

Wool-scouring Arrangements.

In conjunction with the Advisory Committee, arrangements were made by the Department of Imperial Government Supplies for the scouring of wool purchased on behalf of the Imperial Government as required. District Supplies Committees were set up by the Government at Auckland, Wanganui, Wellington (to include Nelson and Marlborough), Gisborne, Napier, Christchurch, Timaru, Dunedin (to include Oamaru), and Invercargill, whose duties were to collect information from time to time regarding the quantities of wool available for scouring in brokers' stores within their respective districts; also to receive from registered wool-scourers applications for wool for scouring, and to recommend to the Controller of the Department of Imperial Government Supplies the allocation of wool in certain quantities to such registered scourers, and to furnish information of matters of importance appearing in reports of Government Inspectors of Wool-scouring Works, such reports to be reviewed by the Committee from time to time.

Scourers were required to sort, classify, scour, and dry and pack the wool to be treated by them, and their remuneration was fixed on the following scale: 1½d. per pound for fleeces on scoured weights; 1¾d. per pound for pieces, bellies, locks, stained pieces, and second pieces, on scoured weights; ¼d. per pound advance on each class for merino wool. Payment to be made within fourteen days upon receipt by the Department of Imperial Government Supplies, of the Inspectors' and valuers' certificates in duplicate.

Slip Wool from Freezing Companies.

The Imperial Government having expressed a desire to purchase the slip wool produced at freezing-works, a conference between the Minister and representatives of freezing companies was held on the 2nd December, 1916, when proposals were submitted for the sale to the Imperial Government of all slip wool held by freezing companies in store in the Dominion on the 16th November, 1916, or produced thereafter during the year ending 15th November, 1917, on the basis of the values received in London for the year 1st January to 31st December, 1914, plus 55 per cent. On the 29th December the Imperial Government agreed to this proposal with the exception of that relating to the fixing of the price, considering that the value should be based on the period 1st August, 1913, to 31st July, 1914.

Subsequent negotiations resulted in the Imperial Government agreeing that the price of the slip wool produced up to the 30th June, 1917, should be based on the values obtained in London during the period 1st January, 1914, to 31st December, 1914, and that the price of the slip wool produced from the 1st July, 1917, to the 15th November, 1917, should be based on the values obtained in London during the period 1st August, 1913, to 31st July, 1914.

No agreement has yet been completed between the freezing companies and the New Zealand Government acting on behalf of the Imperial Government, but this matter is now receiving attention.

Pending formal completion, payment of the 75 per cent. of the value due on delivery in store in New Zealand has been authorized by the Minister in charge, and in accordance with the proposed arrangements the balance due will be paid when the actual value has been ascertained by valuation at that point.

To the 31st March, 1917, advances totalling £49,326 had been made against 1,623 bales.

SKINS AND HIDES.

Purchase of Sheep-skins.

By Order in Council dated 29th January, 1917, the export of sheep-skins and pelts from the Dominion was prohibited, and brokers were appointed, as in the case of wool, and the purchase of the skins under conditions somewhat