

Recommendations.

1. With regard to the picking and marketing of the oysters, we are definitely of the opinion that the present system should continue. The Marine Department should inquire as to ways and means of preventing the trafficking in oysters as far as possible.

2. The Government policy of oyster-cultivation should be implemented as rapidly as finance will permit.

3. That immediate steps be taken to appoint a full-time officer on Whangarei Harbour to protect, cultivate, and pick the oyster-beds and also to attend to routine fishery matters.

4. That the protection of the oysters in Whangaroa be considered, and if such protection is granted, but not before, further cultivation work to be carried out.

5. In those areas where the oyster-beds are not worked by the Government, and on which no public money has been spent on cultivation work, the leasing of foreshores for private oyster-cultivation work should be granted to the owners of the land abutting the foreshore, subject to the conditions mentioned in this section of the report.

TOHEROAS.

East Coast : Ohope Beach.

Toheroas were introduced to this beach some years ago, and the stock is reported to be increasing. There is a seasonal depletion at Christmas-time in each year, but the stocks at the far end of the beach where the people do not go, appear to be sufficient to maintain a supply of young toheroa for the beach near the township. It was stated that the toheroas were introduced by a white man named Spier, who brought some over from Kaipara, and the witnesses contended that as the transfer had been done by white people the Maoris had no special rights, and that a close season should be declared for ten months in each year. Supervision is required on this beach, particularly at week-ends and in the holiday season.

Dargaville.

It was brought to the notice of the Committee that the protection of the toheroa-beds on the coastal beaches near Dargaville is inadequate. No depletion was reported from the cannery areas. Most of the matters brought up were of purely administrative interest and have been submitted to the Marine Department for its consideration. The one matter of public interest to which the Committee's attention was drawn was that the daily limit of fifty toheroas per person was too high, an effect being considerable wastage owing to the toheroa not keeping well after being removed from the sand, more especially in the summer months. Such a limit must lead to depletion of the public areas, as, for instance, some cars take three hundred per trip and go to the beach very often in the summer. (If there are six people in the car, each is allowed fifty toheroas per day.)

Recommendations.

Ohope Beach.

1. That adequate supervision be made available by way of honorary Inspectors to prevent breaches of the regulations.

2. That a survey of the toheroa stocks on this bed be made when the staff is available, and that if the survey shows that more protection than is given by the present regulations is required such protection should be provided for by regulation.

Dargaville.

3. That more adequate supervision of these beds be provided.

4. If it is found that the present limit of fifty (50) toheroas per person is being abused, so as to cause wastage or depletion, a reduction in the limit should be considered.

WHITEBAIT.

Auckland.

The main commercial interest in whitebait in the Auckland District is that centred in the canning industry. Supplies are drawn from the Waikato and also from the Bay of Plenty rivers. Messrs. Brown, Barrett, and Co., Ltd., went to a great deal of trouble to pass on the results of their investigations to the Committee. Representatives of this firm stressed the necessity for the conservation of the whitebait stocks and the care of the spawning-areas. With Messrs. Sanford Ltd. they agreed that research was urgently required to determine the cause of the decline in the stocks of whitebait, and that, if the decline could be traced to any particular cause such as overfishing, the drainage of swamp areas, or the presence of trout, remedial measures should be put into operation immediately. This firm suggested the payment of a levy, the money received to be used to cover the cost of research.

Being interested in canning, Messrs. Brown, Barrett, and Co., Ltd., were anxious that the standard of the pack should be improved, as the poor product which has been turned out by some of the companies tends to injure the name of New Zealand whitebait. The Committee agreed wholly with the opinions expressed.