

Kaikoura.

Fishermen at Kaikoura, who forward all their catches to the auction-market at Christchurch, submitted representations to the Committee expressing dissatisfaction upon several matters affecting their industry. The main allegations were :—

- (1) Full weights not accounted for.
- (2) The demand for "prime" fish in Christchurch is affected by the quantities of "rough" fish coming on to the market.
- (3) The effect upon auction prices of catches from trawlers controlled by Messrs. P. Feron and Son., Ltd.
- (4) The wide spread between returns to fishermen and retail prices.

The same allegations were made in all other centres where similar conditions prevailed.

All these matters are dealt with elsewhere in this report.

In Kaikoura Messrs. P. Feron and Son, Ltd., have cool-storage accommodation similar to that in Timaru, but in the case of Kaikoura a charge of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on selling-price at auction is made for storing and cooling. This amount is high compared with the charge of only 6d. per case in Timaru and appears to call for some justification.

Greymouth.

The main supply into Greymouth comes from two trawlers which were operated by the late Mr. George Scandrett. With adverse weather conditions for fishing the supply is not by any means steady, and, although an attempt is made to keep a week's supply in cool storage, at times fish is of necessity drawn from Christchurch. Alternatively, in times of good supply certain quantities are forwarded for sale by auction in Christchurch. From Greymouth distribution is effected to both Hokitika and Westport, wholesale prices for local and Hokitika requirements fluctuating in accordance with supply and season and averaging between 3d. and 6d. per pound for hapuka, $3\frac{1}{2}$ d. for soles, and 3d. for gurnard. In Westport, Mr. Scandrett supplied his own shop.

There are three retail-shops in Greymouth, all of which keep retail prices as steady as possible. These are usually 1s. 6s. to 2s. per bundle of soles (three large or five small ones, uncleaned) averaging 3d. to 4d. per pound, 7d. per pound for soles headed, cleaned, and skinned, 6d. for groper, and 8d. for best-quality fish such as brill and turbot. With limited supply and limited turnover these prices are considered very reasonable. A fair quantity of fish is sold on the wharf when the boats come in, this being mainly bundles of soles at 1s. 6d. per bundle.

Some little disturbance to the regular trade is caused by part-time fishermen selling hapuka on the wharf at roughly 3d. per pound, although it costs much more than this when caught by full-time fishing-vessels.

The Committee's attention was directed to the necessity for a wider distribution of fish on the West Coast, it being suggested that in centres where there are no retail fish-shops storekeepers ought to be encouraged to handle fish for sale, provided that they have proper facilities for storage under hygienic conditions. A case was instanced where in Greymouth a merchant acted as a distributor of oysters and smoked fish without having such proper facilities.

Westport.

The bulk of the fish taken at Westport is sold locally through four small shops, and any surplus, which once went to Wellington when there was a regular shipping service, is now forwarded for sale by auction at Christchurch. Groper is sold wholesale at not above 4d., flat fish at approximately 3d., and retail prices are generally on a par with those in Greymouth.

Nelson.

The one wholesaler in Nelson handles over half the supply coming into this port, but although his prices to the fishermen fluctuate in some degree they remain fairly constant at the levels shown in Appendix E. His wholesale prices are approximately 10 per cent. on the prices paid to the fishermen. Retail prices are also shown in Appendix E, and a comparison of these with the price paid to the fishermen and the wholesale price shows that they are no more than reasonable after taking wastage and distribution expenses into account.

In Nelson there is one wet-fish shop and six shops combining the retailing of wet and cooked fish with the management of restaurants. All retailers buy through the local wholesaler, except one who draws supplies direct from one fisherman at approximately the customary price paid by the wholesaler. One retailer delivers as far as Murchison and supplies the intervening districts.

Complaints were made by some of the fishermen that the wholesaler in Nelson with the only cool-storage chambers available for the storage of fish was not working harmoniously with certain of those engaged in the industry. Some line-fishermen have been refused space for the storage of bait. Fishermen, of course, have the option of shipping their catches to Wellington to the auction-market or to the wholesalers. A number do this, and the wholesale establishment itself in times of oversupply also ships to these markets.

Fishermen lodged their objections to payment for snapper by the dozen and crayfish by the count, maintaining that all payments should be on a basis of weight.