

RURAL DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

REPORT OF P. W. SMALLFIELD, DIRECTOR

The Division was formed on 1st December, 1944, but as only a few months elapsed before the close of the financial year this report will deal with the set-up of the Division and the plans made for the ensuing year.

In recent years it has become more and more evident throughout the world that the success of the agriculture of any country does not depend merely on its soils and climate and the technical efficiency of its farmers, with which work the Department has been primarily concerned in the past. It has been gradually realized that agricultural economics and the sociological aspects of farming are equally important and play their part in determining the success or failure of our agricultural industries.

The Department had previously endeavoured to cope with the economic situation through a small Farm Economics and Statistical Section; the sociological aspect remained a virgin field, apart from a few investigations in rural areas by other Departments. The setting-up of the Organization for National Development by the Government, however, showed quite clearly that a full divisional organization would be necessary to cope with the post-war problems.

STAFF

Some difficulty was experienced in securing a complete qualified staff to handle the new activity, but a nucleus was formed with a Director, Assistant Rural Economist, Senior Investigational Officer, three Field Economists, three Rural Sociologists, a General Assistant, and a Machinery Officer. The office staff comprised mainly the Statistical Section, which was transferred from the Accounts Division.

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Through this Committee, of which the Minister of Agriculture is the Chairman and which includes producers' and employees' representatives, the Department maintains close co-operation with the Organization for National Development, which was formed during the year for the purpose of concentrating on all problems associated with post-war reconstruction and long-range planning of the Dominion's economy. The Division supplies the secretariat for the Committee, and is thus able to provide research staff to collect and tabulate data to enable the Committee to submit recommendations on such problems as the following, which are at present under consideration :—

- Agricultural import requirements in the immediate post-war years.
- Lime industry.
- Co-operative farm machinery pools.
- Scope for expansion of poultry-keeping; beekeeping; citrus, pip, and stone fruits; and market gardening.
- Scope for expansion of production of butter, cheese, meat, wool, and seeds.

FARM MANAGEMENT SURVEYS

Actual survey work was not commenced during the year, though plans have now been made to undertake the following work as soon as possible :—

- Collection of data on the relationship of prices and the volume of production of various commodities.
- Irrigation.
- Grass- and clover-seed production.
- The problem of wintering-off dairy cows from Hauraki Plains and Northern Wairoa farms.
- Chilled-beef and fat-lamb production.
- Small holdings based on ten to twelve cows with a sideline such as poultry, garden or orchard to bring income up to a living wage.
- Probable trends in New Zealand farming.

RURAL SOCIOLOGY

This venture is into a field that is practically unexplored in New Zealand, and it is confidently expected that the work planned will be of great value to the rural community. The main object will be to develop better living conditions in the country and to co-ordinate the farm gardening and sideline undertakings with the requirements of the farmer's home.

The following aspects of rural living have been selected for the early attention of the rural sociologists :—

- Farm home.
- Home management.
- Nutrition and food production.
- Clothing of the family.
- Rural family life.
- Rural community life.

Research and investigation in co-operation with existing rural organizations will be commenced as soon as possible to obtain factual data on New Zealand conditions to form a basis of the extension work. A farm housing survey will be undertaken in selected districts shortly.