

N.Z. WOOL QUALITY AND MARKETS

Secretariat Chairman's Review

I AM not pessimistic about the future of any wool; there is no substitute for wool, but we must keep up a world-wide programme of promotion and development," said Dr. Edgar Booth, chairman of the International Wool Secretariat, in a message to New Zealand sheep farmers after his recent visit to this country as the guest of the New Zealand Wool Board. "We have a good article," said Dr. Booth, "but even good articles are challenged and must be improved. It pays to develop something which is worth improving and to advertise an article worth selling. It is also essential to remember that everything we accept as fact is so only in the light of our present knowledge, which it is therefore profitable to extend."

THE New Zealand Wool Board is a subscriber to the International Wool Secretariat and is one of the three Dominion Wool Boards thus united to serve overseas, as they do individually in their own countries, the interests of their wool growers. Dr. Booth recently returned to the headquarters of the Secretariat in London after visits to Australia (his own country), New Zealand, U.S.A., and Canada.

"The New Zealand sheep farmer," said Dr. Booth, "has to be a common-sense business man, or he will go out of business. Apart from a small number of farmers who depend on stud flocks for a living, the business of the New Zealand sheep farmer is to raise sheep for the production of meat and wool. His problem is simple, but its solution difficult. He wants to make as big a total profit as he can for his labour and money invested, with due regard to the common sense of maintaining a rational average return over many years."

Demand for Fine Wools

What are the known and unknown factors in the New Zealand sheep farmer's problem? "He lives," said Dr. Booth, "in a country which, within our present knowledge, is not generally suitable for the Merino, but in which the New Zealand Romney is stated to do best and to be profitable to his owner when crossed with the South-down. The Romney produces wools which are referred to as 'medium Crossbreds,' and which are not at present in maximum demand. The demand is now, and will continue to be, for fine wools, causing a spreading differential in prices.

"New Zealand Crossbred lambs are undoubtedly far superior to their Merino cousins in meat value. While we live in a meat-hungry world, carcass value remains very important, and the sheep farmer may be content to accept what is inevitable within present conditions—that is, a higher return for meat and a lower return for wool. Can

he get a safer average, or a better total? What may happen later?"

Emphasis on Medium Crossbred

"The International Wool Secretariat is emphasising overseas the great value of your medium Crossbred wools for many purposes—it is excellent for hand-knitted socks and stockings, particularly of the sports and school variety, where strength and durability are important. It is superior also for sportswear—for lads, lasses, golfers, footballers—and we can and will sell it. It is not going to fetch the right price compared with finer Crossbreds (56's-58's) or with Capes or Merinos. Superfine Merinos will fetch fancy prices, but will probably be unprofitable on account of the light weight per fleece in that fancy bale.

"I have studied the problem of wool growing in a number of countries, of big and small producers: Australia, New Zealand, U.S.A., South Africa, England, and smaller wool producers. I have met and talked also with buyers and brokers, textile and garment manufacturers, and with the wearer or other user of our wools in a very wide range of places. I've been trained as an engineer, a scientist, and an administrator, and I really do know quite



[Photo News Ltd. photo.]
Dr. Edgar Booth.

a lot about the world wool picture, because I'm intensely interested in the job and have the best opportunity to see this picture from every angle. The International Wool Secretariat exists to change this picture in favour of the wool grower, and slight changes can often make a great difference.

"The lower grade medium Crossbreds are going to be the hardest wools to sell at a proper price," continued Dr. Booth. "They are not really wanted as carpet wools and are not in most popular demand as fabric wools, but we are right out to sell them, using to that end every possible scientific development yet available. Definitely, the finer the wool in any class, the more readily saleable it is. There is a tendency in New Zealand to breed broader fibre, which is certainly associated with greater weight of fleece, but unless a back-breaking weight of fleece is produced, 48's will give a greater gross return than 42's, and be more easily sold. I think you can breed finer than that, keep up to profitable fleece weight, and still have healthy animals. If you can't, then that problem will have to be solved (and it can be solved) when the return on meat drops back so that there is a bigger percentage return on the wool. There are still a number of countries producing very broad wools, and there are still very big quantities of these in the world's stock piles.

Future Markets

"The wealthier sections of the world (on a per capita basis) are keen on lightweight wool materials, worsteds, and fine stuffs. Even the woollen-piece manufacturer does not want to go low in the 'forties.' Yet there are still other lands and great populations, and if Merinos and the better-quality Crossbreds are cleared at a good price every year, these other masses of peoples can absorb the medium and lower Crossbreds at a reasonable price, the balance being made up on the better 'meat' return.

"Only about three-quarters of a pound of scoured wool is available for each person in the world. Some have never worn wool, some could never afford to buy wool, but even the total number of potential small buyers means that wool will be in short supply if its merits are pressed on the world's markets. . . . New Zealand in particular has big future wool markets in India. The Secretariat has just completed a comprehensive survey in that country and is about to recommend development of that market. India can use wool, particularly the 'medium Crossbred,' and can pay for it."