

maintenance. Similarly, the cable connection between Stephen Island has been giving a great deal of trouble and can be maintained only by frequent repair or replacement.

A wireless set has now been installed at Puysegur Point, and this will enable constant and reliable communication with Radio-Awanui.

The set for Stephen Island is practically ready and will be installed in September next.

General.—A close study of lighthouse costs, including interest, sinking fund, depreciation, maintenance, salaries, transportation of keepers and their families, stores, &c., has revealed that a very considerable saving can be effected by conversion of a number of stations from watched to automatic lights. A general policy of conversion will therefore be followed as parliamentary appropriation will permit. The requirements and circumstances of every station will, of course, be subjected to close investigation before conversion is decided upon. It is not intended that in every case where conversion is effected that the converted light will remain entirely unwatched. Though experience in this and other countries justifies a firm belief in the reliability of these automatic lights, the Department feels that in public interest it should have some form of watch in the case of the more important and inaccessible lights, and will arrange accordingly.

During last year the Department took £80,000 from shipowners for light dues. An assessment of all legitimate charges arising in connection with lighthouse service and maintenance, including interest, sinking fund, and depreciation, reveals that the revenues derived very nearly approximate the charges.

It should not, I think, be the Department's policy to turn the lighthouse service into an agency for profit-making for the State. The policy should require that shipping should pay dues to fully and efficiently maintain a service which is of incalculable value to it. The savings which may be effected by conversion should be capitalized to enable better service and more lights and other aids to navigation to be provided.

FOG-SIGNALS.—PENCARROW AND GODLEY HEADS.

These two fog-signals are of primitive design and of somewhat uncertain value.

Provision is being made on this year's appropriations, in the sum of £4,000, to enable the provision of modern and effective fog-signals. The ferry service between Wellington and Lyttelton, to say nothing of the general shipping of the ports, demands nothing less.

FISHERIES BRANCH.

Mr. L. F. Ayson, who for so many years has been connected with the Department as Chief Inspector of Fisheries, has passed the normal retiring-age. There appeared to be no one available in New Zealand to take up his position and so applications were invited in Great Britain. An expert Committee, appointed by the High Commissioner, selected Mr. A. E. Hefford, M.Sc., who arrived in New Zealand on the 15th May. Mr. Hefford has a wide experience in all classes of fisheries work, both scientific investigation, practical fishing, commercial handling, and market organization.

Mr. Hefford is meantime engaged in acquiring general local knowledge of our sea-fisheries as a prelude to more complete investigation.

In the past, the supply of sea-fishes being so plentiful, the Department's operations have been more generally confined to acclimatization of fresh-water fishes and the upbuilding of the rock-oyster fisheries.

If the condition of our fisheries were to be judged by the availability to the public, not only at fishing-ports but at other centres, of good-quality fish within the means of everybody, one might be justified in supposing that our fisheries were becoming depleted. The facts do not justify such a supposition. Are the supply conditions, so far as the buying public knows them, due to supply-control methods, to antiquated methods of catching, or to inefficient methods of handling, condition-keeping, and distribution? The limited investigation made within my knowledge certainly reveals instances of definite limitation of catches, and limitation of days on which catches may be made. The investigation is at present insufficient, however, to justify conclusions. It will be Mr. Hefford's function to investigate all these questions in their logical order.

The suggestion has been made that greater assistance should be given to the fishing industry. It is presumed that this means that financial assistance should be widely granted under the Fishing Industry Promotion Act. To advance money to individual fishermen to enable them to buy launches, nets, &c., is to invest public funds on a very uncertain security indeed, as past experience has shown.

If the State were to advance funds it should do so only in the assurance that greater quantities of fish would be available to the public at cheaper prices.

Is there, in the first place, any real necessity for increasing the number of fishermen when it is known that in some cases, at any rate, catches are even now limited and regulated?

Furthermore, is there any guarantee, if Government assistance be granted, that prices will be reduced and quantity and quality improved?

It seems to me that financial assistance which would result in benefit to the industry without corresponding advantage to the public is hardly justified.

The commercial taking of salmon which was permitted under special license last season in the Clutha, Waitaki, Rakaia, and Waimakariri Rivers showed very disappointing results, and no effort whatever was made by fishermen to take the fish at sea.

ROSS SEA WHALING EXPEDITION.

The "Sir James Clark Ross" made her second expedition to the Ross Sea, leaving New Zealand on the 21st November, 1924, and returning on the 10th March, 1925.