

Aerial Topdressing

"The latest activity of the Farm Production Committee has been directed upon an examination of the work carried out in the aerial topdressing of our farm lands and the seeding of pastures from the air. For a year or more under the supervision of the Soil Erosion and Rivers Control Council important experiments have been carried on with the help of the Air Force. Considerable areas have been successfully topdressed at a cost which the sponsors consider economic. Indeed, commercial operators have since begun operations in several districts, spreading 2cwt. per acre at a cost of about 10s. per acre, a cost which when the normal costs of land transport, packhorse or sled haulage, extended weeks of the payment of wages, etc., are taken into account, has proved most attractive to farmers.

"Now the Farm Production Committee has had discussions with the Air Force and the Soil Erosion authorities and has asked the Government to give urgent consideration to certain recommendations which the Soil Erosion and Rivers Control Council recently placed before Cabinet.

"Aerial topdressing has already been proved to be of real value in our farming methods. If proposals at present under investigation prove feasible and economic, aerial topdressing may open a new world of prosperity to our farmers and to our Dominion.

A New Future

"This then is the background," said Mr. Walsh. "We have been many years preparing for this moment, but now a new future lies before us. Even today our farmers have set themselves well upon the road to the new prosperity.

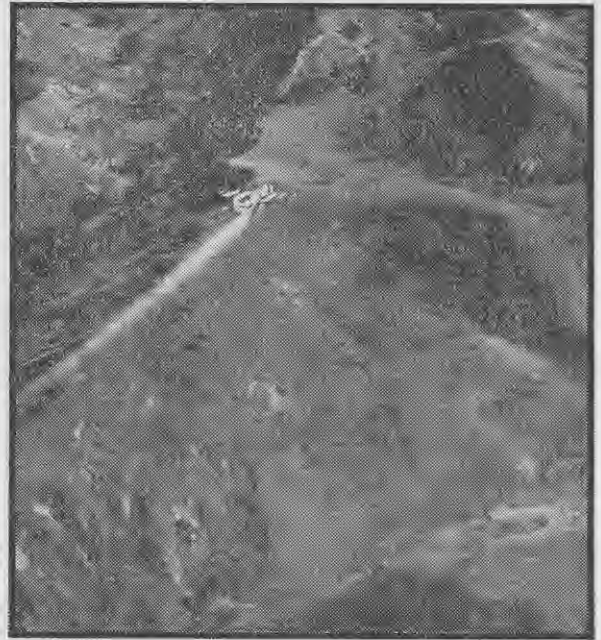
"Dairy farmers last year, with the help of a favourable season, increased butterfat production by more than 10 per cent. over the previous year, resulting in increased gradings for export of 14,500 tons of butter and 12,000 tons of cheese. This year, in the first two months, these figures are already 25 per cent. up each month on the corresponding months of last year's fine effort, or 5300 tons in butter and 1250 tons in cheese. The farmers now have the fencing to subdivide and graze extensively. They have the fertiliser to spur growth. They have the machines to plant and reap winter feed, to collect speedily and cheaply the hay growing so luxuriantly. To use this extra feed they have added this year, according to the Dairy Board, 50,000 cows to their herds, which should bring our dairy cows in milk back to the highest peak reached in our dairy history, in the remarkable 1940-41 season.

"Expansion in our dairy industry is already a fact.

"Our meat producers last year sent rather fewer lambs and sheep to the works, but still showed an increase in weights killed. Beef killings were down, bringing an over-all decrease, but this may mean that farmers were



[National Publicity Studios photo.]



[Ministry of Works photo.]

stocking up for the future. Breeding ewes as at April 30, 1948, were 400,000 up on the previous year. There are indications that this increase will be repeated this year, so that our flocks are obviously being built up to enable our sheep farmers to share in the coming expansion. Beef heifers under one year of age also showed an increase in 1948 and there is reason to believe that there will be a further increase this year.

"These are the first indicators. The expansion is under way and the impetus will grow.

Britain and Our Farm Economy

"Whether for good or for ill our prosperity is linked with the prosperity of Britain. New Zealand must live primarily by producing and selling food. The buyers of food in the great quantities we produce must be those millions who are engaged essentially in producing specialised manufactured goods and those unable to grow enough food for their own use.

"The greatest aggregation of such people lies in Great Britain. America and other manufacturing countries with great areas of fertile land are to a large extent able to supply their own foodstuffs. Our only great market must be Britain, and thus our farm economy is inextricably locked with Britain's prosperity.

"During the war years this country marshalled its productive forces, pushed politics and sectional interests aside, and our farmers rallied inspiringly to see that Britain was given the food she needed to enable her to make the tremendous historical effort she put forward in the successful defence of democracy and freedom. Short of essential materials, with great numbers of our fittest producers overseas in the armed forces, our farmers held on grimly, worked from before daylight to beyond dusk, and succeeded in maintaining and even increasing the vital food we sent to Britain.

"That is the spirit," concluded Mr. Walsh, "which I am satisfied still lies behind our more recent production expansion. Our farmers are today building up their production not only to ensure greater security and higher standards of living for themselves, but also as their contribution to solving Britain's post-war crisis and their contribution to a peaceful solution of the world's present illnesses.

"If this spirit continues to spur our producers, and continues to unite them with other members of the community in a common cause, prosperity will follow as the inevitable reward."