

of agricultural workers other than experts. To provide for the training of farm managers and foremen for private farms it would be necessary to give effect to the recommendation of the General Council of Education in favour of the establishment of farm schools, at which pupils would be taught how and when to carry out the ordinary farming operations, but would not be trained to any great extent in the sciences underlying such operations.

EXPERIMENTAL FARMS AND AREAS.

The establishment of experimental farms or smaller experimental areas in parts of the Dominion not yet catered for in this way also demands attention. Negotiations are already in progress in regard to an experimental farm for the west coast of the South Island, and something definite in this direction is certainly called for in the case of Otago. Concerning smaller experimental areas, to be managed by the Department in conjunction with local committees, the Department is anxious that considerable development should take place, and negotiations with local committees have been begun in several localities. It is felt that areas of this class will serve a much more useful purpose than the more numerous co-operative experiments with individual farmers that were so extensively carried out during the past decade.

SOIL SURVEY.

Another matter that should be pushed on as speedily as possible, in order that the Dominion may be thoroughly equipped for greatly extended production after the war, is a soil or agricultural survey of the country. In brief, this means the mapping of New Zealand into areas having similar characteristics from the agricultural point of view, and when completed in regard to any district it would enormously facilitate the country's development, seeing that the Department would be in a position to conduct its researches and experiments with a full knowledge of how far they would be applicable to places other than those at which they were carried out. I am glad to state that, notwithstanding the adverse conditions prevailing, the Department's Chemist has made a start with this work in certain districts, and every effort will be made as opportunity offers to provide him with facilities for continuing and extending this undertaking.

WEEDS SURVEY AND CONTROL.

An efficient weeds survey of the Dominion is also greatly needed to give our headquarters officers a comprehensive grasp of the incidence of the several plant pests that are so greatly retarding the development of agricultural production. This work has now been put in hand, and will be carried on as rapidly as possible.

Upon completion of the weeds survey, research and experimental work with a view to bringing practical methods of control before the farmers will be undertaken on a considerable scale, it being evident that the mere annual cutting of weeds is not the ultimate solution of the problem, and is, moreover, entirely impracticable in many parts of the country.

Nevertheless it should not be overlooked that a great deal of good work has been done in the way of cutting weeds to comply with the Noxious Weeds Act, and it is safe to say that much land is now producing heavily which, had it not been for the enforcement of the Act, would still be overrun with noxious growths. It is recognized that during the war farmers are in many cases severely hampered in their efforts to meet the requirements of the Inspectors under the Act, and these officers are therefore using the utmost discretion in this matter, but to comply with the suggestion that has been freely made that the Act should be entirely in abeyance during the war would be quite a mistake, as much of the good work already accomplished would undoubtedly be sacrificed.

RABBIT-CONTROL.

The position is much the same in regard to rabbit-control. It is impossible for the Department to contemplate permitting any serious increase of rabbit infestation, and the Inspectors must, while fully sympathizing with the difficulties of landholders, take all steps necessary to prevent any abnormal increase. The trapping industry in Otago and Southland is now quite a large concern, and undoubtedly affords remunerative employment to a considerable number of men and to a large amount of capital, but it is also certain that both the men and capital would be better occupied in developing the agricultural and pastoral interests. To put the matter quite plainly, the Dominion would undoubtedly be better off if the export of rabbits were absolutely prohibited. There is no doubt that, in the districts where commercial trapping obtains, so long as the present profits and employment are afforded by trapping, serious efforts to bring the pest under complete control will only be made by the most enlightened and energetic landowners, whereas many others will remain content to see rabbits flourish so long as they yield a measure of employment and revenue. While I do not advocate that any drastic steps should be taken during the war, I feel that it is only a matter of time when it will be recognized that the trapping industry is against the best interests of the district in which it is carried out.

REFRACTORY LANDS.

Another matter to which very serious attention will have to be given as soon as conditions permit is the development of the more difficult lands of the Dominion, such as the pumice areas in the middle district of the North Island, the gum lands of the Auckland District, the immense montane tussock areas in the South Island, and the pakihi lands of Westland. Some work has already been done in connection with these huge areas of comparatively unproductive country, but the matter undoubtedly warrants more thorough investigation than has yet been found practicable.