

DEHYDRATION

The apple-dehydration factory operated its second season at Motueka with improved efficiency. Some plant was reconstructed during the off season, and problems such as "blueing" and "internal browning" have been solved by the Plant Research Station and the factory chemist. The change to peace production—i.e., production for New Zealand consumption—has also created new problems in packaging. Unfortunately, machinery to turn present wasted by-products into juice is not yet to hand. Though some suppliers' crops did not all size sufficiently for factory use, and though a few turned to supplying other and slightly more profitable markets for loose fruit, the factory has received almost as much as when supplies were "directed" to it. From 31st March, 1945, to 31st March, 1946, the Motueka factory received 3,454,733 lb. of raw fruit, which produced 390,660 dry pounds. Labour has been sometimes hard to obtain or hold for a seasonal industry in a country district. The girls' hostel, built by the Division, has, however, proved of real service to both factory and community, and is a very worthwhile asset.

Under Internal Marketing Division contract, 1,311,884 lb. of apples were also dehydrated at Wattie Canneries, Hastings, producing 123,225 dry pounds.

HONEY SECTION

During the past three seasons the Honey Section has been working under the Honey Emergency Regulations, which provided for all beekeepers with twenty hives and over to supply a certain proportion of their crop to the Division in order that the essential services should receive their supplies, the balance to be equitably distributed over the civilian population.

These regulations expired on the 30th November, 1945, and as the industry was promised that these would lapse when hostilities ceased, no new regulations were brought into force for the coming season. The season that commenced on the 1st December, 1945, will again, unfortunately, be a very small one as far as receipts of honey by the Honey Section are concerned.

The demand for honey still appears very heavy owing to the sugar rationing, together with the fact that other sweet goods are also in short supply on the market. This demand for honey has made it very easy for the beekeeper to sell practically all his crop at his backdoor at a retail price. The fact that the wartime regulations have now lapsed, together with the exceptional dry spell which was experienced, particularly in the North Island between the middle of December and the end of February and also the spray-poisoning experienced in the Hawke's Bay area, will have a decided effect on the amount of honey that will be received this year.

The honey handled by the Honey Section between 1st April, 1945, and 31st March, 1946, is as follows:—

					Tons.
Bulk honey	..	..	..	..	382½ (7,202½ cases)
Packed honey	..	..	..	..	39½

The total value of the honey—bulk honey being valued at 7d. per pound *pro rata*, plus ¾d. per pound bonus—and packed honey at the price paid to the beekeepers, is as follows:—

					£	s.	d.
Bulk honey	..	..	..	..	26,100	8	8
Packed honey	..	..	..	..	3,507	17	9