

# LABOUR FOR THE COMING HARVEST



Message from the **Hon. B. Roberts**, Minister of Agriculture.

"The war is over and we are all delighted, but this fact has not lessened our problems nor our responsibilities, for food supplies are in great demand to feed a stricken world. The harvesting of hay, silage, wheat, oats, as well as all other crops, will soon be upon us, and the Government, as well as farmers, realises the necessity for sufficient labour for this harvest. We will not be able to obtain army labour as we have done before and therefore, must now develop a national voluntary effort to ensure the harvesting of these vital food supplies. I want the farmers, many of whom are associated with co-operative concerns, and the people who are in the towns and cities of the Dominion, to co-operate voluntarily to organise individuals or groups for harvesting work at the weekends and during holidays.

Let us unite town and country by combining work on farms with holidays and pleasure, and let us all reap a rich and abundant harvest. Do your part by volunteering through your nearest Primary Production Council."

*B. Roberts*

Primary Production Councils are located in the following towns in the North Island: **Auckland Province:** Auckland, Dargaville, Gisborne, Hamilton, Kaitaia, Kaikohe, Matamata, Rotorua, Thames, Tauranga, Taumarunui, Te Kuiti, Whakatane, Warkworth, Whangarei. **Taranaki:** Hawera, New Plymouth, Stratford. **Hawke's Bay:** Dannevirke, Hastings, Wairoa. **Wellington Province:** Masterton, Palmerston North, Wellington, Wanganui.

Primary Production Councils are located in the following towns in the South Island: **Nelson Province:** Nelson. **Marlborough:** Blenheim, Kaikoura. **Canterbury:** Ashburton, Christchurch, Timaru. **Westland:** Greymouth. **Otago:** Alexandra, Dunedin, Oamaru. **Southland:** Gore, Invercargill.

## LEND A HAND WITH THE HARVEST

Issued by The New Zealand Department of Agriculture

EIS.A26

be replaced, as patching of lucerne by subsequent sowing is seldom successful.

### Time of Cutting

Depending on soil and climatic conditions, two to six cuts may be obtained over the growing period, extending from spring to late autumn. Some growth should, however, be left to come away after the last cut. Time of cutting depends not on flowering, which varies with each cut, but on the appearance of young shoots coming away from the crowns of the lucerne plants. At this stage the old growth is at peak quality and quantity, but will deteriorate if cutting is delayed, while the young shoots growing up in the old growth will be spindly and cut back by the mower.

It is obvious, therefore, that the period for harvesting each cut is rather limited and restricts the area of lucerne that can be conveniently handled on a property. Harvesting frequently clashes with seasonal work, such as shearing, and cannot be put off for a week, as is the case with a clover crop, which, if necessary, may be utilised for grazing.

As the first cut of lucerne is usually weedy and harvested at an unreliable period for haymaking, particularly in the North Island, it is suitably made into silage, while later cuts, if weather permits, are mostly converted into hay. Conditions over the growing season are generally more favourable for haymaking in the South Island, and grass competition also presents less of a problem. Prime lucerne hay, being high in protein, has proved very valuable as a winter feed supplement to root crops in the south, where lucerne growing is rapidly increasing in popularity.

### Harvesting

Lucerne is probably the most difficult of crops to cure as hay. Wind drying rather than sun drying transpires the moisture from the stems through the leaves, which remain green in well-cured hay. Sun drying with too rapid evaporation of moisture results in exposed leaves drying out prematurely and dropping off before the moisture is drawn from the stems. Unless turned, loss may be high and drying very uneven.

Weather conditions at time of cutting influence treatment, but usually it is wise to side-rake the crop into loose windrows, rather than leave in the swath. The time in the windrow is very variable in different localities and for different periods of the harvesting season. Under very good conditions lucerne may be windrowed after about 8 to 24 hours and baled only 24 to 48 hours after cutting. For hay to be fit for stacking or baling no moisture should appear when it is twisted tightly. If the baler does