

BOARD OF ADVICE.

There are at present four astronomical societies in New Zealand—one at Wanganui, one at Dunedin, one at Wellington, and one at New Plymouth. These bodies should have some official recognition in the Astronomical Department of the Dominion, as their co-operation has always been of value to the Observatory. It is suggested, therefore, that the New Zealand Astronomical Society and the New Zealand Institute should be the nominating bodies for an Observatory Board of Scientific Advice. This method of nominating such a Board would follow the precedent of that in operation in England, where the Board of Visitors of the Royal Observatory at Greenwich is composed of seven Fellows of the Royal Society, seven Fellows of the Royal Astronomical Society, the Cambridge and the Oxford University Professors of Astronomy, and the Hydrographer to the Admiralty. The New Zealand Observatory Board might therefore be composed of three members nominated by the New Zealand Institute, three members nominated by the New Zealand Astronomical Society, and the Naval Adviser to the Government. The functions of such a Board would be—(1) To advise the Minister on Observatory matters; (2) to consider and advise upon the reports of the Government Astronomer.

THE EFFECTS OF THE WAR ON THE OBSERVATORY.

The effects of the war on the Observatory have been most serious, and some of the more important may be referred to hereunder :—

(1.) All building operations were suspended. The need for accommodation is most urgent, as rooms are wanted for offices, library, seismographs, clocks, wireless telegraphy, constant-temperature room, record-room, and store-room, &c.

(2.) New clocks of high precision were authorized before the war, but have not yet been obtained.

(3.) The whole equipment has had to await overhaul and bringing up to date. Much of it dates from 1868, and urgently requires attention.

(4.) No steps could be taken to provide additional equipment such as meridian circle, equatorial telescopes, and auxiliary instruments for spectroscopic and photographic work.

(5.) Proposals for the reorganization of the Observatory and for the carrying-out of a programme of scientific work have had to be postponed.

(6.) Proposals for additional scientific staff have had to be postponed. The need for some addition to the scientific staff has become insistent, and the recent inauguration of the wireless time service makes this important public utility dependent entirely on the health of one officer, besides limiting his activities to Wellington, when he should be enabled to carry out astronomical work in other parts of the Dominion.

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VIII. REPORT OF THE CONSERVATOR OF FISH AND GAME.

Rotorua, 8th June, 1920.

I have the honour to submit my report of the work done in connection with the fresh-water fisheries for the season 1919-20.

On account of the improved condition of the fish in Lake Rotorua it was decided not to operate on this lake, but again deal with fish solely from Lake Rotoiti. Fishing operations were started there on the 1st November, 1919, the number of fish taken during the month being 824, as compared with 2,474 for the corresponding period of the previous season. During December and January 1,680 fish were netted, as compared with the previous year's catch of 4,929. A marked improvement has taken place in the condition of the fish, but for some reason they were not being taken in sufficient numbers to warrant keeping the Rotorua depot open for the sale of fish.

It was then decided to transfer the staff and boats to Taupo, to work the northern end of the Taupo Lake. In the meantime a small cleaning-shed had been erected on the bank of the Waikato River, near the Taupo Wharf, and fishing operations started there on the 9th February. Right from the start good catches were recorded there, and the fish taken were sent by the Department's lorry to Rotorua, where they found a ready sale.

Later the weather changed, and for day after day, on account of the high seas running, it was almost impossible to use the net. On many occasions a start was made, but after getting well away the launch had to return on account of the high seas encountered. This weather, with the unsatisfactory labour available with which to carry on the work, has resulted in the revenue from the sales of fish being somewhat less than last season's returns.

At Tokaanu operations started on the 5th January, and for some weeks fair catches were made, the catches being consigned to Wellington and elsewhere. The consignments were conveyed to Waimarino under a contract made with Mr. P. A. Grace, of Tokaanu, and with the exception of one or two delays during the season the contracting was satisfactorily performed, at a rate