

trawling operations in New South Wales, offered his services in the first place, and then the owners of the trawler "Rita," of Napier, offered to charter that vessel to the department for the purpose, but after consideration the Government did not see their way to incur the necessary expenditure. There are now several trawlers regularly at work in Hawke's Bay, the industry having become quite an extensive one. As it was found that large quantities of small fish were being destroyed by being caught and killed in the trawls, Mr. Moorhouse, the Inspector of Fisheries for the Wellington District, was sent to Napier to see what could be done to prevent this. After going out in some of the trawlers while at work, and looking carefully into the matter, he recommended that the mesh of the body of the nets used should be 5 in., and the cod end $4\frac{1}{2}$ in., so as to give the small fish an opportunity of escaping. He also recommended that the minimum size at which flat fish could be taken should be 11 in. for soles and 10 in. for flounders, instead of 9 in. for both fish as at present. These recommendations are now under consideration.

Mr. L. F. Ayson, the Curator of the fish-ponds at Masterton, was sent by the Government to Europe and America early last year to obtain information respecting the introduction of suitable fresh- and salt-water fishes into New Zealand, and to inspect and report upon the principal fish-hatcheries and acclimatisation establishments generally. He has recently returned to the colony, and has supplied valuable information to the Government. On his return he brought with him a consignment of two million white-fish ova from America. These he took to the West Coast, for the purpose of putting them into the Lake Kanieri hatchery; but, as the weather was very warm, notwithstanding that every precaution was taken, the eggs in some of the trays in each case had hatched out before being unpacked, and in the other trays they were so near hatching that they came out almost as soon as they were put into the water. The United States and the Canadian fish authorities recommend that these fish should be liberated in the water to be stocked as soon as they are hatched out, and this plan was adopted in this instance, the fish being put in the Kanieri Lake. The loss from the date of packing in America till arrival in Wellington was about 10 per cent.; from Wellington to the Kanieri hatchery, about 20 per cent.; and in the hatchery and in liberating, about 5 per cent.: a total loss of about 35 per cent. Some years ago a shipment of white-fish eggs was imported, and the fry were liberated in Lake Rotoiti, in the Nelson District. So far as can be ascertained, none of the fish have been caught, but steps are now being taken to ascertain for certain whether they exist in the lake. Mr. Ayson is now inspecting the site of the proposed fish-hatchery at Purakanui. Regulations have been made prohibiting the use of nets for taking whitebait in "paddocks." These "paddocks" are formed by constructing groins from the banks of rivers and streams, and making holes for the fish between the groins and banks. The fish were trapped in the "paddocks," so that very few could be caught above them.

The close season for seals has been extended up to the 30th June, 1900. The sea-lion skins which the master of the "Hinemoa" obtained at the Auckland Islands have been tanned, and are stated to be worth from 5s. to 7s. each. The oil from the animals is stated by experts to be suitable for making soft soap, and in a small proportion—say, about 5 per cent.—with tallow, for hard soaps. It is valued at about 1s. a gallon, but there appears to be very little demand for it.

Application has been made for the lease of a sponge-bed at the Chatham Islands, and to enable it to be leased an Order in Council has been issued bringing sponge-beds under the provisions of "The Sea-fisheries Act, 1894," which provide for leasing by public auction or tender.

The following convictions were obtained for breaches of the law: J. Cordella was fined £2 and costs for selling a sealskin, and C. Georgeson, to whom it was sold, was fined £1 and costs for having it in his possession; J. Harmer was fined £1 and costs for selling undersized garfish; J. Oberhuber was fined £1 and costs for catching small flounders; and T. Knudson was fined £1 and costs for selling undersized flounders.

Weather Reporting.—Captain Edwin has continued to make and circulate daily weather forecasts. Arrangements are now being made for showing daily weather forecasts at Cape Maria van Diemen, Tiritiri, Cape Campbell, Farewell Spit, and Cape Foulwind lighthouses for the benefit of passing vessels.

Examination of Masters, Mates, and Engineers.—A hundred and seventy persons passed their examinations for certificates of competency, and fifty-seven failed. Of those who passed, a hundred and twenty were masters, mates, and engineers of sea-going vessels, and fifty were masters and engineers of steamships plying within restricted limits. Twelve certificates of service were issued. The question has been raised as to the interpretation of the regulation prescribing the qualifications of a candidate for examination for a first mate's certificate. The regulation provides that he must show the following service:—

- (a.) One year in a capacity not lower than fourth mate of a foreign-going vessel whilst holding a second mate's certificate for foreign-going vessels; or
- (b.) One year and a half in a capacity not lower than only mate in a home-trade or coasting vessel whilst holding a second mate's certificate for foreign-going vessels, or a mate's certificate for home-trade passenger-ship.

The Chief Examiner was of opinion that the service under (a) and (b) must be treated as alternative; but the interpretation placed upon the regulation by this department was that, if a candidate had insufficient service under (a), service under (b) could be added to it to make up sufficient to qualify him for examination. The matter was submitted for decision to the Board of Trade, whose regulation is identical with that in New Zealand, and the reply received bears out the department's view. It has also been ascertained that this interpretation is placed upon the regulation by the Marine Boards of Victoria, South Australia, and Queensland; but the interpretation which was put upon it by the Marine Board of New South Wales was that the service must be treated as alternative. It is doubtful from the reply received from Tasmania which interpretation was put on it in that colony. The office of Chief Examiner of Masters and Mates is at present vacant, but steps are being taken to obtain a Chief Examiner from England.