

TRANSPORT

For several years past the difficulties of transport by road, rail, and sea have been most acute. This year the road transport difficulties have been eased quite appreciably through the increased supplies of benzine available, but the difficulties of transport by sea and by rail have been intensified, especially sea transport. The railway rolling-stock position at present seems to be more acute than in pre-war years, and this, in conjunction with the increased quantity being transported to local markets, means that in many instances fruit has to be transported in wagons that are unsuitable for fruit. Representations have been made to the railway authorities which have met with a most sympathetic and favourable reception, but the railway authorities are definitely limited in the services they can give. Through no fault of the railway authorities, the position is that the unsuitable wagons and the frequent delays during transport are having a very detrimental effect on the quality of the fruit as it is being transported from one point to another. Loss in market value from this cause is quite appreciable. The sea transport difficulties are also acute. It has not been possible to transport fruit from one point to another as expeditiously as desired, and, in addition, the Division frequently had to accept shipping arrangements which were neither desired nor intended. For instance, when it is desired to ship from Nelson to Onehunga or to Auckland, and this cannot be arranged, as a substitute the Division may be forced to accept shipment from Nelson to New Plymouth or Nelson to Wanganui. In some instances shipments from Nelson to Wellington have been accepted and the fruit has then been railed to Auckland from Wellington. These alternative acceptances were unavoidable in order to keep fruit moving, but even so transport clearances were not equal to the inflow of fruit at Nelson depots, and eventually the depots had to cease receiving fruit for three or four days. The Shipping Controller has at all times given sympathetic consideration to the transport of apples and pears, but the demand for shipping for urgent national needs is so great in different directions that not even the sympathetic attitude of the Shipping Controller proved adequate for our needs.

UNECONOMIC ORCHARD FUND

The Uneconomic Orchard Fund, which was established in 1944 to assist growers to bring uneconomic orchards to an economic level, was extended in 1945 to give assistance to growers who suffered financial loss on account of climatic disaster. This year there were numerous claims from growers in Otago and Hawke's Bay because of frost damage, and from growers in Canterbury on account of hail damage.

Reports received indicate that the fund has been of immense benefit in rehabilitating uneconomic orchards and in giving the necessary assistance to those growers who personally were unable to sustain their frost or hail losses.

Table 3 shows the number of grants approved for payment up to the 30th September and the amount of money involved.

APPLE DEHYDRATION

The apple-dehydration plant at Motueka continued to operate during the period under review, and 3,929,069 lb. of raw fruit was processed, yielding 425,892 lb. of dried apples. In addition, J. Wattie Canneries, Ltd., operated on behalf of the Division and processed 979,320 lb. of fresh apples, which produced 77,880 lb. dry. The whole output of both factories is to be marketed within the Dominion, the demand being six or seven times greater than the supply.

There is more than a possibility that dehydration will become a serious challenge to cool storage, particularly as a means of supplying cooking apples to the public during the later months of the year, and should this possibility prove correct the marketing authority will have to give cognizance to the position.