

1926.
NEW ZEALAND.

BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

(REPORT OF THE) FOR THE YEAR 1925-26.

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

SIR,—

Board of Agriculture, Wellington, 20th August, 1926.

I have pleasure in submitting the following brief report of the work of the Board of Agriculture for the year ended 30th April last, and in so doing desire to place on record the Board's appreciation of the assistance it has at all times received from the Director-General of Agriculture and other responsible officers of the Department when matters of a technical nature have been under consideration.

Messrs. E. Averill (Hawke's Bay) and J. H. Perrett (Manawatu) decided, for private reasons, not to seek re-election for their respective districts. These gentlemen have served on the Board for some years, and their decision was received with regret by their colleagues on the Board, who greatly appreciate the services which they have rendered during their term of office.

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION.

The Board since its inception has taken active steps to further agricultural education and bring before the authorities the work of the farming community on this subject. The fact, therefore, that Government has decided to bring down a Bill to establish an agricultural college is most gratifying. In the report the Board presented to you on this subject it made many practical suggestions as to the system of education in primary and secondary schools in order to assist in the work of preparing those who would like to go further in an agricultural course, and also to see that the schoolmasters should have special knowledge to help this forward. The Board, therefore, hopes the Minister of Education will give effect to the recommendations contained in that report.

ANNUAL SHEEP RETURNS.

For some years past the annual sheep returns have been taken as at 30th April, but an alteration of the date to the 30th June was recently urged by the New Zealand Sheepowners' Federation. The reasons submitted by the Federation in support of the proposed alteration were as follows:—

- (1.) That whereas the 30th April was satisfactory under old conditions, the cutting-up of estates and the development of the freezing industry had changed the position entirely, and at that date it was impossible to give an accurate return of sheep to be carried over the winter:
- (2.) That the present returns do not give an accurate record of the carrying-capacity of the farms:
- (3.) That the freezing-works did not close until the end of June:
- (4.) That in the back country of the South Island the rams are not put in with the ewes until well into May:
- (5.) That large numbers of sheep are bought or sold after the 30th April:
- (6.) That mustering was not always finished by the end of April.

The Department reported that the proposal to alter the date had been made on several occasions, three dates having been advanced—viz., 30th April, December or January, and 31st July—but that it had consistently advocated the retention of the present date, 30th April, on the following grounds:—

- (a.) In December or January shearing has not ceased in the South Island, and after this date there is a stragglers muster which accounts for a large number of woolly sheep.