

Co-operation needed to help meat industry

The Executive Director of the New Zealand Freezing Companies Association, Mr Peter Blomfield, says that increased co-operation and communication within the Industry and with associated bodies augured well in view of the present major problems facing the meat industry.

Mr Blomfield listed these problems as the current low export prices, the heavy capital expenditure needed for hygiene improvements, low returns on freezing company investment and the high costs faced, particularly labour.

The New Zealand Freezing Companies Association was set up in July 1974, combining the interests of both the North and South Island Associations and establishing a body that could speak with one voice in determining policy and in discussions with Government, the Meat Board, the Unions, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and Federated Farmers.

It is closely associated with the Meat Exporters Council which in addition to F.C.A. members comprises members of the independent meat exporters association and the two meat exporting co-operatives.

Strong communication had been established with Government, the Meat Board and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and better links were also being established with the Unions.

Mr Blomfield said such contact between management and unions, provided there was flexible thinking, could be a major factor in reducing industrial problems in the freezing industry.

Other avenues could involve unions developing a good understanding of the nature of the freezing companies business and by management maintaining open lines with unions on the company's goals and objectives.

Referring to worker participation in management, Mr Blomfield noted that this had different meanings to different people and it was important to distinguish between schemes which sought to give full control as a matter of principle, and those which introduced a measure of involvement as a contribution to job fulfilment.

He stressed it was important to have worker involvement, and many companies already have some consultation procedure mainly on an informal basis. But it must be remembered that management, while availing itself of employee opinion and possibly being influenced by it, made the ultimate decision.

Job enrichment also sought to improve both efficiency and human satisfaction and when the freezing workers award was eventually restructured using industrial engineering techniques this could be a suitable opportunity

to incorporate principles of job enrichment.

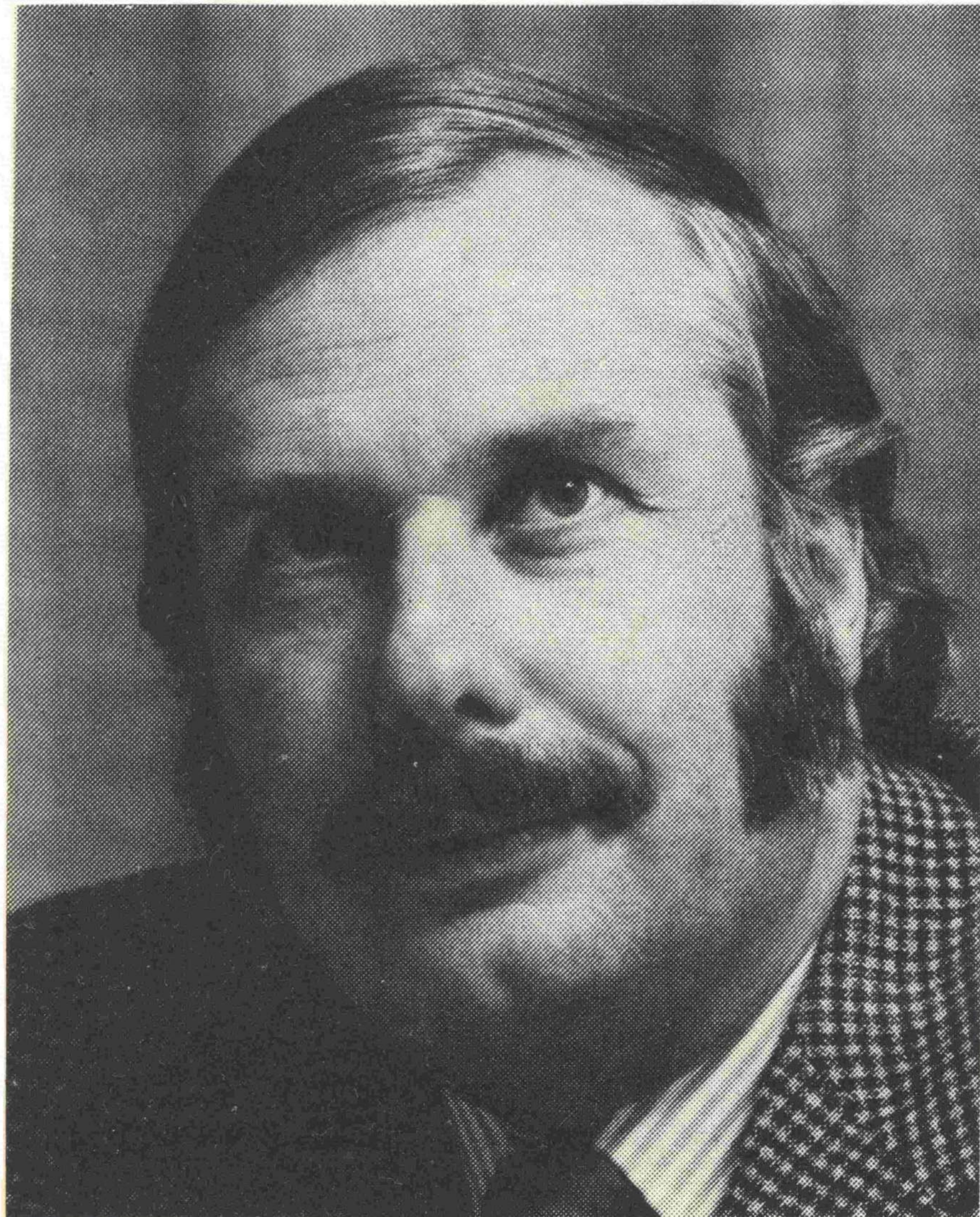
Referring to the future outlook for the meat exporting industry, Mr Blomfield said that he was optimistic. There were definite signs of recovery in the world economies and in the markets affecting New Zealand. However it could be up to 18 months before prices for lamb and beef recovered.

Overseas countries had not recovered from their downward economic slumps as quickly as had been predicted, but the important Japanese market, which cut down significantly on its New Zealand meat imports, had opened up slightly recently.

With the erratic trend in meat exports, Mr Blomfield said it was inevitable that some form of internal stabilisation was required to maintain farmers' incomes and the present steps being taken by the Meat Board had the desired effect.

Mr Blomfield said rising costs, particularly labour, were of serious concern to the industry. However more attention was being paid to materials handling and the industry generally was improving its efficiency.

"Broadly the Industry contributes 40% of overseas earnings - more than wool and dairy produce put together - and it is unlikely that this pattern will change."



MR. BLOMFIELD

Mr Blomfield pointed out one example of this as being the setting up of a committee representing the F.C.A. and the Unions under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Labour, to develop a new freezing workers award based on industrial engineering principles.

The present award has about 250 classifications and the committee will employ consultants to look at all jobs and relate them to one another using a points system.

WESTFIELD WORKS



An aerial view of the Westfield Freezing Company (Story page 3)

Hygiene Expenditure Requires Planning In Implementation

The general manager of W. and R. Fletcher (N.Z.) Ltd., Mr Mark Hinchliff, told a financial seminar organised by the New Zealand Freezing Companies in Wellington recently that the timetable for implementing the new Codex hygiene regulations in the freezing industry should be revised for the sake of the New Zealand economy.

Mr Hinchliff said the programme should be spread out over a longer period to reduce the impact of heavy financial expenditure which must be reflected in slaughtering and processing rates. This, in turn, would have to be paid for by the farmer who was presently going through a difficult period.

He said that the freezing companies acknowledged that they must accept some pressure to ensure that the industry was progressively meeting the hygiene requirements, but some commercial sense must be exercised if the industry was to remain economically viable.

Mr Hinchliff said "We are seeking co-operation with our overseas importing authorities, our own Government and those charged with the responsibility of seeing that the industry is maintained for the good of the nation and its trading partners."

He said some of the new hygiene requirements were necessary and should be carried out with as little delay as possible, but others were quite unnecessary on an immediate basis and could be implemented as and when reconstruction took place. Provided the present procedures and environment were hygienic there should not be extreme pressure to change this virtually overnight.

Mr Hinchliff said a great deal of the expenditure faced by the freezing industry was non-revenue producing and this created problems. If the changes were a purely commercial and economically feasible transaction he had no doubt that the companies would finance the expenditure out of their own resources.

But while some expenditure in question for updating existing works and departments to make them more acceptable hygienically for the high standards now set by overseas countries could be revenue producing it would be difficult to ascertain just how much that would be.

He pointed out the example that if it was necessary to build a new killing floor, then obviously the latest equipment would be installed which would reduce the amount of labour needed in the same way there would be a number of other savings that could be effected by the complete rebuilding of a plant or associated facilities.

And while some pundits would take the view that the projected expenditure of over \$200 million should be put to building new freezing works in other locations this would not be possible because of the high cost of construction.

Talking about the actual financing of the money involved, Mr Hinchliff said the freezing companies were looking for repayments to be effected over a 10 year period.

Problems would also arise concerning interest. If a commercial rate of interest was used then the repayments, plus the rate of interest, would be a direct charge against the farmer, and it was doubtful whether the farmer could absorb this direct charge under present conditions.

Mr Hinchliff suggested that some sort of subsidy would have to be given to the farmer to enable him to stand this size of on-cost. He said this would be a straightforward lending operation by the banks or finance houses, but it must be borne in mind that the rate of interest

would be fairly high if it was treated as a purely commercial operation. An added complication would be the difficulty some freezing companies would face in borrowing this sort of money without security, a position that would affect a number of companies.

Mr Hinchliff also put forward other ideas of financing the hygiene requirements and concluded by saying that he hoped the freezing companies could arrive at a common approach as to the best method they could recommend for reducing the effect of the huge financial burden the industry faced and at the same time protect the farming community from the full impact of these costs which must inevitably reduce their returns for livestock during a period when the international meat market was suffering from a severe dose of indigestion.

He added it was important that the problems of financing be resolved quickly and that the freezing companies enter into early discussions with the Government so that they could plan for the future.

Mr R. Reid (below left) W & R Fletcher (N.Z.) Ltd's Works Superintendent, with the N.Z. delegation at the Codex Meat Hygiene talks in London. With him from his left are: Mr G. Keeley, C.F.M., Mr. B. Mason, M.A.F. and Mr J.D. McNab, Director, Meat Division, M.A.F., who led the delegation.



Lamb to help handicapped

The Lord Mayor of Bradford was recently presented with one of New Zealand's best known products by a South Wairarapa farmer to help that city's appeal for the mentally handicapped.

At a function arranged by Cyril E. Heaps the President of Bradford Rotary Club the farmer, Bob Meadows of "Gum Grove" Featherston, handed over a frozen lamb carcass (supplied by W. Weddel and Co's Wakefield depot) to the Lord Mayor, Mrs Doris Birdsall. Mrs Birdsall said the lamb would probably be raffled at Xmas as part of a concerted drive to raise funds for an I.H.C. school project. This work was pioneered in the U.K. by Mr Sid

Pacific Area Encouraging

One of the Fletcher Head Office meat export sales staff, Mr Dennis Frederickson, who has just returned from a business tour of the Pacific Islands, reports that business prospects for the area are encouraging.

Mr Frederickson says that although the Pacific market is not often looked on as a large one it is nevertheless a busy one for the company.

"In general the Pacific area, Fiji, the Samoas, Rarotonga, Tonga and Tahiti, is suffering more from inflation than many other countries due to their need to import most consumer items. Prices for their exports are down, tourism has also dropped and unemployment has risen which has had a marked effect on the whole area apart from Tahiti.

But despite this our business in the area has increased which is a good sign in these relatively difficult times."

Mr Frederickson points out that the trade to the Pacific is specialised and varies greatly from island to island. Because of lower incomes many areas require cheaper cuts, used by the local population for curries and stews.

However two exceptions are American Samoa, where the supermarkets are stocked with prime beef cuts, and Tahiti where the economy is boosted by the presence of a large forces personnel and French population who buy mainly chilled beef and lamb cuts which are airfreighted weekly to the island.

Fletcher's have reintroduced the keg beef trade to Western Samoa. This was once a steady trade when supplied in wooden kegs, and the new product, which will be packed in plastic kegs will be supplied to the area from this month.

Apart from seeking new areas of trade and meat requirements Mr Frederickson says a most important part of his trip was maintaining a personal link with Fletcher's customers.

"The buyers in these islands appreciate the direct contact between our company and themselves which only goes to further the good-standing of the Weddel brand."

Cowan, a man who Mr Meadows said has close connections with New Zealanders, having served with them in the Middle East during the second World War.

The lamb was exported to Britain by W. & R. Fletcher (N.Z.) Ltd., from their Tomoana Works at Hastings, where Mr Meadows is a client.

He was in the north of England with five other N.Z. Rotary Club members on a Rotary International group study exchange and he visited Bradford to look at aspects of the wool textile trade and to see friends. Mr Meadows places emphasis on the links and friendships achieved under the aegis of Rotary.

Westfield Improvements Take Shape

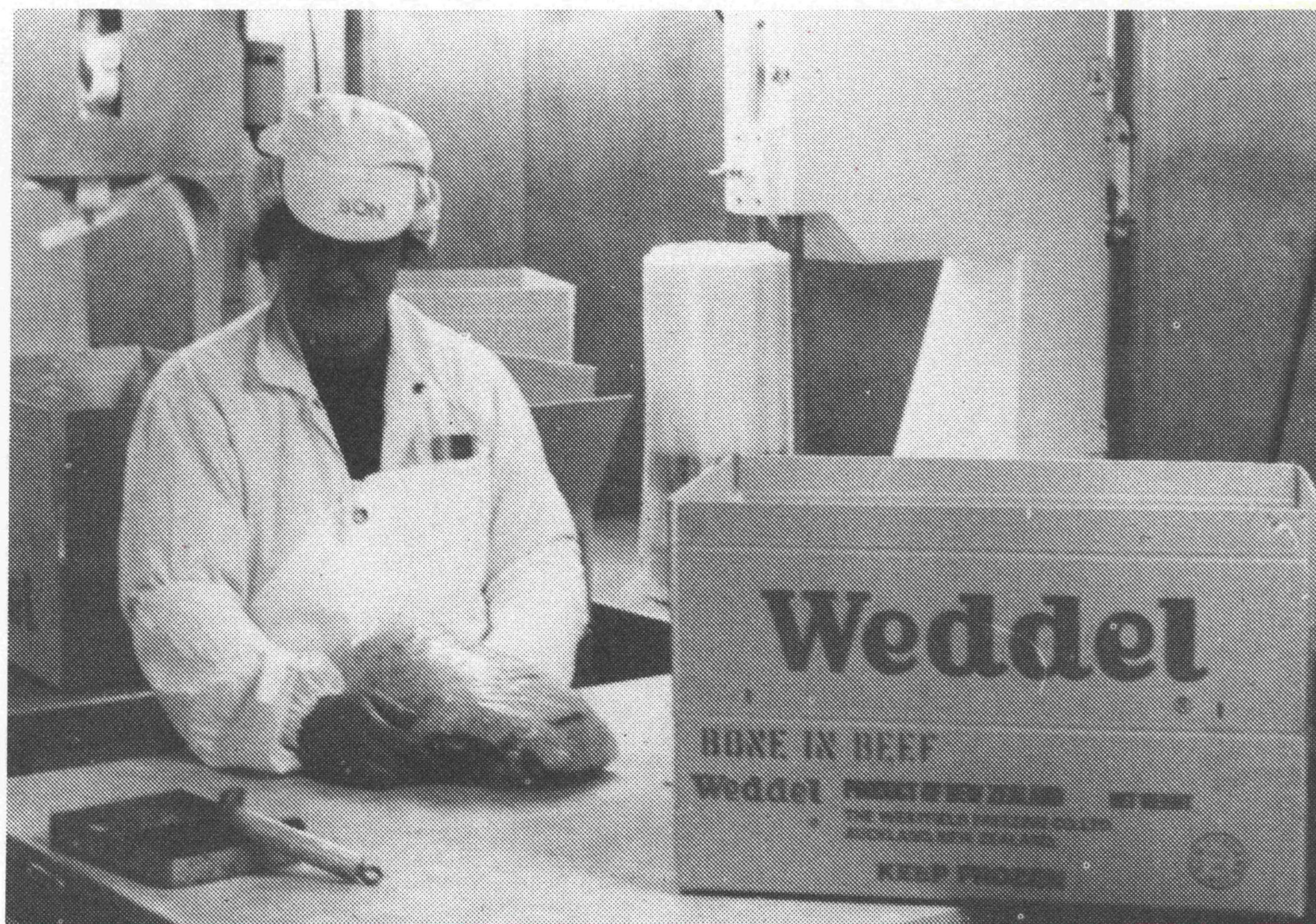
On the outskirts of Auckland lies a highly concentrated meat slaughtering complex and standing prominently in the centre is the Westfield Freezing Company.

The Westfield works, comprising 126 acres, is an example of a year round freezing works which also includes New Zealand's first stock-foods processing plant.

At the present time the Freezing industry is facing an economic crisis through depressed meat prices overseas, fuel and labour cost increases and the prospect of huge capital investment to meet hygiene demands set by the world's meat importing countries. There is a strong lobby against the full acceptance of all these requirements from New Zealand freezing companies and other institutions and they are contesting some requirements which they say are possibly exaggerated and should be delayed because of the present depressed state of the country's and farmers' economies.

However, Westfield has already made important improvements to meet many of the new requirements which has necessitated the outlay of hundreds of thousands of dollars and if all the current proposals are implemented this will lead to further massive expenditure.

All Westfield's boning room areas have been upgraded with the replacement of all metal



Mrs Mary Newton filling an order of special ships' stores in the Westfield beef packaging room.

utensils with stainless steel, the coating of all concrete walls with a fibreglass film and the installation of more washing and sterilizing facilities for the workers.

Floor Improvements

An additional improvement, has been the covering of vast floor areas with sure shield, an epoxy resin base covering. Apart from the hygienic improvement this compound has many other qualities including the facility to replace any worn areas by patching thus eliminating the cost of replacing whole floor surfaces.

The beef slaughter floor is another area which complies in every respect with international standards and while the lamb slaughter area meets present requirements, alterations will be necessary when electrical stunning and the new method of slaughtering is introduced. These projected alterations will also provide for the improved meat tenderisation process by electrical stimulation which will replace part of the present arduous process of conditioning and ageing and the "squat posture" method.

Many of the chillers have had fibreglass protective coats applied to the walls and ceilings, and sure shield flooring. Huge new wide stainless steel sliding doors have also been fitted.

Freezer Regulations

Freezer area improvements are of great concern to the industry, and although Westfield has updated a large area of its freezer space to eliminate the wood content, much of its freezer space still contains wood, in the storage chambers, which under the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Hygiene regulations will have to be covered by an impervious material or phased out at an early date.

Industry spokesmen opposing this issue point out that boned beef is already sufficiently protected hygienically in polythene and cardboard containers. Lamb carcasses are also protected, being wrapped in stockinette or stockinette and polythene before being placed in freezer areas. The possible introduction of shrink wrap polythene for lamb carcasses would also give a protective seal to this product.

The improvements programme has not been restricted to production areas. More than \$70,000, has been spent on upgrading the stockmens amenities and cafeteria and improvements to employee amenities and a new section for the MAF is on the drawing board.

Environment Improvement

More noticeable to the visitor is the beautification programme involving the planting of trees, flowers and grassed areas and part of this brought a chuckle to General Manager, Mr Bob Jeffery, as he reminisced about it before leaving for his new post in Melbourne.

"We decided to put in two flower beds in the grassed area on our drive and accordingly two men measured up two six foot by two foot 'plots' which they dug up during the day. They left them unattended overnight and some wag neatly placed two little white crosses at the head of each bed. The next morning we hurriedly converted both plots to a diamond before putting in the flowers."

Despite its size as a meat exporting organisation the Westfield works also has a prestige and busy trade operating almost on a local butcher level to visiting ships, the Pacific Basin area, the British West Indies and Scandinavia apart from its "bread and butter trade" with Japan, U.S.A. and U.K.

FIRST-CLASS ORDER



Weddel meat recently supplied a prestige order when the Cunard luxury liner, Queen Elizabeth II, called in at Singapore as part of a millionaire's round-the-world cruise. The order, filled by Fletcher's associate company the Malayan Refrigerating Company, included 1500 lbs of Weddel calf livers, which on account of the short notice given of the ship's requirements, had to be flown specially to Singapore. The Malayan Refrigerating Company proudly points out that of all the items put aboard, the calf livers were the only one which the Chief Chef did not inspect, saying that the name Weddel was good enough for him!

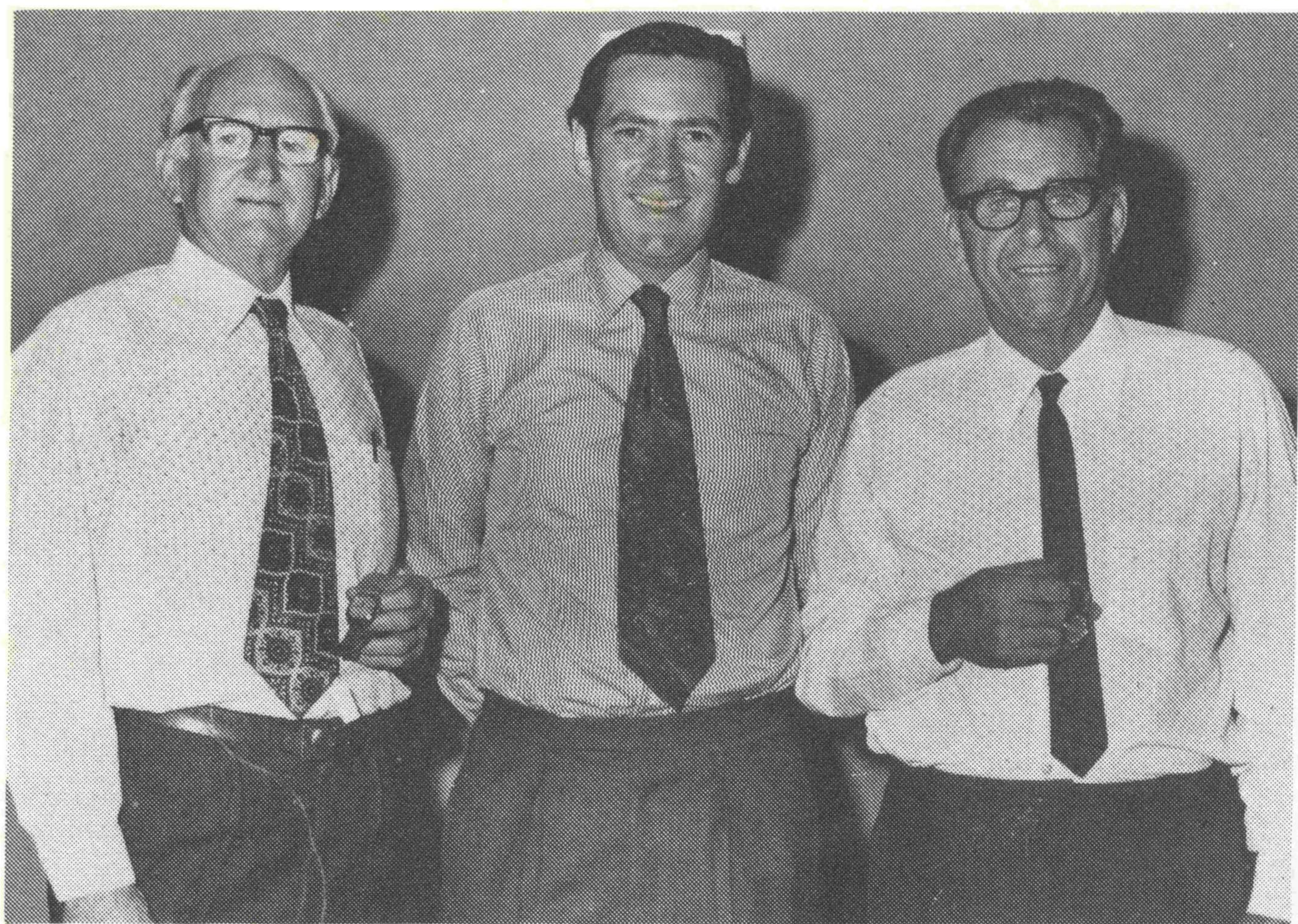
Senior Management Changes

W & R Fletcher (N.Z.) Ltd., have announced three senior management changes.

Mr Gordon Taylor, general manager for five years of Nelsons (N.Z.) Ltd., who operate the Tomoana works in Hastings has been appointed general manager of the Westfield Freezing Company in Auckland.

The new general manager at Tomoana is Mr Michael Sanders, who came to New Zealand earlier this year as assistant to Mr M. Hinchliff, the general manager of Fletcher's, after eight years experience in the group's Australian operation of W. Angliss and Co., Ltd.

The Westfield general manager, Mr Bob Jeffery transfers this month to Melbourne as manager for Victoria of W. Angliss & Co (Australia) Pty Ltd. (See Company Profile).



Two Westfield livestock managers, Mr Athol G. Harding of Auckland (left) and Mr G.A. (Alex) Gillespie of Hamilton (right) with Lord Vestey after being presented with gold watches, to mark their long service, during Lord Vestey's recent trip to New Zealand. Both Athol, who has been with the company for 45 years, and Alex (43 years) joined Westfield after leaving secondary school. At a ceremony attended by members of the Auckland Provincial buying staff and senior management, several speakers paid tribute to the outstanding qualities and devotion to duty shown by both men to the company over the years they have been associated with it.



The teams which took part in the annual golf match between W. & R. Fletcher (N.Z.) Ltd., and P. & O. (N.Z.) Ltd which was held recently on the Martinborough links. The outing proved to be an enjoyable and convivial day with some classical swings on display (and some not so classical) and the verbal repartee was of a high order. The outcome was a relatively comfortable win for P. & O. by 7½ matches to 5½. Fletcher's general manager, Mr Mark Hinchliff (third from left back row) in his presentation of the trophy to his P. & O. counterpart, Mr Gray Hunter (fifth from left back row) allowed that since it was such a lovely Saturday, Fletcher's didn't mind P. & O. notching up their third win in eight years!

STAFF MOVEMENTS

Paul Jones has moved from Westfield to Patea where he is industrial officer.

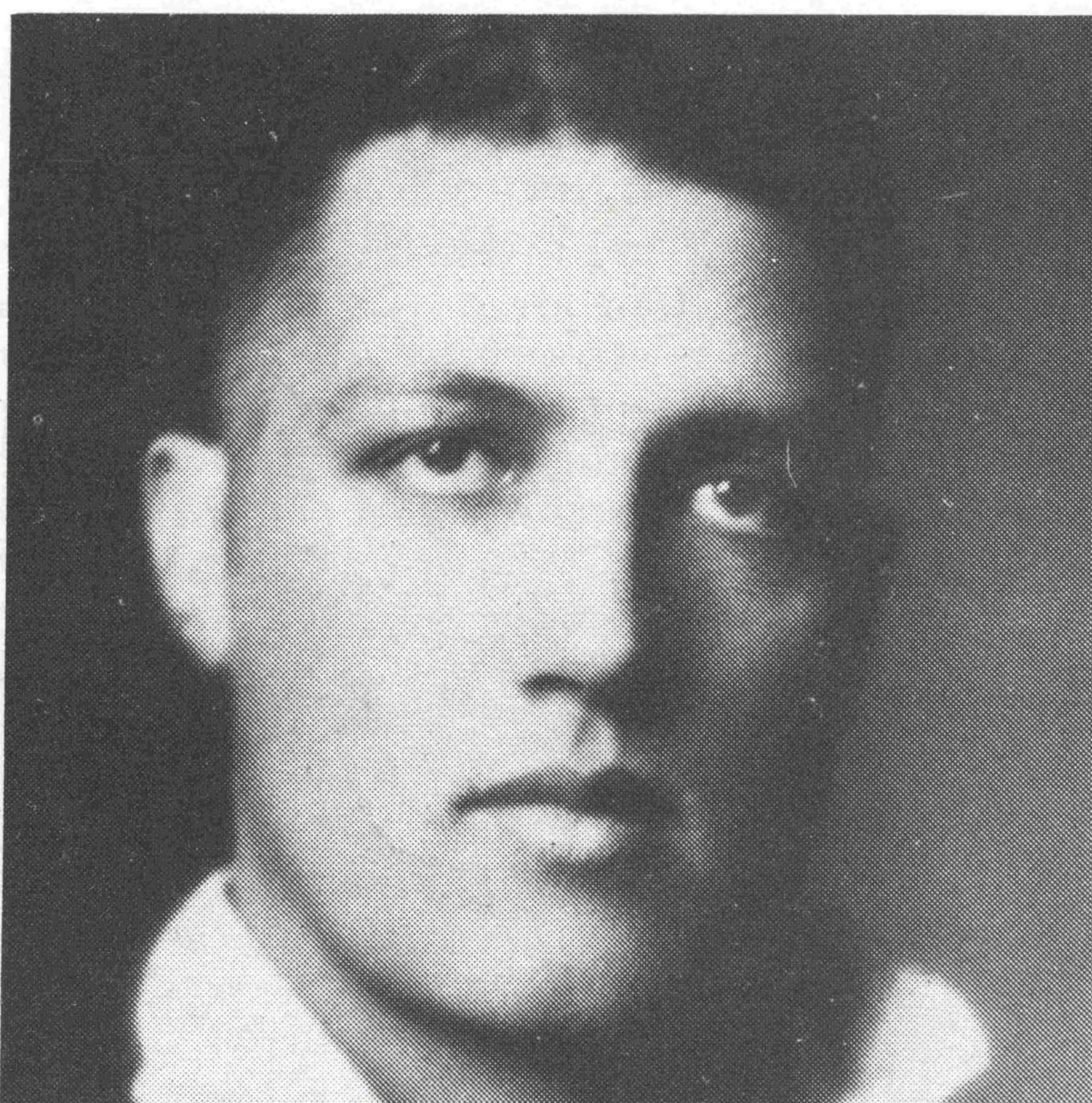
Neville Slight (ex Wanganui Mild Cure Bacon Co.) Tim Mahoney (ex Patea) and the most recent arrivals John Hamlin (ex Patea) and Bruce Taylor (ex Tomoana) have all taken up various postings within the Cost and Production Department, head office in Wellington.

The arrival of John Hamlin and Bruce Taylor will provide a welcome addition to Wellington's senior rugby ranks as they have played for Taranaki and Hawkes Bay respectively.

ON THE MOVE



Tomoana's general manager at the time, Mr Gordon Taylor, still full of running as he crosses the finishing line of the company's freezer hands' annual "marathon" at Hastings recently. Mr Taylor covered the 4½ mile course in the good time of 31m 43s compared to the winning time of 25m 2s set by university student Mark Fenton, who was working at Tomoana during his term vacation. Terry Clough was second, 18s behind the winner, with Angus Hislop, the 1973 winner, third in the 47 strong field.



One of the greats . . . Tori Reid, who was a household name in New Zealand Rugby during the 1930's. His first class playing career spanned a fantastic 22 years which is a testimony to the strength and durability of this great Maori player. In 1929, at the tender age of 16, he first represented East Coast and then he moved to Hawkes Bay. He represented this province from 1934 until he retired in 1950. He first became a Maori All Black in 1930 at the age of 17 and 19 years later he played his last game for them, in Australia, taking the field in 10 of the 11 matches played that tour. He first represented

Retirement

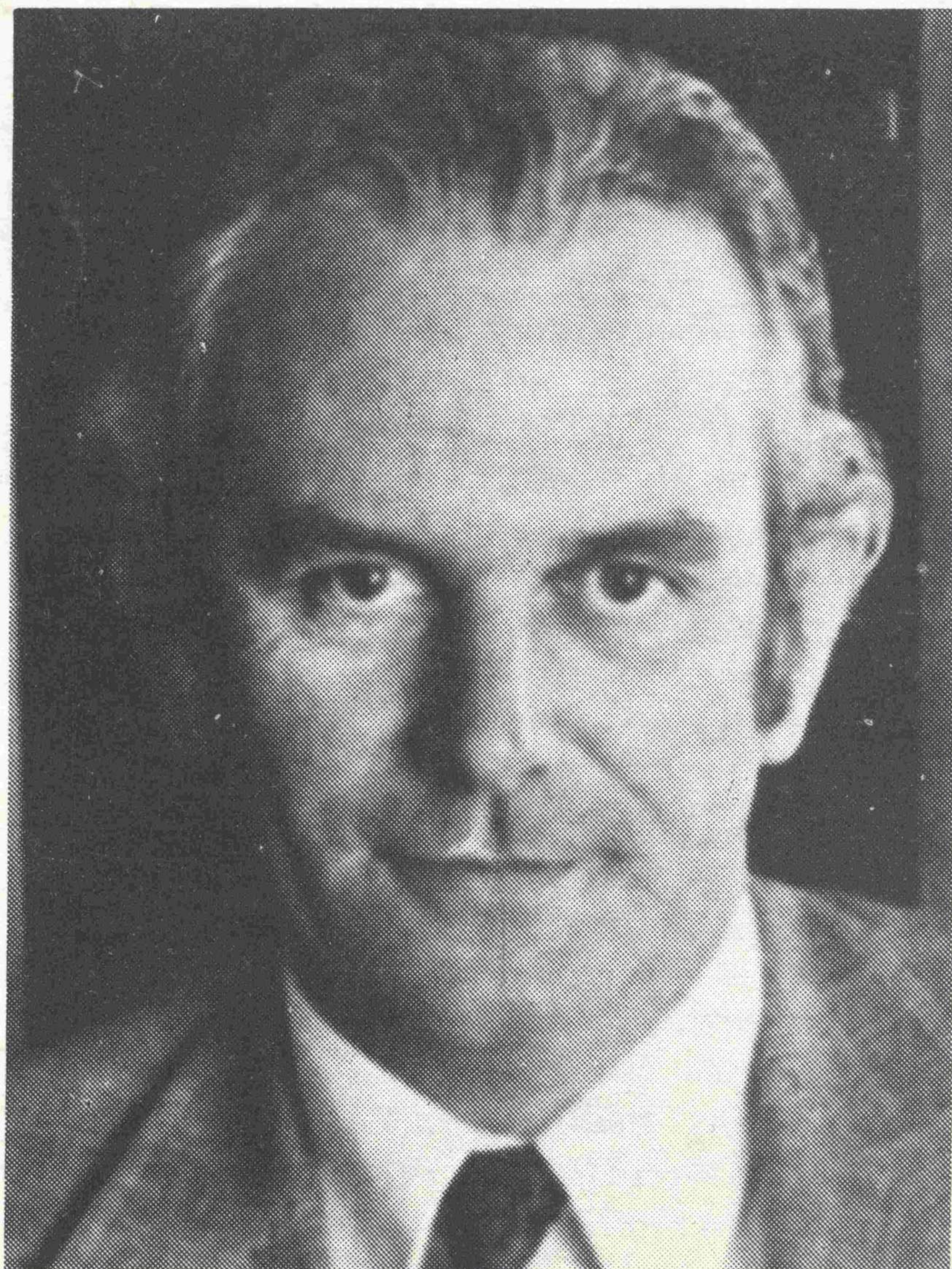
Mr Albert Holland has retired after 46 years' service with W & R Fletcher (N.Z.) Ltd. Mr Holland joined Fletcher's Tomoana works in 1929 and worked his way up to the position of company accountant in Wellington in 1939.

After overseas service in the second world war, Mr Holland went to the Westfield Freezing Company where he was involved in the early development of the company's first stock foods factory. Then after a period as Auckland provincial sales manager he moved to Christchurch in 1954 to establish Fletcher's frozen food business in New Zealand, Fropax (N.Z.) Ltd. From the time when this business was sold to Unilever in the mid 1960's he had been engaged in special duties for Fletcher's and their associate companies in the South Island.

New Zealand on the 1935 tour of Great Britain and Canada. He played the two tests against Australia in 1936, and played in all three tests against South Africa on their 1937 tour of New Zealand, when he was the outstanding forward of the series.

Tori joined the Tomoana works in 1938 and no doubt many of his friends and admirers all over the country will be interested to know that he is still going as strong as ever at 63 and is now in his 33rd year as a slaughterman on the chain.

(Photo courtesy Crown Studios)



COMPANY PROFILE

Mr Bob Jeffery, general manager of the Westfield Freezing Company since 1973, goes to Melbourne this month to take up his new position as manager for Victoria of W. Angliss and Co. (Australia) Pty Ltd. Mr Jeffery joined W. Weddel and Company in 1956 as a meat salesman in Birmingham. The following year he went to Riverstone, Sydney, as a trainee with W. Angliss and Co and then moved to the company's main Australian office in Sydney in the costing department. After a term as assistant production manager at the Footscray plant in Melbourne, Mr Jeffery then spent three years in relieving jobs before becoming assistant manager of the Lakes Creek works in Rockhampton. In 1968 he was manager of the Queensland Meat Export Company in Townsville and the following year he went to Brazil as assistant manager of Frigorifico Anglo. Mr Jeffery, who is married with two sons, Colin 17 and Ross 14, described his leisure pastime as reading, cooking and watching football.