

The matter of co-ordination with other Departments of State in matters where their activities touch those of the Department of Agriculture—particularly as regards the Education Department—has been well advanced during the year. Conferences held between those responsible should result in still closer touch being maintained in the future. The question of higher agricultural education is receiving careful attention, one of the central objectives being the early establishment of a fully equipped State agricultural college for the Dominion, together with other institutions for training lads specially in the practical work of the farm.

In regard to this Department itself, the various services have worked smoothly during the first complete year under the reorganization effected in 1918, although the scheme remains to be completed in certain directions. The strength on the more strictly scientific side, and in fully trained agricultural instructors, is not yet up to requirements. In considerations of staff it has to be realized that although our population is relatively small we have a country to deal with almost as large as the British Isles. The volume of work connected with a soil-survey, for instance, relates almost entirely to area, not to population.

I would conclude this brief review with an expression of appreciation of the year's work carried out by the staff of the Department in its various branches. With a continuance of high conceptions and faithful execution of duty the future must be fruitful of great result.

W. NOSWORTHY, Minister of Agriculture.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF AGRICULTURE.

The Hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Wellington, 15th July, 1920.

I BEG to submit the following report of the work of the Department during the year ended 31st March last:—

The period has been marked by a further development of the operations of the Department in meeting the growing requirements for the expansion and the improvement of the pastoral and agricultural industries in their various branches. The scheme of re-organization adopted in 1918 and gradually brought into operation is proving satisfactory in working, thanks to the good spirit shown by all concerned. One of the most important features of the scheme lay in the amalgamation of rabbit and noxious-weed inspection with stock-inspection, together with a system of district control. The large division thus constituted is doing good work in carrying out its onerous and, at times, difficult duties.

That branch of the Department's service dealing with agricultural experimental and demonstrational work (both on State farms and smaller areas), and with agricultural instruction and general advice to agriculturists, has shown marked development, one feature being the appointment of three trained instructors, who, together with the capable and reliable officers already engaged in this work, now form a nucleus from which an instructional service capable of supplying the needs of the Dominion should quickly develop, provided the necessary supply of suitable men can be secured. At the present time the agricultural instructional staff is located with headquarters at Auckland, Wellington, Wanganui, Christchurch, Dunedin, and Hokitika respectively, the officer stationed at Wellington having Nelson and Marlborough included in his district. Associated with three of the principal Instructors are student assistants who are going through a university course in agriculture, and who will in due course become available for instructional work in the Department after their university studies have been completed. Meanwhile they act as assistants to the Instructors in their spare time. In the work of agricultural instruction cordial co-operation has existed between this Department and the Education Department, thus enabling better results to be attained than might otherwise have been the case.

As regards the larger experimental farms, particularly Weraroa and Moumahaki, some change in the methods of working has been adopted, with a result that though more expenditure has been incurred in the purchase of stock, the receipts have practically counterbalanced the outlay. Weraroa, as a matter of fact, would have shown a useful surplus were it not that very considerable expenditure has been incurred in improvements, particularly in fencing. Ruakura has still further developed its educational activities, and necessarily suffered in its immediate revenue-earning capacity. At the same time the educational work done there must be admitted to be of great value to the Dominion. On the smaller farm areas the special feature of the work has been the application of scientific knowledge to practical farming-work, and the demonstrational results attained have, it is trusted, been of value to the farmers in the districts surrounding each area.

There is a persistent demand for the establishment of more State experimental farms, but this requires to be met cautiously. It is undoubtedly necessary to do what is possible to meet the very evident desire of the agricultural and pastoral community for more information and more advice on matters bearing on the further development of these industries and on the increase of production, but this can be done without unduly multiplying Government farms. A commencement is being made with the demonstration farm arranged to be established in the West Coast District of the South Island. The possibilities of this portion of the Dominion for dairying, and from a pastoral point of view generally, are very considerable, and the establishment of a demonstration farm there should prove of practical value to the district and, indirectly, to the country as a whole. Special consideration is also being given to the question of a farm for the southern portion of the South Island.