

vated and the yield of same, the number and description of live-stock, &c. The information is entered in the collector's book, a single line being devoted to each holding, and each book having provision for a stated number of holdings. The entries are made in such a way as to obviate the necessity for much tabulation when the books are received at the Statistician's Office. The blank books are issued to the police from the Statistician's Office in December of each year along with the books returned for the previous year, or with the names of the holders of the previous year entered in each book, for guidance in the current year's collection. The names of occupiers of new holdings are obtained annually from the Lands Department, and written up in the respective books before issue. The collection is made by the police during January and February, and the completed books returned to the Statistician as soon after as possible. On receipt of the books at the Statistician's Office they are examined, checked, totalled, and summarized to make up the published tables. As the yield of some crops (potato, maize, vine, honey, and fruit) is not available at the time the collectors visit the holdings, this information is collected through the post later in the year in some States, and in others another visit is made by the police for the information. Preharvest estimates of the area sown, and again of the probable yield, for *wheat and oats only*, are made by the Statistician from information collected (through the post in some States and in others by special visit) in conjunction with the actual returns of the previous year.

This system of collection by the police on books has been in force for many years in Australia, and has gradually reached a very high state of efficiency. By means of it the Statisticians there are able to produce most complete and comprehensive statistics as to the country's agricultural and pastoral production and *to follow closely the aggregation or otherwise of holdings*. In some States no payment whatever is made to the police, but in others the Police Department is recouped the actual travelling-expenses incurred in the collection. The expenditure in Victoria (whose system I considered the most suitable for New Zealand) on account of these statistics is stated to be £2,564 per annum, made up as follows: Police expenses, £600; postage, £400; and clerical work, £1,564. It may be of interest here to compare the area and number of holdings of Victoria and New Zealand. Victoria has an area of 87,884 square miles, with 60,240 occupied holdings. The area of the North and South Islands of New Zealand is 102,250 square miles, and according to the census collection there were 73,876 occupied holdings; so that the area to be dealt with in New Zealand is 16·35 per cent. greater than in Victoria, and the number of holdings 22·64 per cent. more. The area of New South Wales is 208,122 square miles greater than New Zealand, or 203·54 per cent. more; but the number of holdings in New South Wales (87,503) is only 18·45 per cent. more than in New Zealand.

The present position in regard to agricultural and pastoral statistics in New Zealand is that every third year a complete collection (estimated to cost about £6,000) from every occupier of 1 acre and upwards is to be made by means of Enumerators specially employed for the purpose, and during the intervening years a collection of returns as to the principal grain and root crops is made through the post. The work of collection is undertaken by the Department of Agriculture, and the tabulation is made in the Statistician's Office. The results obtained by collection through the post are most unsatisfactory and incomplete, and cannot be sufficiently relied on as accurately representing the true facts, while the collection by special enumerators is far too costly to maintain annually. In addition the Department of Agriculture collect and tabulate each year returns of the sheep flocks in the Dominion, publishing in detail the name and address of each owner as well as the number of his flock.

Considering that the agricultural and pastoral products of New Zealand form about 80 per cent. of our exports, I submit that it is of the utmost importance that these statistics should be put on a proper footing. The system adopted throughout Australia of collection per medium of the police has been in operation in some States for over fifteen years. The unanimous testimony is that it is satisfactory in working, gives accurate and reliable results, and, as it at present obtains, is more economical than any other which could be devised. I feel confident that our New Zealand police are capable of doing equally as good service as the police of Australia. I recommend their employment in the collection of these statistics, and the adoption of the Australian methods. I do not think it would be wise, just at first, to make quite such extensive inquiries as are made in Australia, but having once adopted the principles of the system the number of the inquiries could be gradually extended as required and as the collectors became familiarized with the work. The present high state of efficiency in these statistics in Australia has not been attained all at once, but after years of experience and evolution.

Should the Government approve of my recommendations for the adoption of the Australian system, I suggest that the heads of the Police, Agriculture, and Statistical Departments should confer and decide as to the details and inauguration of the system. While believing that, as in Australia, the Statistician should control these statistics, yet I consider that it is in the best interests of the country to have co-operation between the Department of Agriculture and the Statistical Office, so that one collection may serve the needs of both Departments, and that the Statistician may have the assistance of the expert knowledge of the officers of the Agriculture Department. It may also be possible for the field officers of the Department of Agriculture to undertake the collection in some districts and thus relieve the police to some extent, or perhaps they may be able to assist the police considerably if they cannot altogether relieve them. With regard to the latter, I may say that if the field officers of the Department of Agriculture are available and sufficiently numerous for the work of collection their employment would, of course, be preferable to the police, on account of their knowledge of agriculture and stock in their districts. Whichever of these officers (Agriculture or Police) the Government decided to utilize for the collection work would not, of course, affect the system now advocated, which would apply equally well in either case.