

SICK AND INJURED SEAMEN.

The total amount paid by shipowners to sick and injured seamen under the provisions of the Shipping and Seamen Act, 1908, and its amendments, was £18,270 5s. 9d., as against £21,649 2s. 1d., a decrease of £3,378 16s. 4d.

REGISTRATION OF SHIPPING.

On the 31st December, 1928, there were on the register of vessels in the Dominion 88 sailing-vessels, of 11,303 tons register; 250 steamers, of 93,771 tons register; and 222 motor-vessels, of 5,815 tons register; as compared with 90 sailing-vessels, of 11,418 tons register; 261 steamers, of 101,972 tons register; and 214 motor-vessels, of 4,414 tons register, at the end of the previous year.

The number of seamen and boys employed on board vessels registered in New Zealand was 3,611, as compared with 3,593 at the end of 1927.

PROSECUTIONS.

Legal proceedings for offences under the various statutes administered by the Department were instituted in fifty cases. Prosecutions under each Act were as follows: Fisheries Act, 23; Harbours Act, 2; Inspection of Machinery Act, 13; Shipping and Seamen Act, 12.

ROSS SEA DEPENDENCY.

The following table shows the number of whales captured, the quantity of oil obtained, and the royalty paid since the Ross Sea Dependency was placed under New Zealand administration:—

Year.				Number of Whales.	Barrels of Oil.	Revenue.		
						£	s.	d.
1923-24	..	..	..	221	17,791	200	0	0
1924-25	..	..	..	427	32,165	200	0	0
1925-26	..	..	..	531	37,700	1,720	12	6
1926-27	..	..	..	786	70,300	2,921	5	0
1927-28	..	..	..	1,455	124,000	7,176	15	0
1928-29	..	..	..	1,340	122,000	13,961	17	6

NOTE.—One barrel=40 imperial gallons.

During the 1928-29 season three floating factories operated in the Ross Sea Dependency, two of them under license and one not licensed. Two further companies are in process of formation with the object of whaling in the same waters, and both have been promised licenses if flotation is successful. One of these companies is purely English, and the other New Zealand and Australian. It is understood that the unlicensed factory which has previously operated in the Ross Sea will return for the 1929-30 season, and that another very large vessel is being fitted out with the same intent. There is at present insufficient data available to enable any one to say just what degree of intensity of fishing the waters will stand without unduly depleting the whales, but it is clear that if pelagic whaling continues to increase as it has been doing there must come a time when reproduction of whales will be seriously affected. There is always one safeguard, however, which should prevent the fishing becoming too intensive, and that is that these Antarctic expeditions involve a huge capital outlay and operating expenditure, and when competition becomes more intensive than the supply of whales justifies some of the expeditions must go to the wall. Therefore fishing expeditions will have to be adjusted to economic result.

The possibility of such a state of affairs will, it is hoped, force all concerned to realize the necessity for international agreement for the regulation of whaling operations to an extent that will ensure the continuance of the industry by maintaining the required standard of reproduction.

It is hoped that the "Discovery" scientific expedition, which will work in the Antarctic during the 1929-30 season, will add materially to our knowledge on the subject.

FISHERIES.

The work of the Fisheries Branch of the Department is dealt with exhaustively in a special appended report by the Chief Inspector of Fisheries (Mr. A. E. Hefford).

Apart from the ordinary administration and investigation work of the Branch, special attention has been given to the controversy which has been waged over the methods of fishing in Hauraki Gulf and the restrictions which have been, or should be, placed upon them. These methods are trawling, Danish-seining, set-nets, and long-lining. Those interested in each of these particular classes of fishing contend that the next most effective method of catching is ruining the industry and the fishing-grounds. All four methods are more or less necessary to keep the market supplied. The Department's function and responsibility is to impose such restrictive measures as are deemed to be necessary to protect the fisheries, in order that a sufficiency of fish may be left for natural production and maintenance of the fisheries.

It must be borne in mind that the waters in which the various methods of fishing can be carried on are limited. The smaller vessels such as are used by the line and set-net fishermen can operate, as a rule, only in the more inshore and sheltered waters. The Danish-seining, for which a somewhat larger launch is used, is also restricted in its operations by weather conditions and by the fact that it