

would be in the return of empties owing to irregular service by cargo-steamer. On the other hand, empty sacks in bundles of one hundred can easily be landed by the passenger-steamer or by the cargo-steamer, as the case may be.

In regard to Picton, however, the Committee can see no reason why cases should not be used for the transport of all fish (exclusive of crayfish).

While the French Pass fishermen stated that they have received no definite complaints as to their fish arriving in Wellington in a sweated or damaged condition, evidence was submitted by Wellington buyers to show that in the summer-time in particular the quality of fish transported in this way leaves much to be desired. Shipment in sacks, particularly when they contain 230 lb. to 240 lb. net weight of fish, is contrary to the best interests of all concerned, in that the contents must necessarily become bruised in handling and crushed and sweated when stacked for transport; and, having in mind the fact that the small quantities of fish despatched from French Pass to Palmerston North are already packed in cases, we are of opinion that this fish should all be cased for transport.

Napier.

The Hawke's Bay Trawling Co., Ltd., forward all fish for beyond Napier by rail, the goods-train leaving at 6.30 p.m., instead of 5.30 p.m. as previously. An hour later still would suit better, as, with boats coming in at, say, 4.30 p.m., it is somewhat awkward at present to get the rail quantities properly packed in time. This firm's prices for country clients are the same as their local wholesale, but delivered free on rail, Napier. Representations were made by this firm as to the possibility of securing space on afternoon passenger-trains at goods' rates and as to the free return of empty cases.

For the purposes of the Napier Fisheries Co-operative, Ltd., it is unfortunate that transport by rail does not appear convenient, the reasons being:—

- (1) Goods-train departs at 6.30 p.m. This is too early, as packing is seldom completed by that time.
- (2) Abnormal catches require extra accommodation, and transport lorries can be engaged to suit the hour when the fish is ready. The train could not be delayed indefinitely.
- (3) Even if the train could be delayed to a stipulated time, the arrival-times of trawlers owing to uncertainties of weather, tides, and fishing-conditions might preclude catching it.
- (4) The Railways Department delivers to the station only, and fish would remain unprotected on platforms overnight.

The company has adopted the practice of using its own night transport lorries for despatch of fish as far as Palmerston North, deliveries being made to towns *en route*. From Woodville supplies for the Wairarapa are railed as far as Carterton, and from Palmerston North railage is effected to other Manawatu towns, to Wanganui, Taranaki, Taihape, and on occasions to Wellington and Auckland. Drivers are resident at either end of the lorry-run and change over at an intermediate point.

The company contends that this method of delivery gives it a decided advantage. It has increased sales and widened connections; fish caught to-day is sold to-morrow; close contact is maintained with customers; complaints are readily dealt with; and there is a prompt return of empty cases.

The company's delivered prices for fish quoted under the heading "wholesale" are for delivery to any of the points mentioned above, whether by transport lorry or by rail. At one time freight was payable forward by the customer, but following upon an objection from the Transport Board freight is now free. As it is engaged in transporting only its own goods, the company does not come under the Board's licensing provisions.

In regard to the question of the return of empties by rail (in the case of this company from Woodville or Palmerston North), it was pointed out that the customary concession rates on these goods should be granted irrespective of the stipulation that consignment-notes must be certified to the effect that the cases were carried outward by rail. If such certification has been omitted in the past, the full rates have been adjusted to the lower scale. It was suggested that the Railways Department should accept and return empty fish-cases only addressed or consigned to the company whose name is branded thereon. This would obviate the difficulty encountered when other fish-merchants are thus enabled to use cases not their own. Matters such as these will be more fully dealt with later from a Dominion-wide point of view.

Auckland.

In common with those in other centres, the Auckland wholesalers seek some improvement in transport facilities and a reduction in freights to encourage a wider distribution of fish to inland centres and country districts. Reference was made to the unsatisfactory position which arises when, for despatch by the goods-train which leaves Auckland at 8 p.m. for the King-country and Taranaki, packing has to start at 2 p.m. to permit of the fish being placed in the truck at the Railways Department's stipulated time of 4 p.m. This means that more ice is wasted than needs be, but if a modern type of fish-van were used the ice would not waste away unnecessarily. A complaint was also made that cases are dumped out carelessly at railway-stations and often knocked open, with a consequence that flies and dust get in. Messrs. Sanford, Ltd., suggested that it would be a great convenience to them if a railway-siding were established near the Western Wharf where fish could be trucked.

A number of witnesses agreed that an adaptation of the rail car would be an ideal means of speedy and efficient transport of fish to inland points.

In regard to internal distribution from Auckland, Thames, Tauranga, and Whakatane, it is quite apparent that some co-ordination is required and there is little or none at the moment. Instances were quoted of fish being railed south from Auckland crossing, fish going north from Thames for export. Under normal conditions it seems only logical that inland areas should be supplied from their nearest