume of our total live-stock products: 1924–25, 4·1 per cent. increase over previous year; 1925–26, 0·1 per cent. increase over previous year; 1926–27, 6·4 per cent. increase over previous year. (The data necessary for preparing the 1927–28 figures are not yet fully available, but an increase will be shown.)

When the Scientific and Industrial Research Department was established, steps were taken to endeavour to bring about the best possible co-operation between it and the scientific services of the Department of Agriculture in the utilization of the grants made for research by the Government and by the Empire Marketing Board, thus enabling arrangements to be made under which the whole of the scientific personnel available, both in the Department and in institutions such as Lincoln College, Massey College, and the Cawthron Institute, could be mobilized, so to speak, in one co-operative whole, and bring about as far as possible co-ordination of effort and working methods calculated to give the best results to the Dominion.

Following are more detailed particulars of the work done and in hand:—

Farm Economics.—A Farm Economics Section of the Department of Agriculture has recently been inaugurated. The securing of data and their manipulation to enable deductions to be made is a lengthy business, but already the results of several dairying investigations have been published, and much other material is well in hand, including other branches of New Zealand agriculture. All data supplied by farmers are regarded and treated as confidential.

Agricultural Instruction.—The Department's instruction service—a feature of which is personal advice on the farm—has been considerably strengthened of late by the appointment of additional officers. The desire is to provide more intensive instruction where required.