

made latterly, but meat-stocks continued to accumulate, touching a record figure in this respect. While the position reached a critical stage, it was fortunately found possible to complete the meat-freezing season without any serious dislocation of the industry. There is reason to fear that, owing to inadequate shipping, more or less congestion will prevail for some time to come, and the opinion seems to be gaining ground that another extension of the Imperial purchase, for a period enabling a practical clearance of stocks, would be in the interests of the industry. During the year a better supply of non-refrigerated tonnage enabled good shipments to be made of accumulations of freezing-works by-products, such as tallow and pelts. Wool was also lifted steadily.

A marked feature of present-day agricultural and pastoral conditions lies in the exceptionally high land-values existing, especially in some North Island districts. This provides food for serious thought. It is certainly time that a halt was called, and, notwithstanding the productivity of the better-class land of the Dominion, those investing their resources in it need to have regard to the conditions which may exist in the near future, and realize that undue encouragement of land-gambling is detrimental to the best interests of the farming community.

Agricultural development in all its ramifications must undoubtedly be the Dominion's chief concern for many years to come. Better knowledge, methods and practice, extended resources and facilities, and greater amenities of rural life, all call for study and practical action. Such factors combined with activity in land-settlement—by breaking in new country, developing the potential resources of the poorer unoccupied lands, and further subdivision and improvement of older areas—cannot fail to immensely stimulate production. The Department of Agriculture recognizes its great responsibilities in this respect, and its duty to give a sound lead wherever required. The necessity for co-ordination with other State Departments—Education, Repatriation, Lands, and Forestry—concerned more or less with other parts of the same great field, is also realized. Good understandings have been established with these authorities, and working arrangements are being evolved to avoid overlapping and secure sound results. With regard to returned soldiers, the Department is working in close co-operation with the Repatriation Department, both as regards instruction upon the State farms and joint effort upon special farms established for training purposes. The Board of Agriculture—whose continued valuable advisory assistance is here cordially acknowledged—will also find ample scope for work in connection with questions of post-war agricultural development.

Among the Department's independent activities one line of action which promises excellent results is that of district experimental and demonstrational farms, established and administered by local committees of farmers, &c., under the supervision of and subsidized by the Department. By this means local problems and conditions can be dealt with to the best advantage, co-operation in effort is given full play, and the sustained interest of those concerned is assured. Moreover, the system can be carried out at a relatively small cost. Another means of promoting efficiency and increased production lies in the establishment of a body of agricultural instructors or advisers—men combining scientific training with sound knowledge of farming. The nucleus of such an organization has been formed in the Department, and will be supplemented as rapidly as circumstances allow. Dealing with the younger generation of the countryside—the farmers of the near future—an early development of the system of juvenile cropping and live-stock competitions is projected. Here co-operation between the educational authorities and this Department would be involved.

In regard to the affairs of the Department itself, certain important changes were effected during the year. It was considered desirable by the Government that the position of permanent head should be held by an officer possessing both practical and scientific qualifications. In accordance with this decision the position of Secretary of Agriculture was abolished, and a chief administrative position of Director-General created. Dr. C. J. Reakes, D.V.Sc., M.R.C.V.S., then Director of the Live-stock Division, was appointed to the Director-Generalship, while Mr. F. S. Pope, who had held the position of Secretary, became Assistant Director-General. At the same time a scheme of reorganization, affecting chiefly the Fields