

NAURU AND OCEAN ISLANDS PHOSPHATE.

In connection with the use of this fertilizer, I advised the Board that it came to my notice that some top-dressing experiments with very finely ground phosphate rock derived from Nauru and Ocean Islands were being carried out in Victoria with good results. A sample of the material was secured, and handed for examination to Mr. B. C. Aston, Agricultural Chemist, who reported that it was much finer than any phosphate used in New Zealand, and would pass through a sieve of 120 meshes to the inch. The phosphate in the sample was, therefore, in a much more available form than that on the market in this country. The Board was of opinion that a sufficient quantity of the material should be secured for the purpose of carrying out experiments, which should be conducted under the supervision of the Department of Agriculture. Dr. Reakes stated he would be pleased to give effect to the Board's recommendation, and would furnish reports in due course of the results of such experiments as might be determined upon.

ROYAL AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND.

A letter was received from the secretary of the society stating that the constitution of the Royal Agricultural Society of New Zealand permitted of the Board of Agriculture nominating two of its members to sit on the council of the society, and asking that two appointees be chosen. The Board has selected Messrs. D. W. Westenra (Dunsandel) and D. Marshall (Waianiwa) to represent it.

BUSH-SICKNESS INVESTIGATION.

An outline of the progress made and of the work at present being carried on at the Department's experimental farm at Mamaku was furnished to the Board by Dr. Reakes and Mr. B. C. Aston, Agricultural Chemist. It was noted with satisfaction that the developments on the farm, both as regards the maintenance of live-stock and the improvements made, were very satisfactory. Mr. Aston, who is dealing with the chemistry side of the investigation, in co-operation with the Live-stock Division, stated that the results which have been so far arrived at were gratifying, and the current work was holding out prospects of a still further advance in the knowledge possessed regarding bush sickness and the methods to be adopted in order to overcome it. After receiving this information the Board expressed its satisfaction at the progress which has been made.

DEPARTMENTAL FARMS AND EXPERIMENTAL PLOTS.

Balance-sheets of the various farms under the control of the Department of Agriculture were submitted for the Board's consideration, and were reviewed. Each farm was taken separately, and suggestions made in regard to future policy of each. In addition the following resolution was passed in regard to the large farms:—

“In the opinion of the Board the time has arrived when the future policy of the large State farms should be dealt with. Some have served their original purpose, and, unless put to some other use (notably the education of future farmers) of a public benefit, their continuance upon present lines is not warranted. At the same time, the Board appreciates the improved financial position of these farms, as compared with an earlier period.”

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION.

Mr. A. E. V. Richardson, Superintendent of Agriculture, Victoria, paid a visit to the Dominion during 1923, and submitted a report to the New Zealand University Senate on agricultural education in New Zealand.

The University Senate referred the report to the Board for its consideration and comments, and the matter received earnest attention, a comprehensive reply being sent to the Senate.

Since the foregoing was written, in October, 1923, the establishment of a Chair of Agriculture at the Victoria University, Wellington, has been proceeded with, and the appointment of a professor has been made in the person of Mr. G. S. Peren, B.Sc. Agric., Toronto University. The conditions of the trust fund created by Sir Walter Buchanan for the establishment of a Chair of Agriculture required that the selection of a professor had to be approved by the Board. All applications for the position were first submitted to a special and fully qualified selection committee which had been set up in England. This committee communicated its recommendation through the High Commissioner for New Zealand, London, to the University authorities. This information, along with the papers of the various applicants, was made available to the Board, and a special meeting was held to deal with the matter. The relative merits of the various applicants were thoroughly discussed, and the Board decided to endorse the recommendation of the selection committee. This decision was communicated to the Victoria College Council, with whom the final selection rested.

MATRICULATION EXAMINATION.

The question of the Matriculation Examination in regard to those students who were studying higher agriculture was again brought up. The Board has formerly made representation to the University Senate, suggesting that the Senate eliminate the necessity for such students having to take a foreign language in the examination and substitute an agricultural subject. The Senate advised that the Board's recommendation could not be given effect to; but, in view of the importance of the question, it was decided to again approach the Senate on the matter.