OPENING ADDRESS

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The Lands and Survey Department organization in Rotorua was formed just prior to World War 2 as a branch of the Auckland Office and the first Assistant Superintendent appointed was the present Mayor of Rotorua. After the war it became a separate organization charged specifically with the job of producing farms for rehabilitation settlement.

By 1970 the branch settled its 1,000th farm and we are still left with some 200,000 acres of which 168,000 acres are in grass at various stages of development and consolidation awaiting individual settlement. Government agencies in Wellington have for a number of years been requesting more recovery of costs before settlement and, with the changing economics of farming and the dilemma of the one-man economic unit, settlement has now slowed almost to a stop.

We are now farming just on 1/2 million sheep and 70,000 cattle on some 53 blocks, with both Government and public attention focused on our endeavours to change a land development organization into a viable farming one.

There are a number of limiting factors in such a policy. I could mention the legacy of debt representing the difference between the cost of development and the value received at settlement for farms. I could mention the problems of changing people's thinking, from having a fully developed property to studying the trading accounts in an endeavour to ensure that money spent is represented by a return. I could mention a couple of unfavourable seasons climatically and the general cost price structure in farming, by far the most significant being the costs of controlling weeds and pests. This branch in the last ten years has spent over \$1 3/4 million on chemical weed control and an unknown sum on DDT for grass grub control. If rabbit rates are added, it is clear that we have spent over \$2 million on weed and pest control in a ten-year period.

Much of this expenditure would be justified in the eradication of hard weeds in the days of land development but I can find little justification for expenditure of this magnitude in the annual control of weeds like nodding thistle (*Carduus nutans*) and barley grass (*Hordeum murinum*) which are the two problem weeds at present. Cheaper ways have got to be found. Because we farm Crown land we are vulnerable. If we have one flowering nodding thistle or one patch of barley grass it is held up as an example of neglect by most farmers to most noxious weeds inspectors. In fact, we are often led to believe that we propagate them, but let me assure you that we, too, want eradication of all noxious weeds and we need your help to get better value for money spent.

Our current problems are:

- (1) It is quite impossible to budget accurately for weed control on individual blocks. The degree of infestation is unpredictable and eradication is chancy. Overall, however, there is very little reduction in the total cost.

ROTORUA LAND DEVELOPMENT WEED SPRAYING COSTS
(TRADING ACCOUNT YEAR)
OVERALL DISTRICT FIGURES

	Labour Costs				Total (\$)	Materials (\$)	Labour and Materials (\$)	Grass at start of year (ac)	Cost per acre (\$)
	Ground Sprayers (\$)	Helicopter (\$)							
1961-2	50,156	3,154			53,310	21,320	74,630	?	?
1962-3	67,084	21,090			88,174	35,280	123,454	152,917	0.80
1963-4	85,084	27,432			112,515	45,004	157,519	159,445	0.98
1964-5	83,546	33,678			117,224	46,888	164,112	176,001	0.93
1965-6	96,100	68,258			164,358	65,743	230,101	172,657	1.33
1966-7	109,522	42,864			152,386	48,467	200,853	169,657	1.19
1967-8	99,003	34,474			133,477	60,502	193,979	167,089	1.16
1968-9	106,466	44,022			150,488	86,197	236,685	169,083	1.39
1969-70	91,902	33,795			125,697	76,201	201,898	168,674	1.20
9-Year Total	788,863	308,767			1,097,630	485,602	1,583,232	1,488,450 est.	1.06
1970-1							166,565		

INDIVIDUAL COUNTY FIGURES: TOTAL COSTS

1966-7	Taupo	County			Totals and Averages
		Rotorua	Tauranga	Whakatane	
1967-8	Grass (ac)	...	...	...	169,657
	Cost (\$)	...	...	...	200,853
	Cost per acre (\$)	0.59	1.33	2.26	1.19
1968-9	Grass (ac)	89,450	42,854	22,295	167,089
	Cost (\$)	54,190	46,931	50,937	193,979
	Cost per acre (\$)	0.61	1.01	2.16	1.16
1969-70	Grass (ac)	89,056	45,501	22,295	169,083
	Cost (\$)	85,119	65,194	51,359	242,047
	Cost per acre (\$)	0.95	1.43	2.30	1.43
1967-8	Grass (ac)	90,646	44,531	21,381	168,674
	Cost (\$)	60,700	58,641	47,383	201,898
	Cost per acre (\$)	0.67	1.32	2.22	1.20

- (2) There never seem to be enough operators to kill weeds at the right time of the year.
- (3) There is always doubt that the correct chemical was used in the correct quantity through correctly calibrated plant. Failure in any of these aspects can lead to bitter argument and wasteful expenditure.
- (4) Spraying contractors are only as good as the staff they employ and one sees some pretty unusual types on the job.

I have heard it said that 1.5 lb of MCPA applied in the spring can reduce pasture growth by up to 3,000 lb of dry matter. How then can we afford to control nodding thistle in the spring? If everybody sprays in the late autumn and early winter, how can weed contractors have plant, men and equipment gainfully employed throughout the year? Perhaps the solution lies with the chemist. Can he produce a weedicide that will kill nodding thistle at any stage of growth and have no harmful effect on clover? Until this Utopia is reached, we are dependent on contractors to employ men who do not drive a vehicle over the country with the nozzle held out of the window with the tap turned on, who have their plant properly calibrated, who conscientiously endeavour to get a good cover and who ensure that drift does not destroy gardens, shrubs and planted conservation areas.

For some twenty years we have had almost complete control of grass grub. As the last effects of DDT are now wearing off, I believe there is plenty of evidence to suggest that this pest is again assuming major proportions and that we could be in serious trouble unless some economic biological or chemical control is quickly found. No farmer today can afford \$8 an acre to get partial annual control and no farmer today with a grass grub problem can afford to do nothing. These are just some of the problems we face.

We hope that your deliberations and discussions will give us some answers.