

Fish Freezers, Ltd. (Half-moon Bay).—This freezer is owned and operated by a partnership of four of the Bluff wholesale fish firms. The fish are cleaned and cased at the freezer and put in the chamber until the transport vessel makes her next trip. This may be the next day, and there is no great length of storage at any time. The temperature of the room is not known. The policy of sending some of the fish over to the mainland in a half-frozen condition is to be condemned, as repeated freezing and thawing must affect the quality of the product. It would be better to freeze the fish hard if the plant was capable of doing this in a reasonable time, and then to ship it over in a vessel with an insulated hold so as to avoid as much rise in temperature as possible.

Southland Cool Stores (Bluff) (Fish Storage).—Five chambers at this plant are available for fish, but the whole of the space is let to a group of the merchants, who thus control the space and only allow other people's fish entry and storage on their own terms.

Johnston Bros., Ltd. (Bluff).—This plant is used by the firm for their own produce only.

National Mortgage and Agency Co. of N.Z., Ltd. (Waikawa).—This is an up-to-date chilling-plant used by the firm for their own produce only.

Johnston Bros. (Fiord Fisheries, Ltd.) "Stella" at Chalky Inlet.—This freezer is necessary because of the distance these fishing-grounds are from Bluff, and none of the fishing-boats are large enough to carry a freezer aboard. The highest load so far has been ninety cases per day. Average load, fifty to sixty cases on any one day. About six fishing-days per month.

We inspected all of the freezers except that on board the "Stella" and the one at Port Pegasus, Stewart Island. With the exception of the plant at Waikawa, which is really only a pre-cooler, none of the plant is up to date, and some of it is definitely out of date. In the case of the various plants used for freezing fish, the time taken to harden the fish, which is about three days, is too long to ensure the best possible results. The slow freezing of fish has many drawbacks and affects the quality of the product to a great extent. The fact that the merchants have been able to sell the fish is by no means a justification for turning out an article which could be definitely improved upon. It is only the popularity of blue cod on the Australian market which has facilitated the sale of this fish. As soon as better freezing methods are adopted in Australia and the public becomes educated to the difference between fish which has been properly handled and frozen and that which has been treated by the old-fashioned methods, these firms will be forced to erect plant which is capable of freezing the produce quickly. One other serious objection was raised in regard to these freezers. It will be noticed that, with the exception of the Southland Cool Stores, they all belong to firms engaged in the fish-export trade, and in the case of the Cool Stores all the space available for the refrigeration of fish is leased by a combination of four of the Bluff merchants. Several of the witnesses stressed the desirability of the provision of refrigeration space into which a fisherman could put his own fish without being forced to sell it to the firms controlling the freezers. It is agreed by the Committee that modern freezing-facilities are necessary both at Stewart Island and at Bluff, but as over 80 per cent. of the boats are owned or controlled by the merchants the balance of the fleet would not have sufficient catching-capacity to warrant the erection of modern refrigerative accommodation by any outside firm. This ownership of the largest portion of the fleet and control of the whole of the available freezing-space is apt to give rise to certain undesirable practices in the elimination of fair and reasonable competition. It is not desirable that any one firm or combination of firms should obtain a stranglehold on the industry unless there are adequate safeguards to prevent such a monopoly being abused, but it is even less desirable to have an influx of a number of small units uneconomic in operation and unable to handle the product in a satisfactory manner.

Otago and South Canterbury (Retail excluded).

This district has six fish-freezing establishments. These freezers are as follow :—

No.	Location.	Owner.
1	Dunedin	Otago Fish Supply, Ltd.
2	Dunedin	Otago Dairy Producers Cool Storage Co., Ltd.
3	Port Chalmers	National Mortgage and Agency Co. of N.Z., Ltd.
4	Moeraki	Alfred Hull.
5	Oamaru	North Otago Cool Stores, Ltd.
6	Timaru	P. Feron and Son, Ltd.

Otago Fish Supply, Ltd. (Gibbs), Dunedin.—This plant is owned and operated by the fish-auctioneering firm, and its primary use is for dealing with the excess supply of fish which is bought in by the auctioneer.

Otago Dairy Producers Cool Storage Co., Ltd., Dunedin.—This plant is available for use by the trade generally, but is not really adapted for the freezing of fish.

National Mortgage and Agency Co., Ltd., Port Chalmers.—This plant is a modern one used by the company for dealing with their own produce. It is the finest fish-freezing unit in the South Island, if not in New Zealand. Ample refrigeration is provided, and chambers are well designed and laid out. It is the only plant in Otago and Southland which really measures up to the standard required to turn out a first-class product for the export trade.