

Review of Farm Production Drive by Mr. F. P. Walsh

"SUFFICIENT real evidence is now available to show that New Zealand's farming economy is well advanced into a period of post-war expansion," said Mr. F. P. Walsh, Chairman of the Aid for Britain National Council and of the Farm Production Committee, to "The New Zealand Journal of Agriculture" recently. "The expansion now well under way is founded primarily upon a well-laid basis of security, a basis determined and built up largely by our farmers themselves, by their leaders, and by their organisations.

"THIS expansion is consistent with, and runs parallel to, the recent long-term agreements for the supply of greater quantities of food to the people of Britain.

"The background to our present success lies very deep. It consists in part of long years of solid research by our agricultural scientists, whose work today is studied in every advanced country in the world, and in part of a commendable readiness by the farmers of this country to apply the results of that research. First and foremost, the Department of Agriculture has built up a scientific and extension service to farmers which has won their regard and whole-hearted support. Their Extension, Animal Research, Livestock, Dairy, and Horticulture Divisions are staffed with first-class scientists and practical men who, among other attainments, have placed New Zealand's methods of grass-land farming and livestock management foremost in the world.

"With this Department's work has gone brilliant research by the Soil Survey, Plant Research, and Plant Chemistry sections of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research and by the Wheat Research Institute. Practical application of scientific advances has been given wider scope through the teaching work of Massey and Canterbury Agricultural Colleges. An outstanding basis for an expansionist programme had been well laid over many years.

The Second Stage

"The second period of background development," said Mr. Walsh, "began with the inception of the guaranteed price to our dairy farmers. Insecurity and the constant threat of disastrously low prices have always hung close over the heads of the world's food producers. The guaranteed price was a long step toward security, taken after full discussion with the farmers, and is now accepted as a corner stone of progress in the dairy industry.

"While our fighting men were overseas defending our liberties the prospect of inflation loomed, with ever-mounting costs threatening to create a top-heavy structure which would crash in ruins as did the farming structure after the last war. An organised defence against this new threat brought every section of our community into a new fight, on the home front. A programme to bring the threat under control was designed, a programme which reached into every corner of our country and touched every individual. As the Prime Minister said in 1942, 'Social security implies much more than a system of monetary benefits. It implies an order of society in which every citizen—wage earner, trader, farmer, professional man, or pensioner—is safeguarded against economic fluctuations.'

Stabilisation

"From this defensive organisation on the home front came the great 1942 stabilisation campaign, a successful fight which, besides protecting every individual in our community in the war years, succeeded in bringing our country through into the post-war period to a position of far greater stability and economic security than any other country in the world was to attain. New Zealanders travelling abroad and visitors knowing our country have no illusions on this point.

"Indeed, outside New Zealand the outcome of our stabilisation programme is considered to be so important that our methods have been held up as an example to be followed by food producers throughout the world. At the third Annual Conference of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers, an entirely independent body of the world's producers, financed entirely by voluntary



Mr. F. P. Walsh. [Spencer Digby photo.]

subscriptions from producers' organisations, certain recommendations were considered for stimulating high levels of purchasing power, reinforced by national agricultural price stabilisation measures as prerequisites to international price stability. This Annual Conference, consisting of some 150 farmers from 23 countries, including the United States, Great Britain, and other world powers, an essential qualification for membership of which is that any national farm or co-operative organisation must 'demonstrate that they are free and independent of Governments,' produced certain unanimous recommendations for forwarding to the November, 1949, Fifth World Food and Agriculture Organization for their consideration as practical methods of meeting producers' problems. Among these, as quoted in the I.F.A.P. Bulletin Vol. 1, No. 5 for June-July, 1949, were certain measures agreed as basic to expanding international trade in agricultural products at stable prices, including:—

'(d) where practicable, suitable international adaptation of the price stabilisation programs of producers, such as exist in Australia and New Zealand, which accumulate financial reserves in periods of high prices to supplement income of producers in periods of low prices.'

"No better endorsement of the success of our country's stabilisation policy could be envisaged. To have a responsible international body of farmers, with a full knowledge of international farming problems, hold up our farm stabilisation success as a standard for adoption throughout the world gives the measure of the great boon this policy has been to our producers.

"For our farmers this finely conceived and admirably administered scheme, devised and carried out with the full consent and co-operation of the producers' representatives on their statutory boards, has meant that they came out into the clear light of post-war opportunity with land prices at a new level of moderation, material costs kept within reason, labour costs saved from runaway levels, and finally