

FISH LIVER OIL

A KORERO REPORT



It's a fishy business. You can tell that by the smell. It meets you long before the factory manager shouts his greeting above the whirr of wheels. It's a messy business, too. One look at the cream-cans crammed with grey, black, yellow, brown, and pink livers will convince you of that. Or a glance at the electric mincer dripping out a stream of liquid liver into pans streaked with dull colours—colours like those of the layers of sand in the little bottles on grandmother's mantelpiece. But you will agree there are compensations when you watch the centrifuge pouring out rich, brown oil—oil which clears to red-gold when held in a beaker against the light.

It's the fish liver oil industry, and you find it has more than visual compensations when you hear something of its history and the uses of its product.

In fact, you begin to wonder why nobody ever thought of it before. You learn that they did, but it was not until the war endangered our overseas supply of medicinal fish oils that New Zealand had to find a home-made substitute. We found something more than a substitute. We found the livers of many New Zealand fish produced an oil far more valuable than the cod-liver oil we had previously imported. Livers which had always been wasted became highly prized. Fish that New-Zealanders normally shunned as a food became valuable for their livers. Once again it was a case of the war forcing us to find riches in our own back yard, but whereas

many of our wartime substitutes are only substitutes for the original, here we have found a product many times better than the overseas article. The beneficial results, the manufacturers hope, will not be confined only to New Zealand.

Why is fish oil so valuable? What are its uses? You can find answers to these questions in a factory at Newtown, Wellington. In this factory, set back in trees and shrubs on a terrace below the Karitane Home, there is a small but well-equipped laboratory. In charge is a woman doctor who is only too glad to tell you why the new industry is so vital to New Zealand's national health. The factory produces baby foods: special mixtures which help both the ailing and the normal baby. But it is not a commercial concern. It is the outcome of the work of the late Sir Truby King, who devoted his life, his money, and his brilliant mind to improving the health of New Zealand babies. It is an adjunct of the Plunket Society, and it produces the special foods which form an integral part of the Plunket system. It makes the foods as well as possible, sells them as cheaply as possible, and uses any profits for the maintenance of its Karitane Homes both in New Zealand and overseas. New Zealand is still the only country to produce the emulsions and humanized milk used under the Plunket system. From this spick-and-span Melrose factory these products are consigned to Australia, England, Canada, South Africa, India, and many other countries as well.