

1917.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRIES, AND
COMMERCE.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1916-17.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Excellency.

Department of Agriculture, Industries, and Commerce,
Wellington, 6th August, 1917.

MY LORD,—

I have the honour to forward herewith, for your Excellency's information, the report of the Department of Agriculture, Industries, and Commerce of the Dominion for the financial year ended the 31st March last.

I have, &c.,
W. D. S. MACDONALD,
Minister of Agriculture.

His Excellency the Earl of Liverpool, Governor-General of New Zealand

REPORT OF THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE.

DURING the period under review the agricultural industry of New Zealand has come under the many-sided influences of the Great War in steadily increasing degree. The phase of semi-detachment enjoyed by this favoured land from the profound economic and industrial changes brought about in the Motherland and other countries situated round the main storm-centre appears, indeed, to be rapidly passing away. In the earlier stages of the war increased prices for our staple products were the leading factor affecting agriculture in the Dominion. While this feature still obtains, and has been strengthened and steadied by a great extension of the system of Government purchase by requisition, other factors have entered the position. The depletion of rural man-power necessitated by the requirements of the Expeditionary Forces has begun to tell heavily. In relation to the local consumer, maximum prices have had to be fixed for several foodstuffs, and other kindred measures taken to reduce the cost of living. Our overseas trade has been seriously hampered by a prolonged shortage of shipping, causing enormous accumulations of produce in the Dominion, with an attendant locking-up of funds; and, as a corollary, questions are now arising regarding the most suitable lines of farm production to follow next season. The problems thus created require to be met by increasing organization and action, in which the State must necessarily take a leading part.

It is gratifying to be able to record that, notwithstanding the handicaps already weighing on rural industry, production has again attained a high level, a position which bespeaks both enterprise and extra effort on the part of the agricultural community, and redounds to the credit of our working-farmers. While the agricultural year, taking the average of the