

## Pioneer in Farming Economics

# Mr. E. J. Fawcett, Director-General of Agriculture, to Retire

**M**R. E. J. FAWCETT, Director-General of Agriculture since 1943, is to retire at the end of December. He has been an officer of the Department of Agriculture for 35 years.

**F**OR 20 years Mr. Fawcett has been widely known for the important part he has played in shaping the primary production policy of the Dominion. What is not so widely known and appreciated is the background of training and work through which he prepared himself for the onerous duties of Director-General.

Mr. Fawcett joined the Department in 1922 at a time when the work of the Department was being reorganised after the 1914-18 war and the general advisory service of the Fields Division was being strengthened by the appointment of professional officers. His first position was that of Assistant Instructor in Agriculture, Christchurch, and there he soon made his first major contribution to the fund of written farming knowledge by reporting on an investigation into the cost of maintaining a 6-horse team on Canterbury arable mixed farms. This investigation opened the study of agricultural economics in New Zealand and is not only a work of merit but a report of historical importance.

### Early Investigations

Investigations into the economics of various aspects of farming are now commonplace, but things were very different in the early 1920s. Farmers then were not used to meeting the wishes of curious young men by supplying information on their businesses, for farmers then paid no income tax and few kept account books. This was a new sort of inquiry, the purpose of which they did not understand; they had had no experience of the value of research work in agricultural economics. However, Mr. Fawcett by his determination and painstaking work showed farmers and administrators that knowledge of the economics of farming was important and that valuable data could be collected from properly conducted surveys.

Soon administrators and farmers were quite glad to have him investigate quite a number of problems: Problems of farming deteriorated land and those affecting the poultry and dairy industries. His major work in the 1930s was an investigation of the dairy industry and his surveys provided the foundation data for the deliberations and report of the Dairy Industry Commission set up in 1934 to examine the state of the industry. At a time when the economics of

farming and marketing were becoming more and more acute Mr. Fawcett became recognised as a man whose opinions were sound, for they were based on data he had carefully collected and analysed. He was the logical choice for the post of Assistant Director-General in 1938. In this position he soon showed his administrative ability while engaged in planning to provide for carrying on the country's primary industries during a war which was known to be imminent. His work then and during the war was of immense importance to the country and it was largely due to his foresight and energy that farm production was so well maintained during the war.

### Growth of Department

Mr. Fawcett's marked administrative ability has been evident in the manner in which during a period of rapid advancement in agricultural science and practice the Department has been developed under his guidance to maintain close liaison with the farming community and to meet the ever-expanding demand for information and service. The great advances made in all aspects of research and extension have been due in large measure to his activities and to the way in which he has inculcated in his officers the concept that their work is one of real public service.

### Headed FAO Delegations

During the latter part of the war and since, Mr. Fawcett has been a leading figure in New Zealand's representation at meetings of various overseas agencies dealing with agricultural trade and production problems and assistance to underdeveloped areas. He attended the United Nations conference on food and agriculture at Hot Springs, Virginia, in 1943 and was a member of the first executive committee. From 1945 to 1949 he headed the New Zealand delegations to FAO conferences and in 1947 represented New Zealand at executive committee meetings and at the International Trade Organisation and GATT talks. In 1952, 1953, and 1954 he took a leading part in negotiations in London, Melbourne, and Washington regarding wool marketing; and in negotiations in London to determine the prices of meat under the bulk-purchase agreement with the United Kingdom and in the subsequent discussions leading to the termination of the agreement.



*[Spencer Digby]*  
Mr. E. J. Fawcett.

In 1955 he attended with the then Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Holyoake, the eighth session of conference of FAO at Rome and in that year and 1956 toured research and experimental stations in Italy, the United Kingdom, U.S.S.R., and U.S.A.

Mr. Fawcett was a member of this year's trade delegation to the United Kingdom headed by Mr. Holyoake. His last overseas duties were inquiry into the reasons for rejection of New Zealand boneless meat shipments to the U.S.A. and investigation of market requirements there.

### Degree from Cambridge

Mr. Fawcett, who was born at Tadmor, Nelson, in 1892 and received his early education there, left New Zealand in 1915 with the Seventh Reinforcements as a 2nd lieutenant. He was wounded four times, the last time in 1917 at Passchendaele, where he won the Military Cross. He was discharged from the army with the rank of captain in 1918.

Shortly afterward he was awarded a Kitchener Memorial Scholarship tenable for one year, and obtained permission to enter Cambridge University. On the completion of that year Mr. Fawcett was granted a New Zealand Expeditionary Force Scholarship, and after 3 years' residence at