

NEW ZEALAND LEMONS.

During the last seven or eight years comparatively large areas of land in the Kerikeri district of the Bay of Islands have been laid down in citrus fruit, principally lemons. Many men from overseas have been attracted to Kerikeri by its genial climate and fertile soil, but the incidence of the world's depression soon after they had taken up their holdings there has made it very difficult for them to make good. Their orchards are now, however, coming into bearing, and a steadily increasing revenue from these orchards is now in sight. A number of settlers have formed a Co-operative Association and have approached the Government for financial assistance in establishing a packing plant in the district for the purpose of grading and curing the lemon crop, which is now beginning to come forward in bulk quantities, and for the purpose of organizing the marketing of the fruit on sound business lines.

At the end of the financial year this matter was still under consideration, the Department being engaged in an investigation to ascertain the resources of the district in the way of lemons and oranges now bearing and coming into bearing.

NEW ZEALAND GRAPEFRUIT.

A commercial survey of the New Zealand grapefruit industry was made during the past year, and the inquiry brought to light the fact that in this little-known fruit we have an asset of very substantial value to the community. This tree is certainly the hardiest of all citrus varieties in the Dominion, and has been successfully established over a considerable portion of the North Island, including the Bay of Plenty district, and as far south as Gisborne and Hastings, and is more resistant to frost than any of the lemons or sweet oranges. The Department of Scientific and Industrial Research has in hand the investigation of the merits of the type of grapefruit at present produced, and it is hoped to obtain information that will lead to its taking an important place in the dietary of the people.

ANGORA-RABBIT WOOL.

The production of Angora-rabbit wool in the Dominion is stationary, and the industry is suffering from the effects of a limited demand in the United Kingdom, together with a weakness in prices. Owing to the precarious nature of the market, the Bank of New Zealand ceased making advances on wool consigned to English mills, and the failure of this support has made it even more difficult for those engaged in the industry to carry on.

This comparatively new industry is of value in providing, under suitable conditions, partial employment to people engaged on small holdings.

GAS REGULATIONS.

The Board of Trade (Gas) Regulations, which are administered by the Department, provide safeguards in respect to calorific value, purity, pressure, measurement, and price. Nineteen gas undertakings in the Dominion come within the scope of the regulations.

The work of the Gas Examiners and Inspectors of Meters has been carried out efficiently during the year, and official relations with the gas companies and municipal undertakings have, without exception, continued to remain most satisfactory.

COMMERCIAL TRUSTS ACT, 1910.

Briefly it may be said that the Commercial Trusts Act prohibits the giving of concessions, &c., in consideration of exclusive dealing, prohibits refusals to deal if such refusals arise for certain reasons, prohibits sales at unreasonably high prices where such prices have been fixed or influenced in any way by a commercial trust, and provides in general terms against monopolies which are of such a nature as to be contrary to public interest.

A number of complaints have been made to the Department from time to time that the provisions of the Act were being infringed, and in each case these have been followed by full investigation by the Department into the nature and circumstances of the alleged breaches. These complaints have related principally to alleged refusals to supply certain commodities, and to the fixation of prices of commodities covered by the Schedule to the Act.

In recent years a good deal of price-cutting has taken place in connection with the sale of some of the classes of commodities covered by the Act, and there have been many requests for the repeal or amendment of the Act in order to provide a greater measure of freedom to traders in regard to fixing the price of the commodities in which they are dealing. By the Finance Act (No. 2), 1933, Parliament removed tobacco, cigars, and cigarettes from the operations of the Act.

The Act is still necessary as a safeguard to the public and to business men against harmful commercial practices, its importance lying in its restraining influence rather than in its actual direct enforcement through the Courts of law.

A further amendment to the Act was brought down last session. This followed the line of stating that it would be a sufficient defence for a person charged with an offence under section 3 (relating to the granting of illegal concessions in consideration of exclusive dealing) and section 4 (relating to illegal refusals to deal) if he could prove—

- (a) That his act was not prejudicial to any industry carried on in New Zealand ;
- (b) That his act was not prejudicial to public welfare ; and
- (c) That his act was not unfair or of a nature that it would, if commonly practised or repeated, be unfair to other interests.

The amending Bill was not passed.