

It will be seen that agricultural improvement and education stand to be effectively promoted by the means just outlined. It is essential, however, that the Central Development Farm should receive a strong support, the ultimate aim being increased primary production—the wealth which is needed to pay for the war. It would be a serious mistake to in any way starve the nerve-centre of the new development, which contains such great and beneficial potentialities.

As already briefly mentioned, the prolongation of the war is placing an increasing strain on the agricultural industry, the provision of the necessary labour being the principal problem to cope with. It will be for the Government, after a wide survey of the position and consultation with various authorities concerned, to indicate any necessary limits in connection with the industry's share in military service. Possibly the precedent regarding exemptions set by Great Britain might be reasonably followed by New Zealand. But in any case the time appears to be approaching when the women of the country must be called into the agricultural ranks in no inconsiderable numbers. Here also we have the example of the Motherland. Our boys leaving school must also help to fill the gaps to a greater extent than hitherto. There is also a great opportunity for retired farmers to render patriotic service in the training and superintending of such labour recruits. As regards the great primary industries proper, partial exemptions have already been granted to certain classes of workers, and similar provisions may have to be extended shortly.

In regard to the vitally important matter of refrigerated shipping and storage for dealing with our main perishable products—meat, butter, and cheese—it is satisfactory to record that the stores were cleared of accumulations of produce before the export season of 1916-17 began in earnest. The end of the period now reviewed, however, was marked by a greater blockage of produce than ever experienced before, and the position has since become more aggravated. The main causes are the war losses among the refrigerated fleet trading to New Zealand, and the diversion of a number of such vessels for food-carrying on shorter routes in order to meet the serious exigencies of the Mother-country. The tonnage recently allotted to New Zealand up to the end of September is, however, very considerable, and, while there seems little hope of the stores being cleared this year, sufficient space will be set free to enable the new season's business to open without being disastrously hampered. The wisdom of the action taken by the majority of the meat-freezing companies in extending their cold-storage accommodation has been amply demonstrated. The aggregate holding-capacity of the various works is now equivalent to between four and four and a half million freight carcasses, and further extensions are in hand at certain establishments. The dairy industry has hardly shown the same readiness in providing refrigerated storage for its output, though extensions to cheese-stores have been made recently at several ports, and others are now in hand, at Wellington in particular. It seems clear that much more must be done before the dairy industry can feel reasonably secure in relation to next season's operations. A repetition of the experiences of the past season at Wellington, with more or less casual storage for large quantities of cheese, is highly undesirable. A measure of financial support for the construction of cheese cool storage for this and certain other ports has now been decided upon by the Government.

The present position in regard to our overseas trade should cause all concerned to look well ahead and consider the best scheme of farming and production to follow under possible eventualities during the ensuing season. Questions of live-stock management are chiefly concerned, such as whether to carry over more lambs and freeze more sheep. Again, should the dairy factories make butter or cheese? and so on. A complete stoppage of shipping even for a comparatively short time would, of course, require the taking of very radical measures, and these should be worked out in advance as war emergencies are worked out by a military general staff. It appears, however, not unduly optimistic to hold that the new producing season may be commenced on fairly normal lines.

Above all things a strong all-round food-production policy should be maintained. Any suggestions for a limitation of production on the grounds of a possible stoppage of exports cannot be considered. Neither New Zealand nor the Empire is at the end of its resources in shipping or storage. With a world-wide shortage of foodstuffs among the possibilities of the near future, any slackening-off in production cannot be too strongly deprecated. The conclusion of peace, with an easing of the shipping difficulty, should find New Zealand ready as a supplier to the utmost of its capacity under prevailing conditions.

It may be mentioned that one of the most important duties assigned to the recently constituted National Efficiency Board is the investigation of the special problem arising in connection with the agricultural industry as touched upon in the foregoing remarks, and it is