

Departmental Service to Horticulture Industry

THE impact of the Second World War had a marked effect on some aspects of horticultural production in New Zealand. The export of apples and pears to the United Kingdom was cut off and New Zealand had to reorganise and stimulate vegetable production to meet the requirements of the Allies in the Pacific as well as of the civilian population. The "Dig for Victory" campaigns aroused further interest in home gardening. The result has been a marked increase of interest in horticulture in all its aspects, and the backing and assistance of the Government have been shown in a practical manner by a larger grant to the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture and the reorganisation of the Horticulture Division of the Department of Agriculture.

Functions of Division

That Division has two main functions, inspectorial and advisory, both designed to assist in the sound economic development of horticultural production.

The inspectorial service is concerned primarily with the prevention, control, and eradication of disease. It begins with port inspectors, whose duties are to prevent more diseases from gaining entry to New Zealand; continues with inspection of plant nurseries and orchards; and ends with inspection of produce in wholesale markets and retail shops. In addition the Division provides a service to marketing organisations by the supply of regular crop estimates and the grading of products. It maintains a list of those engaged in fruit and vegetable production and collects tax from these producers on behalf of fruit-growing and commercial gardening organisations.

The Division's advisory work constitutes a free extension service to all horticulturists, provided through "The Journal of Agriculture," bulletins, lectures, shows, field days and demonstrations, and personal visits by advisory officers, who are stationed at practically all centres where some aspect of horticultural work is of importance. In this branch of its work the Division is closely associated with growers' organisations. It is also represented on boards or committees concerned with production and marketing.

Reorganisation of Work

To enable it to play an even more efficient part in the more certain future gained through assured

returns for certain products, such as apples, pears, and lemons, the Horticulture Division has been reorganised during the past year. The principal change has been a complete separation of the inspectorial and advisory services in practically all districts, the two phases of work being co-ordinated at the administrative level. The administrative section consists of a Director and Assistant Director in Wellington and four superintendents stationed in Auckland, Palmerston North, Nelson, and Dunedin. The inspectorial staff consists of 38 Horticultural Inspectors in the districts and a Principal Horticultural Inspector in Wellington.

Specialist Officers to be Appointed

The advisory officers stationed throughout the Dominion and known as Orchard, Vegetable, or Horticultural Instructors in future will concentrate on advisory work alone. To assemble and condense the vast amount of horticultural literature now available, to keep in close touch with research stations, to study economic problems, and to maintain liaison with marketing organisations, 13 specialist officers are being appointed to concentrate on different branches of fruit growing. These men, some of whom have arrived recently from overseas, will include specialists in pip, stone, berry, and citrus fruits, grapes, vegetables, and general horticulture.

The policy of the Division is reviewed regularly at quarterly meetings of superintendents in Wellington. An endeavour is being made to reduce the number of statistical returns from producers and divisional officers, to encourage decentralisation, and to maintain uniform interpretation of grading standards and administrative actions.

Confidence in the Future

There is no doubt of the great advances—technically, culturally, and economically—which have been made in horticulture in recent years, and this reorganisation of the Horticulture Division is evidence that the Department is determined that nothing shall stand in the way of further progress. If the admirable degree of unity existing among growers can be accompanied by close co-operation with Departmental officers who are working for the benefit of the industry, it is certain that horticultural production, commercial or aesthetic, is on a sound foundation.