

FARMING Takes to the AIR



AFTER a three-weeks' tour looking at all aspects of civil aviation, Arnold Wall, Talks Officer at 3YA, considers that in agricultural aviation, New Zealand leads the world, and in a documentary programme which includes interviews with key figures in this branch of aviation throughout New Zealand, Mr. Wall sums up the immense progress made in less than a decade, and gives a picture of the latest developments. This programme, *Aircraft Alter Agriculture*, to be heard from YA stations and 4YZ at 9.30 p.m. on Sunday, November 4, will be of special interest in view of the International Agricultural Aviation Show to be held at Palmerston North aerodrome on Friday and Saturday, November 9 and 10.

This will be the first show of its kind in the world, for though there have been displays of agricultural aircraft in various countries (notably in the U.S.A.) this will be the first time that agriculture and aviation have combined to make a display of wide interest both to the general public and overseas observers, as well as to farmers and aviation experts.

The development of this type of aerial work in New Zealand is comparatively recent, but although the United States, for instance, has a lead of some 23 years on New Zealand, in the last seven years this country has not only caught up but has taken

the initiative in further developments.

The vision of aerial work operators and farmers, together with progressive regulations, have combined to give this sort of result—the hours flown in fertiliser spreading in the U.S. in 1954 were 62,736; in New Zealand in the year 1955-56 the figure for the same purpose was 79,747.

There are now nearly 300 aircraft involved in agricultural flying in New Zealand; and besides aerial topdressing, less publicised tasks such as rabbit poisoning, back-country freighting, and the dropping of supplies and fencing materials by air, are undertaken by these planes.

One of the most interesting of these tasks is the dropping of fencing materials. It was found that a free-dropped coil of fencing wire always landed on its edge and was thus flattened and completely useless. Various methods of packing were tried, and the problem was finally solved by placing the coils on a wooden spool built around an empty paint drum. On impact the air in the drum explodes, and off shoot the roped together coils of wire to lie neatly on the ground ready for the fencer. Besides wire, posts, battens, and unit fencing are all dropped from the air. A recent Civil Aviation Administration publication, *Agricultural Aviation in New Zealand*, comments on the

importance of this development as follows: "Aerial topdressing and seed sowing have proved to be valuable tools in the field of soil conservation. But to derive the utmost benefit from the increased fertility of New Zealand's hill country brought about by these means, improved management of grazing in these areas is urgently required. To do this, it is estimated that more than 15 million acres require subdivision by fencing. Using existing methods of delivering materials by packhorse and sledge this would be an impossible task."

The development work required in the dropping of fencing materials will be described in *Aircraft Alter Agriculture*. Also in this programme will be a description of the first commercial topdressing operation, made on the late Sir R. Heaton Rhode's property at Otahuna; of developments in weed and insect control by aerial spraying; the use of aircraft in conservation work and rabbit poisoning, and many other aspects of agricultural aviation.

Aircraft Alter Agriculture, which is being presented as a prelude to the Air Show at Palmerston North, is the first of a series of documentaries on Civil Aviation in New Zealand, produced by Arnold Wall, the others of which will be heard later in the year. In the five programmes that make up the rest of the series, listeners will hear about air traffic control, meteorological services, navigational aids, passenger lines, air freighting, mercy work, aerial surveys, air advertising, scenic flying—in fact, about every aspect of civil aviation. The last programme in the series tells how aviation is administered, and gives some idea of plans and ambitions for the future.

BELOW: Arnold Wall, producer of the new series of civil aviation documentaries. LEFT: Fence-posts slung beneath the wings of an agricultural aircraft.

