

IMPERIAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE, LONDON, 1927.

REPORT OF THE NEW ZEALAND DELEGATES.

THE HON. THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE.

Wellington, 14th June, 1928.

We have the honour to submit the following report on the Imperial Agricultural Conference :—

Recognizing the profound influence which agriculture is destined to play in the future in the promotion of the prosperity of the Empire and the happiness of its people, the Governments of Great Britain and of the Dominions have tried earnestly since the conclusion of the war to improve the status of agriculture in their respective countries. The importance of surveying the problems of agriculture throughout the Empire, of co-ordinating research work, of effecting a better utilization of the results of research, and of training efficient workers was recommended by the Imperial Conference of 1926 for the sympathetic consideration of the respective Governments of the Empire.

It was therefore not surprising that with the advent of the Empire Marketing Board and the stimulus given to agricultural research by its efforts the invitation of the British Ministry of Agriculture to the Dominions, Crown colonies, and dependencies, to send delegates to an Imperial Agricultural Conference in England met with ready acceptance from all parts of the Empire.

No effort was spared by the Ministry of Agriculture or the Empire Marketing Board, which defrayed the cost of all secretarial work and of the entertainment of delegates in England, to make the Conference in the highest degree successful. The Governments of the Dominions and the Colonial Office contributed in no small measure to the success by sending their representatives to attend the Conference and take part in its proceedings. The Conference was supported whole-heartedly by the agricultural-research stations of Great Britain, and every facility was granted overseas delegates to inspect the work which was being carried out and to discuss with the scientific staffs at these stations problems of mutual interest.

Too much stress cannot be laid on the value to agriculture which accrued from the opportunities thus afforded delegates of meeting one another and of discussing their work. In many cases it was realized, in some cases for the first time, that workers in other parts of the Empire were investigating similar or allied problems. Frequently a new approach to a particular problem resulted from the discussions which took place.

THE WORK OF THE CONFERENCE.

Early in the proceedings of the Conference it was clearly recognized that matters of broad policy affecting the development of agriculture in every part of the Empire deserved special consideration by the Conference as a whole. Such questions as follow were all matters of great importance to every part of the Empire, and were considered in detail by the Conference :—

- (1) The establishment of Imperial bureaux and information centres for various branches of agricultural science.
- (2) The collection and dissemination of information on agricultural problems throughout the Empire.
- (3) The desirability of creating special research stations for the investigation of particular problems.
- (4) The recruitment and training of agricultural workers.
- (5) The establishment of permanent machinery which could conduct the secretarial work of the Conference and of other conferences which might be arranged in the future.

Specialist Commissions of technical and research officers met during the course of the Conference to consider the needs of agricultural research in different branches of agricultural science. Many valuable recommendations were submitted by these Commissions to the Conference.

Among the important matters which were considered in detail by the Administrative Commissions of the Conference, those relating to (1) the dissemination of information, and (2) the creation of Imperial bureaux and information centres were of great importance to all the Dominions.

In the past, agricultural officers in the Dominions have been dependent to a very large extent on the fundamental knowledge which has been gained by many famous research stations in Great Britain and Europe, often by prolonged and deep research, and Dominion workers have effected a practical solution of many problems confronting the agriculture of their countries by the application of such fundamental knowledge to their own particular conditions. While it is highly desirable that the value of fundamental research should receive the fullest recognition, direct attacks upon the great economic problems of agriculture in the Dominions must remain for many years the prime consideration of our workers. In the solution of such Dominion problems specific fundamental research will frequently be required, but the efficient application of existing knowledge must constitute the first line of attack.

In many cases it will be found that Dominion workers who are in touch with the progress of fundamental research in Great Britain and other countries will be able to suggest a practical solution of the problem confronting them. Full success in the solution of economic problems, however, is not likely to be obtained unless well-trained officers are available who keep abreast of the development of research work in other countries.