

concerned, in the face of great difficulties caused by the scarcity of requisite plant and material, is a matter for real congratulation. The freezing companies, associated dairy companies, and other parties have shown commendable self-reliance in financing these undertakings, but where necessary the Government has given financial assistance on easy terms. Granted a supply of shipping equal to that of the past year, our primary industries should be able to maintain production fairly normally in the ensuing season, but various precautionary measures have been studied in case of emergency. Farmers also should in all cases endeavour to put themselves on the safe side as regards their stock by raising ample auxiliary fodder crops.

I cannot leave the subject of shipping without recording a tribute to the splendid work of the Navy in keeping open our vital trade communications, and to the dogged fortitude of the mercantile marine in carrying on regardless of dangers. Our debt to the sea services of the Empire both nationally and economically can never be overstated.

Agricultural development and increased production will undoubtedly be the country's main concern after the war, and our best knowledge and energies must be directed to the task. A great strengthening of the scientific and instructional staffs of the Department of Agriculture is called for in this connection. Such measures as comprehensive soil-surveys must be pushed on, the supply of fertilizers and lime better organized, the noxious-weeds problem dealt with comprehensively, the rabbit pest tackled radically. "Better farming" and "more farming" must withal be accompanied by measures for better communications, better roads, better housing for farm-workers, and other facilities which will increase the attractiveness and amenities of rural life, and draw population to the country. Advice to the less-experienced soldier settlers, who may be expected to number thousands in the near future, is another activity which falls naturally to this Department. The provision of training facilities for ex-soldiers qualifying to take up land also calls for action.

A great and increasing responsibility thus rests upon the authorities and their advisers. Co-operation between all Government Departments concerned (Agriculture, Lands, Education, and any administration dealing directly with repatriation), local bodies, and farmers' organizations, together with co-ordination of the various activities, will be required in special degree. The Board of Agriculture, which has been doing valuable service in studying many rural questions, will doubtless find a still larger scope for its functions in connection with after-war measures.

Like the farming community itself, the Department of Agriculture has had to "carry on" during the period under review much handicapped by staff difficulties due to war conditions. Nevertheless most of its various services and activities have been maintained in a very creditable degree. An account of the Department's work in all branches is given in the reports of the Secretary and other heads which follow.

W. D. S. MACDONALD.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRIES, AND COMMERCE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1918.

Wellington, 15th July, 1918.

The Hon. Minister of Agriculture, and of Industries and Commerce.

I BEG to submit the annual reports of the Department for the year ended 31st March last.

The continuance of the war throughout the period has precluded any great forward movement, but practically the whole of the services have been maintained in spite of the steadily increasing difficulties.

The following are the salient points of the appended reports as regards departmental activities :—

LIVE-STOCK DIVISION.

The control of animal-disease called for a normal amount of action during the year. To more effectively cope with blackleg in the Auckland District the declared affected area was considerably extended. This has greatly increased the work of inoculation and preparation of vaccine, but the results have been satisfactory. Experimental work with a preventive vaccine for contagious abortion of dairy cows was carried on, but has not yet reached a definite stage as regards results. A slight increase has again taken place in tuberculosis among cattle and pigs, as disclosed by inspection at slaughter. The Inspectors of Stock have devoted much of their time to following up this trouble on the farms, and it is hoped to deal with it to a still greater extent during the present year. Experimental work in bush sickness on new lines has been commenced, and when the general situation is more normal closer attention will, it is hoped, enable useful results to be obtained. What might be termed a mild scare was caused in the North Auckland district by an abnormal occurrence of ticks on cattle, horses, &c. These ticks are identified as distinct from the Queensland cattle-tick, and tick fever has never been present in New Zealand; moreover, importation of cattle from affected countries