

by such a plant would be very material. The fishermen at present there were, he said, often capable of catching fish in quantities that could not be dealt with under present conditions, on account of the difficulty of conveying them to the Auckland market. The provision of a chilling plant would overcome this difficulty.

Though in our opinion there is not the same urgent need for the erection of plants in these two places as there is in the case of Helensville, we consider that the erection of plants in these localities, more particularly at Whangaruru, would be of very great value to the industry.

INSURANCE AND ASSISTANCE.

One difficulty that is encountered by fishermen is the extremely high cost of insurance of their boats and gear. In the present circumstances few of them are able to insure at all. From the evidence put before us we formed the opinion that the Government Insurance Department could insure fishing-boats and gear at very much lower premiums than are asked by the private insurance companies. The Commission was informed that the average loss of fishing-boats and gear throughout the Dominion does not exceed 2 per cent. The Commission had not before it evidence sufficiently full to enable it to recommend any scheme of insurance, but we are of opinion that insurance by the Government at reasonable rates would afford the fishermen very substantial relief and give encouragement to the industry. We beg to recommend that arrangements be made for the insurance of boats and vessels engaged in the fishing industry and their gear by the Government Insurance Department at the lowest rates which inquiries show to be practicable.

We are also of opinion that very great encouragement would be given to the industry if the Government would make advances to fishermen upon the security of their boats and gear, in the same way as advances are made to settlers. It was proved before the Commission that the possibilities of the expansion of the industry are enormous. The evidence shows that the waters around New Zealand teem with fish. Inspector Flinn informed us that in the bays and inlets towards Russell there are very large supplies of fish, at present scarcely touched. The fishermen in the Kaipara and Manukau stated that they could enormously increase their catches. At the Thames the managing director of the Thames Fisheries (Limited) informed us that with confidence his company was making provision to deal with 100 tons of fish weekly, and it was prepared to make further provision if it was found to be necessary. Mr. Ayson testified that there were very large quantities of fish in the Bay of Plenty, and the Hauraki Gulf has consistently proved itself a magnificent fishing-ground. If the industry is encouraged in the direction we are now recommending a large number of men without capital will have open to them remunerative employment.

Without, in our opinion, injuring the trawling industry in the least, our recommendation with respect to the trawling-limits reserves a large sea area in the Hauraki Gulf to line and net fishermen. If this branch of the industry is encouraged a large number of men will engage in it. The trawling industry can be depended upon with its own resources to expand as the market extends. With the increase in the production of fish that would be ensured in these two directions a steady supply of fish could be sent not only to the large centres, but also to the inland towns of the Dominion, while a large export trade would probably be developed.

Another way in which the fishing industry could be assisted by the Government with advantage would be for the Marine Department to import and sell to those engaged in the industry, at reasonable prices, material and gear such as nets, hooks, rope, and benzine.

INSPECTION OF FISH.

Several other matters were brought before us by the representatives of the line and net fishermen. Complaint was made that the inspection of fish on its arrival in Auckland from outlying districts by an inspector appointed by the Auckland City Council had been discontinued. The ground of this complaint was that the fishermen felt that on occasions their fish were rejected by the dealers as not being in fit condition when the fish were in fact in good condition but the dealers did not want them. The fishermen were of opinion that official inspection would save them this difficulty. Their evidence was to the effect that during the time when an inspector was in office the rejection of fish on the ground that it was not in good condition occurred much less frequently than when there was no inspection. At present the only inspection of fish is in the hands of the Public Health Department. The object of inspection is the protection of the public, and not the facilitation of business between dealers and fishermen. So long as the public is protected from having sold to it fish in a condition unsuitable for human consumption we can hardly see our way to recommend the appointment of inspectors, the expense of carrying out whose duties would be a burden upon the whole industry, in order to facilitate the business of a small number of those engaged in the sale of fish.

FISH-MARKETS AND AUCTIONING FISH.

The line and net fishermen also asked the Commission to recommend that they be allowed to auction their own fish in the City of Auckland. They stated that the only place where fish are sold by auction is the Auckland Fish-market, and that there, when fish are auctioned, they receive low prices. They were under the impression that the provisions of the Auckland City Markets and Empowering Act, 1915, preclude them from dealing with their fish in any other way than by sale to the present fish-dealers, including the Municipal Fish-market, or by auction at the Municipal Market.

Section 5 of the Auckland City Markets and Empowering Act, 1915, makes it unlawful to sell fish wholesale or by auction within the city save at the Fish-market or some other market appointed by the Council. This seems to us to leave it open to the fishermen to arrange with the City Council for the appointment of some suitable place as a market where they may sell their fish by auction or otherwise.