

adverse criticisms again being possible from similar causes. Under these circumstances, I have deemed it advisable, in the best interests of the country, to prepare a measure to permanently fix the date for collecting this tax.

The regulations issued in January last with regard to foreign traders and to shipping owned outside New Zealand have, I am informed, worked well except in one particular. As to this, I will consider whether the system of annual licenses adopted in many other colonies will not answer the purpose better than the present plan.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

This department still continues the good work commenced some three years ago.

The past year has been most discouraging to those connected with agricultural and pastoral pursuits. The prices obtained for all products have been lower than anything experienced for many years.

The dairy industry promised well at the beginning of the season, but towards the end prices fell. During last session a new Dairy Act was passed, and, in addition to increased powers of inspection, authority was taken whereby the Governor by Order in Council could declare that all produce had to be put in a cool-store, and there graded and cooled prior to shipment. It was decided to deal with the butter only, and arrangements were made with the local freezing companies for the necessary storage. The grading has resulted in a very marked improvement in the quality of the later shipments; and the wisdom of the appointment of competent and impartial men to inspect the produce prior to shipment is admitted by all who have the general welfare of the industry at heart. To encourage the industry, no charge was made for the first month's storage, cooling, or grading.

A number of new factories and creameries have been started, and there are now at work 218, an increase of forty.

The quantity of butter shipped was 60,656cwt., valued at £242,387. This shows a decrease for the year of 1844cwt. in weight, and of £23,572 in value. Of cheese, there was shipped 54,947cwt., valued at £109,157, or an increase of 17,584cwt., valued at £26,140.

Acting on the recommendation of Professor Robertson, of Canada, the services of Mr. MacEwan have been secured as Dairy Instructor, and he has, along with the other instructors, given valuable assistance to those connected with the industry. Mr. MacEwan has now been appointed to the position of Chief Dairy Expert.

It is proposed during the off-season to start dairy schools, for the purpose of giving instruction in the management of milk and manufacture of butter and cheese.

The fruit experts have been busily engaged, and their efforts to impart instruction have been highly appreciated. The other branches of agriculture have not been neglected, and numerous leaflets on different subjects have been issued from time to time.

In addition to our exports of meat in a frozen state, the feasibility of shipping live-stock and chilled meat has now been successfully demonstrated, and this will to a great extent remove the objections formerly urged against our frozen meat.

The stock throughout the colony are generally in healthy condition.

POST-OFFICE SAVINGS-BANKS.

The deposits during the year 1894 were £2,252,862 6s. 11d., and the withdrawals £2,268,624 8s. 4d. The withdrawals exceeded the deposits by £15,762 1s. 5d. For the previous year the deposits were £2,386,089 10s. 7d., or £133,227 3s. 8d. more than in 1894; while the withdrawals amounted to £2,122,521 16s. 8d., or £146,102 11s. 8d. less than the amount withdrawn last year. During the first two quarters of 1894 the withdrawals were £88,935 17s. 10d. in excess of the deposits, but during the last two quarters of the year the deposits exceeded the withdrawals by £73,173 16s. 5d. There was an abnor-