

Business Personalities No. 10

G. F. LOFT & SONS

To make a substantial contribution to national production is to carry out a worthwhile job, but to do this and at the same time work gratuitously for the welfare of others is to merit the goodwill and warm regard of a grateful community.

This is the exemplary record of the Loft family of Newport.

Founded in 1916 by the late Mr. G. F. Loft, the tool factory operating under the name of G. F. Loft and Sons has made steady progress over the years. The founder came to Newport when about six or seven years of age, and spent the rest of his life there. He died in the first year of world war II. His widow, who lives next door to the factory, was the first pianist in the Newport Baptist Church and today she is the oldest living member of the church.

In the initial stage of the business the old style forges were used, and nearly the whole of the work was done by hand. Now the heavier part of the work is done by a power hammer. During the war the firm carried out colossal contracts for the Defence Dept., and to cope with such work it was found necessary to introduce improved methods. The firm has a big interstate trade in hand tools and contract for every State Government Dept., in addition to supplying Melbourne merchants. Novelty lines such as old types of scroll iron work are also produced, and these include attractive fireside sets. Automatic machines are making it possible to put through a great bulk of output.

MODEL WORKSHOP.

There are only seven automatic eye-bending machines in Aus-

tralia, and Lofts have one of them. They built it themselves, and the job took twelve months. They also have one of the most modern electric flash-butt welders. The workshop is probably the only place of its kind, having all types of welders — fire, oxy, arc and flash-butt.

Recently a new section was commenced to handle repairs and transport. All types of tow bars are fitted to cars. The service of this section is greatly appreciated by local contractors and motorists.

The firm supplies iron and steel work to local industries.

There are three brothers in firm—Reg, Brand and Eric. All were born in Newport and all still live in the district. Cr. Eric (Dick) Loft is founder of Newport Baptist Baseball Club, and has been captain and coach for a period of eight years. Today it is claimed that this is the biggest baseball team in the State. Cr. Loft learned his baseball at Williamstown, going up from the bottom to the top grades. For years he was captain of Newport Baptist Cricket Club, and he has played football with Williamstown Seconds for three years, but gave up football for baseball.

At the present time he is interested in three businesses besides the tool factory. These are two dairies at Footscray and a semi-wholesale milk business with Mr. Harry Griffiths, which operates from Williamstown. Cr

operates from Williamstown. Cr Loft is one of the original members of Spotswood Recreational Centre, the committee of which are at present voluntarily grading the ground for a municipal golf course. Cr. Loft's turn at this job falls on Saturday afternoon after sport. He is chairman of the Newport Baptist Baseball Club in which there are four teams. When all four teams win together, he puts on a pie night for the players. He has already given them one this year to start off the season.

When the Recreation Centre was set up there were no boys' clubs of any sort in Spotswood, but the centre resulted in the formation of several clubs, the lead of which has gone to the churches. Every Saturday night Newport Baptist Church provides a film night at the local migrants camp. This venture was supported by Cr. Loft till such time as it could run itself. The film night is in the nature of a gesture to new Australians.

BABY OF COUNCIL.

Cr. Loft is a vice-president of Williamstown Football Club, and also a trophy donor to the club,

and a vice-president of Williamstown Rovers. He attends Association football as often as he is free to do so. He was at the unfurling of the premiership flag. At the age of 39 Cr. Loft is the "baby" of Williamstown council. He is a life-governor of Williamstown Hospital and secretary of the Williamstown Cemetery Trust.

Mr. Reg. Loft, oldest of the brothers, is undemonstrative and of a retiring nature. He has been a very good cricketer, but today his main recreation is shooting. He has a holiday home at Heathcote Junction with 10 or 11 acres of ground, and last year he planted out a number of fruit trees on the property. He approaches his pastoral pursuits by way of a hobby and not

suits by way of a hobby and not for profit. He is a staunch church worker and an office-bearer of Newport Baptist. His wife runs the girls' gymnasium in connection with the same church. This is claimed to be the biggest girls' gymnasium in Victoria. Their daughter, Mrs. Margaret Young, is in charge of the office.

Mr. Brand Loft is founder of Newport scouts (originally Newport Baptist scouts) as well as of the Boys' Brigade movement at Williamstown Baptist. He takes a keen interest in cricket, but at the moment he is interested in caravanning, having just finished building a caravan for himself.

Another brother, Fred, has also taken a keen interest in the business. He is a toolsmith but his activities have been mostly confined to the Shell Company. Fred is a prominent figure in local social functions.

A sister, Mrs. A. E. Smith, has been engaged with her husband in missionary work in India. They are now at East Camberwell.

The elder sister, Mrs. Lowns, has been superintendent of the primary class at Newport Baptist Sunday School for fifteen years.

Cr. Loft's wife is connected with Red Cross. She is a trained nurse, and has lectured at the local Red Cross. She arrived in Australia from Scotland at the age of four. Wives of Messrs. Reg and Brand Loft were bred and born in Williamstown municipality.

The father of this notable family founded the Altona Baptist Church.