

localities and in others the surface soil has gone, leaving a subsoil on the surface. On the hillier country, especially where cultivation is practised, gullying sometimes occurs and in the worst cases 'tunnel erosion.' On our very steep slopes soils are usually extremely thin. In every State of the Commonwealth methods of control are being worked out, and on the gentle slopes terracing is now fairly widely practised."

Climate and Ways of Living

We asked the professor what the truth was about the interior of Australia. Was it fact that it could never carry a large population? "Put it this way," he replied, "Forty to fifty per cent. of the whole of Australia will not be fit for anything but light grazing—in parts. You can do something with certain outback areas, pieces here and there. It depends largely on what water you can get. The problem of Northern Australia is sociological as much as anything else. British people have brought their old ideas to that climate, and they must change them. We need better housing and better amenities generally. Yes, the siesta habit might be a good idea."

We mentioned that investigations some years ago had indicated that the



white settlers in the north were not suffering in health or vitality. "Yes," said Professor Wadham, "the conclusion may have been favourable, but more investigation is necessary. Do you know what invention has done more than anything else to make life easier for the people up there? The kerosene-driven refrigerator."

"The point about the kerosene-driven refrigerator is that it can be used where there is no electrical supply. It has no moving parts. Gases do the work. Much more thought will have to be given to the construction of houses there. There should be air-conditioned units in homes. The heat sometimes prevents people from sleeping, and then they lose condition. Air-conditioning would help them."

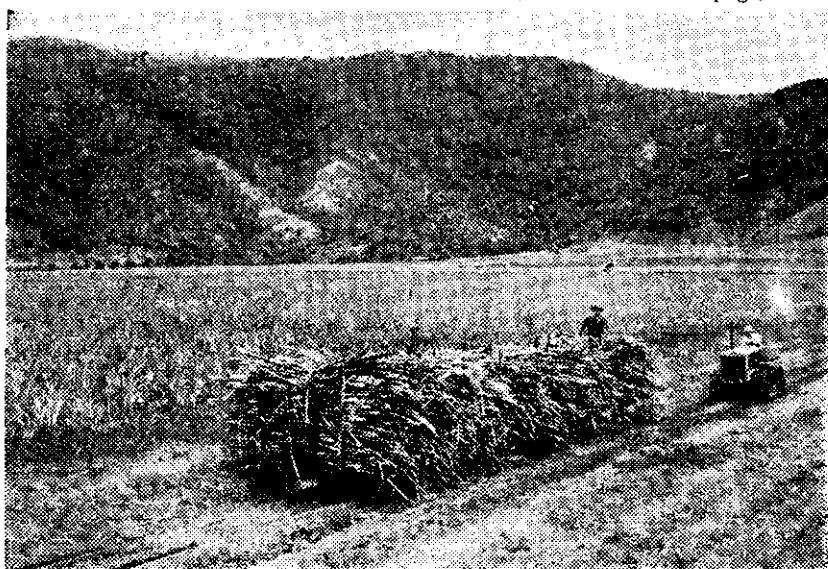
What were the prospects of tropical crops such as rice? Yes, rice could be grown in certain places. It was a matter of water. Sugar was grown successfully in selected patches along the Queensland coast, the only "white" cane sugar industry in the world. From the technical point of view, the sugar industry in Queensland was probably the most efficiently organised primary industry in Australia, though there was still room for improvement. It had a great record in improved yields. Yes, run to a considerable extent by Italians, they had given no trouble during the war.

Rural Homes

The discussion then passed to the problem of rural labour and general conditions on farms. Professor Wadham agreed that there was a general rise in the standard of housing in the community generally. The town-dweller was demanding and getting better accommodation, and the countryman was following suit. What had been good enough for the "hired man" years ago wasn't always good enough now. The Rural Reconstruction Commission in Australia had taken up this question with all other phases of country life, and issued a report.

We looked through this report, which covers a wide field, from septic tanks to education, and thought the conditions generally could be paralleled in New Zealand.

(continued on next page)



WHITE SUGAR—Australia is the only country that produces cane sugar entirely by white labour. The photographs show (at top) a plantation worker with a load of cut cane ready for the truck, and (above) the loaded trucks being hauled by tractor to the mill

FOR THE LITERARY-MINDED

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