

## LINCOLN COLLEGE CENTENNIAL AWARD 1984

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W. G. WALKER

Bill Walker has been a genial host to parties of Lincoln College staff and students at frequent intervals since the early 1970s. The features of the management of the property which he has willingly discussed with student and staff visitors have included the adjustments to the management system as development proceeded, detailed financial information, problems associated with large scale development, scale economies in the design of the new management system and in particular, the excellence of his management organisation and stock performance. He has taken a more than passing interest in soil science research in his administrative role with the Southland Cooperative Phosphate Co. His interests in fertiliser use and in the associated research stems from his long experience with hill country improvement.

Shortly after the war, Bill took over his parents' 2280 ha farm at the top of the Kurawaio Gorge behind Clinton. At that time the property carried 1500 ewes, 500 hoggets and a few cattle, in all about 1900 stock units (excluding rabbits). Bill did his own shearing and crutching and it was hard to make ends meet. In 1953 he was one of the first people in South Otago to begin aerial topdressing when, with the able support of his wife, he began a development programme which reached its peak in the 1960s.

By 1974 the property was carrying 14 000 stock units, 8 000 as sheep and 6 000 as cattle. The change-over to Perendales was completed by the early 1970s and since then stock carried and stock performance have continued to rise although more slowly. Today, Bill farms in partnership with his son-in-law, Jeff

Ware. The property now carries approximately 16 000 stock units, the sheep numbers have increased to 10 000. Where 0.8 stock units per hectare were carried formerly there are now 7. Stock performances which exceeds 130% lambing, 4.3 kg wool and 95% calving sets an example for many to follow. Put in perspective at 5 300 stock units farmed per man, this performance is outstanding.

Much is attributed to the low labour requirement of the Perendales as 3 more men would have been needed if the Romneys had not been replaced. However, everything about the property has been geared to low labour inputs from fencing and race placement through to the occasional use of aeroplanes for spotting stock. There are now 530 hectares of grassed paddocks and all lambs and cattle are fattened. As a 3 man operation everything is well managed.

The property is very attractive and with performance to match is seen by visiting Lincoln College staff and students to reflect the perception and hard work so necessary for success and leadership in agriculture. Bill's own personal achievements are considerable but equally important in this award are his willingness to communicate his ideas about farming to students at a formative stage of their careers. Without such individuals the task of teaching and infecting students with enthusiasm for sound progressive agriculture would be infinitely more difficult. For these reasons Bill Walker is a worthy recipient of this award.

A. R. Sykes