

LINEN FLAX

During the past year activities have been concentrated upon the consolidation and stimulation of production in the seventeen factories operating under the control of the Department, with the result that over 1,900 tons of line fibre and 1,150 tons of tow were produced, making a total of over 4,000 tons of line fibre and 2,200 tons of tow which has been made available to Great Britain and local manufacturers since the inception of the industry.

Production of seed during the year for the manufacture of linseed-oil and cattle cake, after making necessary reservation for resowing, totals 3,500 tons, which has made it possible to keep the linseed-oil factory up to full production.

In view of the increasing demand for various types of tow as a substitute for *Phormium tenax* for upholstery purposes and fibrous-plaster manufacturers, &c., an attempt has been made to standardize these products. With this object in view a new research station and by-products factory has been established at Washdyke, where progress is being made in the development of machinery for scutching tow rug and the conversion of otherwise waste products into upholsters' tow, and the production of a new short-staple product to be marketed under the trade name of "Linwool," which has been favourably reported on as a substitute for hair in the manufacture of under-felts.

A visit of inspection of the operations of the industry in Australia was made during the year, when mutual problems were discussed and ideas exchanged. A trial is being made of the Australian method of dual harvesting, which provides for the heading and spreading of the crop for dew retting in the one operation, which is proving satisfactory under Australian conditions. Wherever possible the harvesting of crop has been undertaken with factory labour, as opposed to the contract system, which, it is considered, will result in further economies in this operation. The present labour complement is 930, comprised of 723 male and 207 female workers.

1942-43 Season.—From the area of 21,849 acres sown, 17,487 acres, or 80.05 per cent., was accepted for line fibre, 40 acres, or 0.18 per cent., purchased for conversion into tow, together producing approximately 33,500 tons of crop, which, with the carry over of 15,874 tons for 1941-42 season, made a total of 49,374 tons available for processing. An area of 3,997 acres, or 18.3 per cent., was rejected for fibre and harvested for seed, while 324 acres, or 1.48 per cent., proved failures. During the year a total of approximately 29,000 tons was retted, leaving a carry over of 20,374 tons to process with 1943-44 crop.

1943-44 Season.—In view of the substantial carry over from previous season's crop, it was found necessary to make substantial reductions in acreages sown in certain districts, which, with the late season and abnormal weather conditions, reduced the total area sown to 9,615 acres, estimated to produce 12,342 tons of crop. In North Canterbury the severe drought conditions experienced during the growing season seriously affected linen flax in common with all other crops, and those factories dependent on supply from these areas will be unable to maintain production at full capacity.

LIBRARY AND PUBLICITY

The scope and activity of the departmental library have been considerably widened during the past year. The greatly extended development of the work of the Department, the research undertaken, and the information supplied have covered a wide diversity of subjects.

Due to the extension of New Zealand's relationships with the United States, and to enable up-to-date information to be available relating to economic and political trends overseas, several additional periodicals have been procured, in addition to official documents and newsletters forwarded by the overseas offices of the Department.

The library has acted as a clearing-house for the dissemination of information to many other State Departments, and has co-operated fully with the New Zealand Libraries Association, the Country Library Service, the General Assembly Library, and individual public libraries in procuring and furnishing information. Assistance was also given in the compilation of the cumulative book index, whereby it is possible for librarians to know what books are available and what books can be procured or should be purchased.

The technological side of the library has been extended by the accretion of new books, and an excellent variety of material is available on plastics, electrical practices, and factory layout and administration.

As in past years, close liaison has been maintained with the United States Legation and the offices of overseas Consuls for the exchange of data. Library reciprocal courtesies have been built up with the Library of Congress and the Library of the Department of Commerce and Foreign Trade, Washington, D.C. During the year a closer liaison was created with the acting Canadian Government Trade Commissioner in Auckland, to our mutual benefit.

As mentioned in our last report, the facilities of the library were offered to the New Zealand Manufacturers' Federation and its constituent associations. The New Zealand Employers' Federation sought a similar privilege, and this was granted. Full use has been made of the service, and information relating to printing has been supplied to Dunedin as also has advice regarding a technical difficulty in the manufacture of chocolate for tropical use. Publications have also been made available to herd-testing associations in Auckland, and units of the radio industry have been furnished with information.