

# WINDS AND THE WEATHER

## Twentieth Century Advances in Forecasting

### A KORERO Report

ONCE UPON a time, before the invasion, there was a man well known and highly respected for the accuracy with which he could predict the next day's weather. He knew all about rain, wind, frost, and sunshine, and, it was common knowledge in the district, a lot more besides. His advice was greatly, and constantly, in demand. On fine days he would sit on the rustic seat in the shade of the walnut tree in his garden; when it was raining or the day was too chill for comfort he could be found in front of the stove in his kitchen. Always he was pleased to share his knowledge; and his callers varied from the neighbouring Chinese market-gardener, who was wondering, please, whether it was too early to plant out honourable hothouse seedlings, to the local schoolmistress, who was planning a picnic in the country for some of the older pupils with an interest, a marked interest, in botany.

This weather expert, and he wasn't so old considering he knew so much, was held in high esteem; it was even mentioned that he was to be nominated as candidate for mayor. As a preliminary to this he was elected unopposed to the drains committee of the local council. Then his secret was discovered, the secret of his knowledge. The people's shame that such a hoax had not been seen through for so many years was so general that everybody in the town went round with ear-tips blushing red, too thoughtful to speak.

It was found that this imposter, a man of no conscience, had risen early every morning, an hour before anybody else, and collected his morning newspaper from the lawn. Asked for his advice later in the day, he shamelessly offered as his own work the exact opposite of the information given in the daily weather forecast.

This simple story may or may not be true; at least it shows people's interest

in the weather and the prediction of its changes. From early in this century weather forecasting has been scientifically studied and advanced; progress in aviation has brought further technological development; and in the fight to victory of World War II meteorological prediction has become of great value and importance. One of the interesting stories after the war will be of co-operation between the meteorologist and the strategist—of operations planned to success with the help of the weather. Axis and allied forces have learned to use weather purposefully as an ally. Mark Twain's complaint that everybody talks about the weather but no-one does anything about it could not be made to-day.

### Weather Prediction Helps Business

Weather forecasting is important not only to the needs of war; in our daily lives it is more definite and timely than ever before. Among its benefits are: less hazardous aeroplane travel; less respiratory disease; reduced costs of perishable foods, especially fruits; a decrease in forest fires; less damage from storms; fewer shipping losses; and a great financial saving to business generally. Floods can be predicted, their extent estimated, and the necessary precautions taken. Weather men can tell engineers responsible for dams and roads how bad will be the worst possible storm ever to hit that region, and therefore what is probably necessary to make the roads or the dams safe.

Why weather is so important to business can be illustrated by two examples. Several racing clubs in New Zealand make a practice of "laying the odds" with insurance companies against a fall of rain on a race-day that will result in the cancelling of the meeting. A long-scale prediction and a knowledge from past records of the average rainfall at that time of the year is valuable in the laying of the odds.