

SECRETARY'S REPORT

The Hon. T. H. McCOMBS, Minister in Charge of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.

I HAVE the honour to submit herewith the annual report of the Department for the year 1948-49.

During the year under review there has been a slight expansion of activities, but more particularly a consolidation of the whole organization has been apparent. The year has been a notable one in that it has seen a very considerable strengthening of our relationships with kindred organizations and research workers overseas, brought about in a twofold manner: firstly, through the holding in New Zealand of the Seventh Pacific Science Congress, attended by some 200 eminent scientists from overseas; and secondly, by the sending of a number of senior officers overseas to study or to undertake special investigations, or to represent New Zealand at Commonwealth and international scientific conferences. The benefits are immediate, continuing, and substantial. The Department's Scientific Liaison staffs in London, Washington, and Melbourne greatly promote the continuation of the collaboration initiated by these exchanges of visits.

Unfortunately it has not as yet been possible to implement the recommendations of Sir Reginald Stradling for the establishment of a Building Research Station in New Zealand, but it is anticipated that definite action will be taken during the coming year.

There has been a considerable increase in the number of requests for scientific and technical information and assistance from other Departments of State and from industry, and this indicates that the Department's services are meeting a definite need. There is a growing realization in industry that if the Dominion is to maintain or improve its position with regard to overseas competition it must have the benefit of the most recent appropriate scientific information.

Some reorganization has taken place within the Department to give better conditions for the functioning of various activities. The Observatories have been arranged into four separate closely co-ordinated units. Fruit Research has been established as a separate entity. The Industrial Psychology Division has been changed so that its scope is purely research. Service work has been transferred to the Personnel Advisory Division of the Department of Labour and Employment, with which close co-ordination of effort has been established. The Defence Development Section has been transferred to the control of Canterbury University College, where it will function in providing scientific services to the South Island manufacturing industries.

Certain major difficulties referred to in previous annual reports remain, especially those of accommodation and shortage of senior experienced scientific officers. These difficulties continue to affect seriously the nature of the service that the Department is able to give.

Defence science matters have received continuous and close attention during the year, and the fullest collaboration has been maintained with the Services.

The record of achievement in all branches of the Department, as set out in this report, is one of general sound advancement in a great number of directions. Every branch has reached attainments likely to have far-reaching influences on the national welfare of New Zealand, and the policy of the Department to expedite the putting into operation of all results of commercial value has been continued. The work of the Research Council and its many advisory research committees and research associations has been of the greatest importance and value in this sphere, and has done much to