

Lamb tailored for retail markets

W&R Fletcher (NZ) Ltd has diversified from traditional frozen lamb cutting, into full and part boneless lamb cuts.

An increased demand from both established and emerging markets for lamb cuts produced to retail level, has necessitated a conversion of the cutting room at the Westfield Works, which will now handle a chilled, rather than a frozen product.

Producing to retail level requires cutting and boning of carcasses beyond the traditional primal cut stage and packaging which will appeal to consumers because of its presentation and ease of handling, when taken from a supermarket freezer.

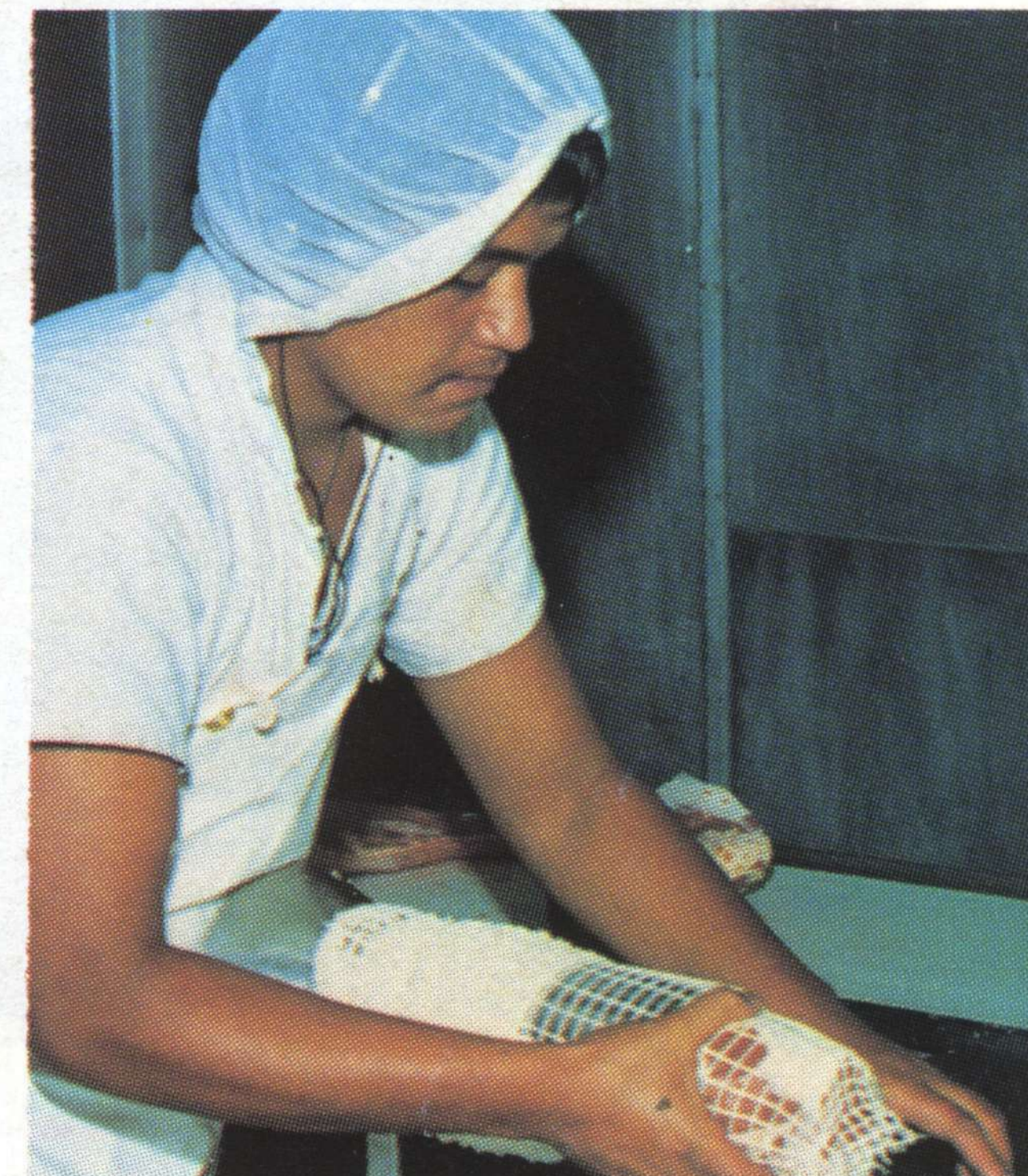
Mr Bishop says an arrangement has been finalised with the New Zealand Meat Producers' Board, to further

process a large volume of lambs at Westfield, into a variety of sophisticated specifications, ranging from individually wrapped boneless cuts, to retail presented chops.

As the types of cuts and the presentation required by each market varies, particular attention is paid to production, as it concerns the preparation of the chilled carcass and the boning, wrapping and labelling of final cuts.

800 tonnes

Mr Bishop estimates that the Westfield processing room will produce in the vicinity of 800 tonnes of lamb under the Weddel brand, in the 1983 season. He says the move towards further processing of New Zealand lamb should increase in the future as new markets open up.



STOP PRESS:

WRF sends aid

A RELIEF aid donation of canned meats worth \$5,000 was made by W & R Fletcher recently, after Fiji was hit by its worst hurricane in 50 years.

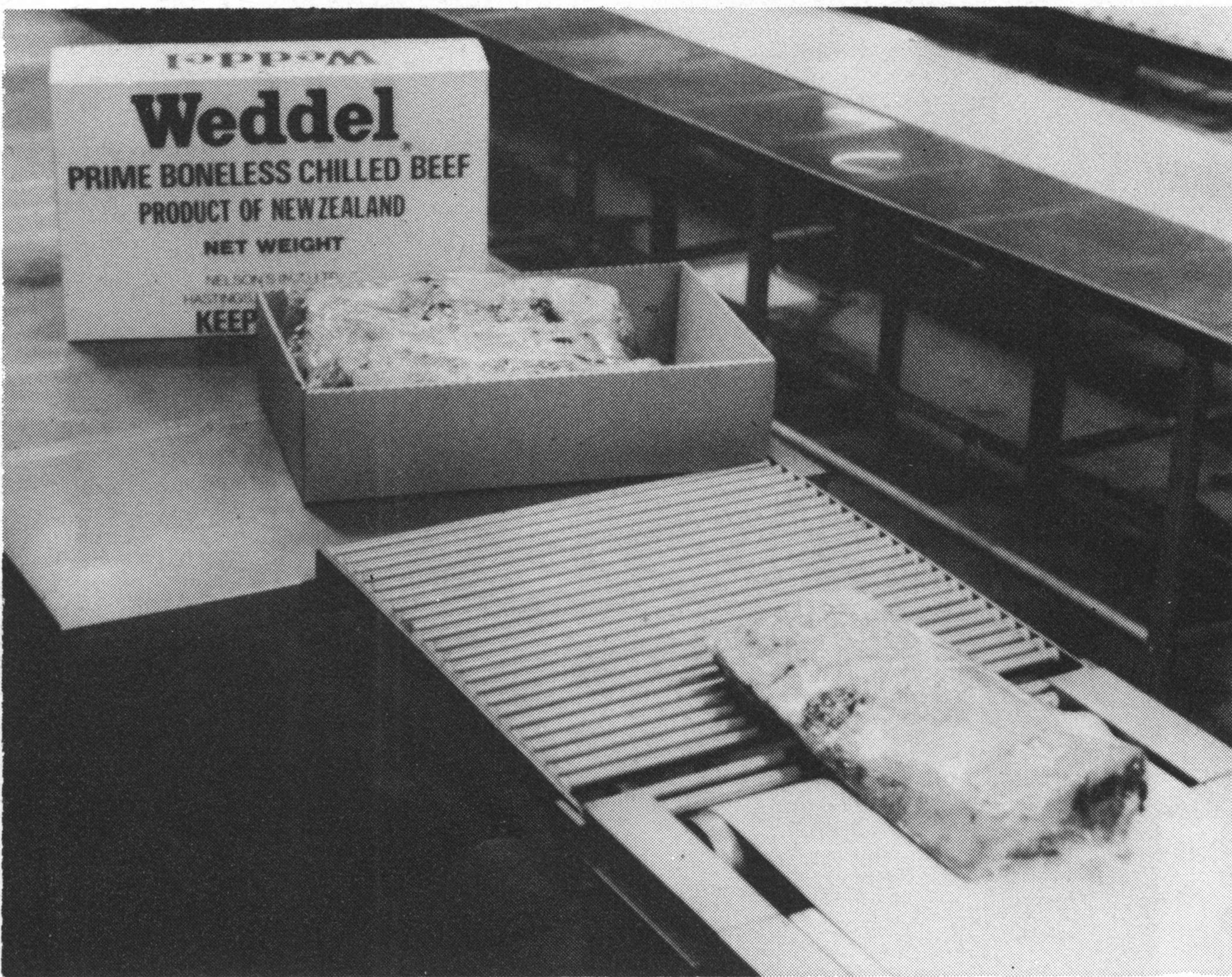
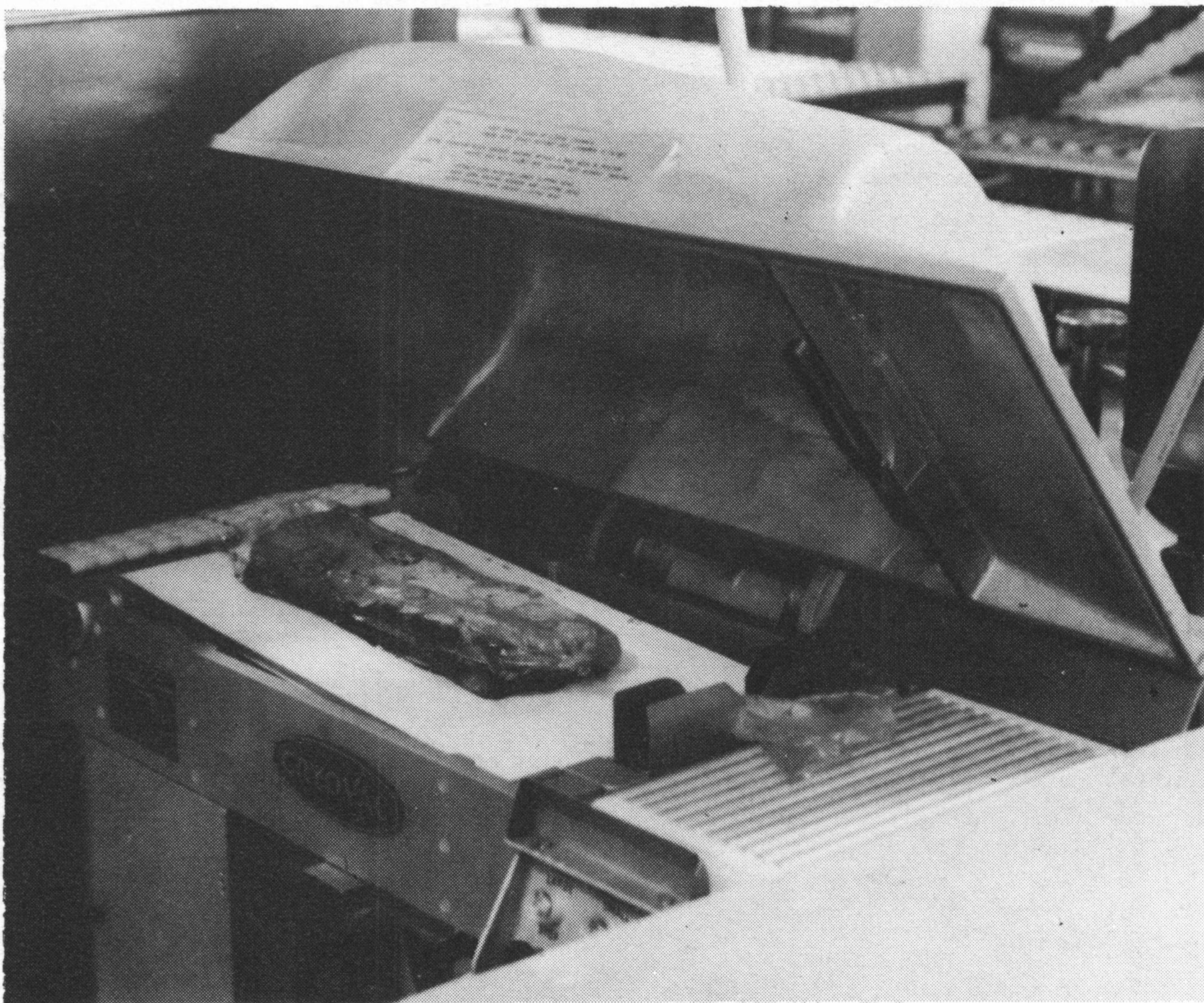
Hurricane Oscar devastated the south-west region of Viti Levu, Fiji's main island, and left about 200,000 people — almost a third of the population — dependent on government-supplied food rations.

The shipment of Palm Corned Beef and Salisbury Corned Mutton, made in conjunction with McCallum industries, was due to leave about March 24. As its donation to the cause, Pacific Lines agreed to carry the shipment free of freight charges aboard its vessel, Tui Cakau II. It was expected to take about a week to reach distressed families in the worst-hit areas of Nandi and Sigatoka.

Fiji absorbs 40 percent of canned meats exported by W & R Fletcher, with both Palm Corned Beef and Salisbury Corned Mutton forming a staple protein for many islanders.

The popularity of these products and a continuing interest in the well-being of the Pacific islands led the company to make a donation as it has done several times to hurricane-devastated areas in the past.





Demand doubles capacities

W&R Fletcher (NZ) Ltd has extended its facilities to double the existing chilled beef capacities at the Westfield and Tomoana Works.

This is as a result of "an extremely optimistic forward outlook" for the company's meat export marketing, says Export Manager, Mr Bruce Bishop.

"It is envisaged the primary market disposal for these high quality beef cuts will remain with Australia, Japan, South East Asia, the Pacific and the Middle East. Increased production capacity was necessary to satisfy the expected demand from these areas, which we could not have met with the existing facilities," he said.

Westfield was one of the pioneers in the chilled beef trade and because of its location adjacent to Auckland International Airport, it is ideally situated to cater for the international airfreight trade. The increased capacity will

also enable Westfield to produce both for airfreight and seafreight markets.

The new line at Westfield was expected to begin production as Weddel's World went to press, while Tomoana began export production in early March. Both plants have been equipped with the latest Cryovac machinery, supplied by W.R. Grace Ltd.

Photos show, above left: a boneless striploin which has undergone initial vacuum packing to remove all air from its protective plastic covering. The vacuum machine is part of new Cryovac machinery which has been installed at the Tomoana Works.

Below left: The cuts are packaged under the Weddel brand and destined for Middle East, Japanese and Australian markets.

Printer beats language problem

A new printing machine installed at Head Office will enable French and Middle East importers of W&R Fletcher meat to read cut descriptions in their own languages.

Head Office Production Officer, Neville Slight, explained that importing regulations laid down by various markets now require labelling to meet individual countries' criteria, covering the sale of meat at wholesale and retail levels.

"These regulations are becoming more stringent all the time and where, in the past, exporters were able to supply orders with a standard branded product, today a producer must comply with each importing country's regulations to maintain sales.

"The most difficult requirement, concerned applying

individual labels to each cut of meat indicating the cut, weight, production date, consumption date and exporter's name, both in English and the language of the market country.

"At present, the countries which require specialised labels are France and the Middle East areas. With a minimum of 32 different cuts, it is easy to see the number of translations required," Neville said.

Because of the stock control difficulties foreseen in keeping sufficient numbers of pre-printed labels on hand, it was decided to install a machine which would print foreign script on demand.

Orders can be made up individually and in sufficient time to be available at any of the W&R Fletcher plants during production.



Production Officer, Neville Slight, is pictured with the new ETI printer which is capable of printing meat cut description labels in French or Arabic.

Labs ensure high quality product

Meat science has become increasingly important in recent years as importers of New Zealand meat demand higher standards to satisfy their local markets.

The Tomoana, Kaiti and Westfield works have teams of technicians headed by chemists, who ensure that meat processed by W&R Fletcher (NZ) Ltd meets the standards required. It is in the laboratories that quality and hygiene of meat and plant is examined, assessed and ultimately endorsed.

Operation of labs is split into two areas — microbiological and chemistry sections.

In the microbiology section routine tests are carried out to ensure maintenance of plant and product hygiene. To monitor overall cleanliness of edible departments' work surfaces, they are randomly swabbed prior to starting work. The swabs are processed and the number of bacteria on surfaces is determined. As this result is delayed, a quality-control department check ensures departments do not process if there are any obvious visual defects.

Assessment

Routine checks of edible products are made prior to freezing. An area of surface tissue is removed and the total number of bacteria present is assessed. Also specific types of bacteria are isolated to ensure that the food does not contain large quantities of "food poisoning type" organisms.

The chemistry lab undertakes further assessments of products. To test quantity of fat in meat, random samples are taken during each day and undergo what is known as the Babcock method of fat analysis.

A drilling machine takes a core sample of meat from a cartoned carcass. This is then minced with a small portion being removed and heated in a test tube to separate fat from meat. The percentage of fat is read off a scale on the container.

By-products such as tallow, meat/bone meal and skins are all tested to attain

the highest standard of product possible. The laboratories are also responsible for analysis of produce from departments such as stock-foods and canned corned beef.

Another very important but common, everyday service activity, is the monitoring of trade wastes from works, to ensure they meet various local body requirements.

Because of market requirements a new task has been introduced to assess tenderness of meat. A sample of muscle (lamb) is taken, cooked at 80°C for an hour, cut to one square centimetre and placed in a tenderometer which measures (in kilopascals) the pressure needed to cut through the cube.

WRF first link in vital chain

W & R FLETCHER (NZ) Ltd's contribution to the New Zealand economy is considerably broader than their well known frozen export meat operations.

Since 1971, the company has been involved in the institution and growth of New Zealand Pharmaceuticals Ltd, a company in Linton near Palmerston North, which was established principally by the New Zealand meat industry to process animal by-products into valuable pharmaceuticals.

In 1975, NZP's first process came on stream, producing cholic acid and deoxycholic acid from animal gall. Since then, the freezing works owned by W & R Fletcher (NZ) Ltd have supplied over 100,000 kilograms of bile acid products.

Hydro-cortisone

NZP's Operations Manager, Dr Richard Garland, explained that bile acids are used in a variety of pharmaceutical products. For example, the common anti-inflammatory steroid drug, hydro-cortisone, is made from bile acids by a large pharmaceutical company in France.

Bile acids are also required for the manufacture of culture media used in detecting micro-organisms, which may be harmful to the human digestive system.



PICTURED above are Debbie Curtin (front) and Anne Johnston (rear), two laboratory technicians at the Westfield Works. The Westfield, Kaiti and Tomoana Works have laboratories which ensure that quality and hygiene of meat and plants meet export requirements.

The lab also tests pH of meat which, when high may indicate poor keeping quality. This relates particularly to chilled beef cuts for export.

From time to time both laboratories are involved in

research and problem-solving duties. However, the major emphasis is to provide management with an effective tool to ensure that a safe, quality product reaches the consumer.

lodges and travels to the lungs.

"To extract heparin from the New Zealand raw material source, NZP had to develop a new process to cope with the special New Zealand conditions. W & R Fletcher (NZ) Ltd fully supported NZP in this venture and installed the first mucosa processing plant at the Tomoana Works," Dr Garland said.

Heparin accepted

Several production samples of NZP heparin have been tested by Weddel Pharmaceuticals and following their acceptance, the first shipment to Weddel was despatched during August.

"Although it is often the pharmaceutical manufacturers supplying drugs to the doctors of whom the public are most aware, each of the companies involved is a vital link in the chain required to take a freezing works by-product, and process it through to a medically useful product.

"The possibility of utilising other freezing works' by-products is constantly under review and W & R Fletcher is always ready to make maximum use of the raw material available and at the same time, help provide some of the medicines our society requires," Dr Garland added.

Another animal by-product which is being refined in New Zealand, is the mucosal lining of sheep and lamb intestines, which is produced during the processing of intestines into sausage casings. The product which can be extracted from this freezing works effluent, is the anti-coagulant drug, heparin.

Heparin delays the clotting time of blood and is routinely used before, during, and after surgery, to help prevent blood clots forming in the deep leg veins — a condition which can lead to serious complications if a clot dis-

Long serving manager retires

MANAGER of New Zealand Stockfoods Ltd and W & R Fletcher's longest serving Wellington employee, Mr Ken Stephenson, retired last month after 44 years' service.

Mr Stephenson joined the company at 18 years of age, as assistant purchasing officer, but shortly afterwards joined the Royal New Zealand Air Force. He went to Canada on an air training scheme and served in the British coastal command and transport squadron as a navigator, seeing service in Britain, Europe and the Pacific throughout the Second World War.

Following the war, he returned to New Zealand and the purchasing department before being seconded to Jack Kent's local sales team.

In 1976, Mr Stephenson was appointed N.Z.S.'s manager and became responsible for merchandising outside the Auckland area. Three years later he received a gold watch for 40 years service.

A keen and very capable cricketer and tennis player "in his day", he now enjoys golf. His wife, Doreen, does valuable work translating material into braille for the Foundation for the Blind. They have three married children.

Mr Stephenson's wide experience and valuable contributions to the company will be greatly missed. Good luck for the future!



PICTURED is the Head Office telex team (from left): Karen Tapp; Supervisor, John Thorn; Eleni Fiso.

Top telex team vital

TUCKED away at Head Office are three people who operate the communications nerve centre of W & R Fletcher (NZ) Ltd. Without their skill, valuable time and business could be lost.

Eleni Fiso joined Supervisor John Thorn and Karen Tapp recently, and is by now, quite used to the din caused by two teleprinters and two telex machines.

Telex communications work requires high levels of concentration, initiative, an ability to work under pressure, and a thorough knowledge of the workings of the company.

"You have got to have your wits about you as nothing is the same from one moment to the next — one minute you will be doing an overseas telex on wool and the next, a local one on shipping," John said.

"You must know what is going on and quite often what someone in another department is thinking!"

John, Karen and Eleni operate two teleprinters

which relay directly to the Westfield, Kaiti and Tomoana Works. At the Tomoana end are Valerie Hope and Fiona Hearn. Duties at Westfield are shared by Ainsly Samson, Pamela Luhrs and Mavis Tobeck.

"We also operate two telex machines which cater for inland and overseas traffic to customers of W & R Fletcher," John said.

London

And not only is there speedy contact nationally, but also internationally to the London office. A Datel machine and the twelve-hour difference between New Zealand and Britain allow continuous exchanges of international information.

Because of the volume of information being transmitted, it is compressed using electrical impulses. Two hours of transmission time is reduced to about five minutes and the material is printed at about 700 words a minute.

John has worked on telex machines worldwide, gaining his initial training while he was in the Navy for 10 years and has been with the company since June last year. Karen changed her position as a Head Office junior for a telex machine and on-the-job-training, as did Eleni.

Obituary:

Mr A.H. Niker

IT IS with regret that Weddel's World reports the death late last year of Mr A.H. Niker, a well-respected, senior London colleague.

Following a period in London and the Argentine, Mr Niker was seconded to Wellington between 1936 and 1953, where he was in charge of cost and production. On his return to London, he became assistant to the Australasian Manager, Mr G. Drabble.

He was later in charge of the Secondary Industries, which included Fropax, before taking up a position as assistant to Lord Vesty. At the time of his retirement, he was responsible for the Management Services Department in London.

He is survived by his wife and two daughters.

A well-earned retirement

AN ASSOCIATION of 47 years with W & R Fletcher (NZ) Ltd's Gisborne Refrigerating Company, ended with the retirement at Christmas of Works Manager, Mr Wally Varley.

He began working with the company as a scales clerk in 1935 and later gained experience as a slaughterman. After training in pig and calf dressing, Wally became what was then known as an all round slaughterman, at a time when there was very little mechanisation.

With 12 years seasonal work behind him, Wally was appointed as assistant foreman in the Kaiti slaughterhouse in 1950, and senior foreman about four years later.

After he became Works Manager in 1963, Wally became involved in developing supervisory and man-

agement skills, in foremen throughout the industry.

He also recalls the first inter-office sports meeting held in Gisborne in 1974, and the pleasure he experienced while competing in the axemen's events against workers from all parts of the industry.

In his "younger days"



Kaiti's recently retired Works Manager, Mr Wally Varley.

Wally was a prominent axeman who competed widely and even now appears in local chopping events with some success.

He is actively involved in the Gisborne Search and Rescue team and is past president of the city's canoeing and tramping club, often leading parties of trampers. He has done extensive mountain climbing on Mounts Cook, Ruapehu and Egmont.

As for his retirement plans, Wally hopes to see more of New Zealand with his wife, Win, who "washed my dirty gear in the early days, and patiently listened to freezing works' problems thereafter".

He hopes to do some "modest" mountain climbing, and explore remote areas with a pack and fishing rod. Between training for a marathon and wood carving, Wally also wants to do some farm work to remain in touch with the pastoral industry.