

MINISTER'S STATEMENT

THE work of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research was very close to the heart of the late Minister, the Hon. D. G. Sullivan, who laid down long-range plans of development which are being pursued. The war has interfered with or slowed down many of these plans—for example, the development of improved varieties of plants, soil surveys, coal research and surveys, geological surveys, and investigations in the thermal regions, the three last being undertaken in long-range anticipation of requirements of fuel and power. Nevertheless, the work in these and other directions is proving useful by providing factual information in preparation for development and plans for action. It is becoming increasingly obvious, however, that, apart from the steady, long-range pursuit of new scientific knowledge and principles, industry and society are now much more alive to its significance, and there is a tendency and general desire to close the time gap between research and application.

The question of publication and dissemination of scientific information thus becomes increasingly important, firstly to the more applied workers in other Departments and in industry, and secondly in a form more intelligible to the general public. In the supplying of information for direct application to New Zealand's problems the work done by research associations and researches carried out in co-operation with representatives of primary and secondary industry play a very important part, since the results are made available at the point of maximum understanding. The servicing sections of the Dominion Physical Laboratory and Auckland Industrial Development Laboratories have been fruitful from these points of view, and the indications are that such activities will become important aspects of the future structure of industry.

During the past year a number of new research developments have been undertaken by the Department, adding further to its already considerable capacity to provide guidance and assistance for the Dominion's primary and secondary industries. The formation of Industrial Research Associations to serve the needs of particular industries has been encouraged through the Manufacturers' Research Committee, a number of such organizations being now firmly established and others in course of formation. Complete details are contained in the body of this report.

Apart from the problems of maintenance of local laboratories and of utilization of sources of scientific information for requirements more peculiar to the Dominion itself, there is also that of obtaining and integrating scientific information from researches carried out abroad. The volume of such work is increasing rapidly, since all countries are now expending so much effort on research. The Department is co-operating in the British Commonwealth scientific liaison scheme, whereby an effort is being made to systematically pool information as it becomes available, and to co-operate in scientific projects of general significance and application. Specialist officers of the Department continue to be sent abroad for study and research, and pre-war international exchanges of publications have been renewed and extended, these now covering nearly forty overseas countries.

From the record of recent achievements of the Department, many examples of the economic value of research conducted in New Zealand can be taken. Prior to the commencement of research work on the breeding and certification of New-Zealand-grown grass and clover seeds, a high proportion of the seed being sold was virtually useless for pasture purposes. Selected strains were improved by plant breeding, and field inspection and certification introduced. The results of this Department's research have been made available to the New Zealand farmer by the field service maintained by the Department of Agriculture. That the research was successful is indicated not only by the advantages that have accrued locally, but also by the increase in export value of New-Zealand-grown grass and clover seed.