

for United States Joint Purchasing Board had to be delivered in Auckland. The Auckland crop is not nearly sufficient to meet even its local requirements, but, normally, if the Hawke's Bay crop is large it is not difficult to supplement Auckland. This year's Hawke's Bay crop, however, was relatively light. A continuous flow of fruit had therefore to be maintained from Nelson to Auckland, much of it being shipped to New Plymouth and then railed. This was not only an expensive procedure, but also often resulted in deterioration or damage.

PRICES

A schedule of apple and pear prices was first established towards the end of 1942, when a maximum price was set for the later sales of that year. In 1943 the principle of issuing Price Orders was introduced, and an agreement entered into between the Division and the Economic Stabilization Commission as to the prices which should operate month by month. In maintaining this principle the higher values which were normally received in the early and late months of the season have been broken down and added during the mid-season period. This results in a more gradual swing of prices month by month.

Crop quantities fluctuate from season to season, apple and pear trees being regarded as biennial bearers. The 1945 season was one of comparatively low production, and was still further reduced by hail damage, most seriously in the Canterbury and Nelson districts. No precise estimate of the loss sustained by orchardists in these districts has been possible, although many growers in the Loburn area had their crops completely destroyed, and many in Nelson lost heavily through reduction of grade.

STORAGE

The grading standards for 1945 were confirmed according to the 1944 extension, but a greater tolerance for hail damage and black-spot was granted for minimum grade. Crop condition generally throughout the year was excellent, keeping losses by deterioration, during both harvesting and cool-storage periods, to a minimum. One of the Division's main problems is to make a crop which is harvested almost wholly between February and May spread evenly over the year. The cool-storage space available this year amounts to approximately 850,000 case-space in public stores and 50,000 in private stores. Repacking losses on fruit distributed ex cool store were again kept to a minimum through the policy of disposing of fruit before deterioration set in. Cool-storage losses were less than 1 per cent. A great deal more fruit than the total cool-storage space passes through cool store, since the earlier cool-stored varieties are marketed in time to make room available for the late keeping ones, and at the same time to maintain an even spread over the markets during the harvesting season.

To encourage growers to provide suitable varieties in a condition where they will remain sound for long periods a cool-storage bonus is paid during certain weeks of the year on selected varieties and sizes. This amounted to 9d. per case to compensate for the extra labour involved in making the special selections and special pickings. In addition, a programme of orchard storage is adopted in the Canterbury and Otago districts (25,000 cases each), which are eminently suitable for it. This makes for a better-spread distribution and also leaves more space in the cool stores for other fruits.

Before the purchase scheme was introduced in 1940 growers often received from the market up to 30s. per case for very early fruit. Taking into account the very low production and the very high cost of picking these early varieties this was not an unduly high return. However, the purchase scheme was unable to allow these varieties their normal market—i.e., scarcity—prices. To overcome this an early market bonus was introduced and operates on a sliding scale week by week. Even with this bonus the early varieties are tending to go out of production. Stabilization of fruit prices, though essential, naturally intensified this difficulty because holding the ceiling for apples at 13s. 6d. per case limited the amount of early market bonus which can be paid while still keeping within market returns. However, the bonus has operated in all years since it was first introduced in 1940.