

commission is the difference between the wholesale price of 21s. and 14s. 6d. f.o.r. Bluff plus railage and cartage, the railage upon a per-sack basis varying a little according to the quantities railed at any one time.

Retailers submitted representations asking for the fixation of the retail price of oysters, in order to eliminate price-cutting, which has been more or less prevalent in the city. They also stated that if the grounds are being depleted the catching season should be reduced to six months, and suggested that in any event February should be cut out of the season, as losses are heavy in this particularly warm month.

These representations have been taken into consideration in forming the recommendations relating to the dredge-oyster industry.

Napier.

Oysters cost 24s. 6d. per sack on rail Wellington, and railage to Napier is 4s. 6d. plus 6d. cartage, making a total cost of 29s. 6d. They are retailed at 9d. per dozen in the shell, 1s. opened, and 10d. opened for large quantities. No complaints as to quality were made.

Gisborne.

Oysters cost 24s. 6d. per sack on rail Wellington plus 12s. 6d. freight to Gisborne, equalling 37s. They are retailed at 1s. per dozen on the shell and 1s. 6d. opened on the plate.

Wellington.

Complaints were made that oysters were too small during the 1937 season and that a number were stale. Under the best transport conditions oysters which leave Bluff on Sunday night arrive in Wellington on Tuesday morning. The selling commission received by the N.Z. Fisheries, Ltd., is 2s. per sack.

Stewart Island Canneries, Ltd.

This concern now confines its activities to the canning of oysters only. At one time blue cod and crayfish were canned also, but it was found that in the case of the former there was little or no demand, and in the latter technical difficulties in canning and irregularities in supply were encountered. The company as now constituted took over in 1930 from an earlier company which went into liquidation. In 1932 the paid-up capital was increased from £4,500 to £6,150. With the assistance of the Department of Industries and Commerce, overseas markets have been built up until in 1936 the total sales were 8,826 cases (of forty-eight 11 oz. tins), Australia taking 5,535 of these, the United Kingdom 775, while sales within New Zealand amounted to 2,257 cases. When it is considered that up to forty-five wage-earners are employed and close upon £4,000 per annum in factory wages is paid, it will be realized that this industry is of material benefit to Bluff. The product is well packed, and can now be sold in increasing quantities, but bound up with the development of the company are matters concerning the conservation of the oyster-beds and the claim of the local markets in preference to those of overseas.

While the cannery was limited to a certain turnover, no great difficulty was experienced in procuring the requisite quantities of oysters from the oyster fleet, but as the company's trade expanded, simultaneously with an increased local demand for fresh oysters, it became apparent that the surplus from each boat for supply to the cannery was likely to be shortened. Moreover, a basis of increased wages was being sought by the oyster-workers.

It became evident that the price of 7s. 6d. per sack for oysters supplied to the cannery must rise. It is now 9s. 6d. per sack. As an outcome, the company applied for, and was later granted, a license under the Industrial Efficiency Act, to operate its own boat. This followed upon the investigation and recommendation made by the Committee, and in its recommendation the Committee, having regard to the interests of the industry as a whole, made it quite clear that no additional license ought to be granted if application were subsequently made. That application was made, and the issue of a license refused. The Committee reiterates its recommendation, but qualifies it to the extent that a survey of the oyster-beds must be made prior to any consideration whatever being given to the granting of further licenses. (See recommendation in section dealing with the dredge-oyster industry.)

Medicinal Preparations.

Two small companies, Thyrodone Development, Ltd., and Hygienic Packers, Ltd., have recently been promoted in Invercargill with the object of manufacturing and marketing oyster concentrates in capsule form as medicinal preparations. The former commenced operations in 1936 and the latter in April, 1937, and altogether it is expected that approximately thirty-five sacks of oysters per day will more than cover the requirements of both companies. Even this quantity or less might be looked upon as making a substantial inroad upon fresh oyster-supplies, and the position will need to be watched in case there should be any sudden acceleration in the turnover of these companies.

EXPORT AND INTERNAL MARKETING OF FISH.

Bearing in mind the further conservational measures which we consider must be brought into effect to protect our fish stocks, and having regard to the desirability of increasing internal consumption by means of a better system of distribution, it becomes evident that our export trade in fish will not remain at its present volume, but will decline as time goes on. As a means of correcting in part New Zealand's adverse trade balance with Australia, which takes practically all our export fish, this product, had the stocks been available, would have been capable of finding a widening market under proper organization.