

*North Auckland (Wholesale, Retail, and Transport).*

*Whangarei.*—A depletion of local supplies at Whangarei has resulted in the bulk of requirements being brought in from outside centres—Auckland and Russell—with a result that retail prices are rather high compared with ports similarly situated and with the prices which were ruling when Whangarei fishermen were able to supply all the demand. One retail-shop which draws supplies from local fishermen has often had to close for short periods, there being no local fish coming in. Reference is made elsewhere to the dwindling of the landings at Whangarei. An investigation made into wholesalers' and retailers' margins of profit show that no more than reasonable profits are being made—in fact, they are lower than they might justifiably be, on account of the limited turnover. There are five retail-shops in Whangarei.

*Russell, Whangaroa, Mangonui, and Kaitia.*—In North Auckland generally the questions of insufficient and irregular supplies and of transport are the principal considerations. Under the section "Danish-seining" the depletion of the grounds by these vessels at the expense of local line-fishermen is indicated. As a consequence of failing local supplies, a retailer (Mr. J. Miller, trading under the name of "Northland Fish-supplies") who once drew his full requirements from Mangonui now finds that he cannot get anything like the quantity he requires in order to supply a wide range of customers (including hotels and restaurants and two hospitals) in the Mangonui, Hokianga, and Whangaroa Counties. These customers number 1,239, according to a statement submitted by this distributor (Mr. J. Miller), and he can now serve them only intermittently. There is something radically wrong in this situation, and Mr. Miller asked on his own behalf and on behalf of his customers that a stop be put on the wholesale depletion of fish in local waters. As a way out of the difficulty it was suggested to Mr. Miller that he might arrange for one or other of the Auckland seine boats to land certain quantities at Mangonui for his purposes, but he later advised that the proposition is unworkable, for the reason that the visits of any one of these vessels to local waters are so irregular that no reasonable guarantee of constant supply is possible. As an alternative he suggested that a seine boat (possibly requiring some small subsidy, he thinks) might be stationed permanently at Mangonui for the purpose of satisfying the local and inland demand. This is a problem, however, which is wrapped up with the general question of Danish-seining and until the position is clarified no recommendation unfortunately can be made in connection therewith. The remedy lies in our recommendations concerning the operations of Danish-seine vessels.

Transport in general in North Auckland is reasonable in regard to the rates charged for the conveyance of fish, but in some cases—e.g., Totara North—there is an unavoidable infrequency of service which tends to retard distribution.

*New Plymouth.*

Owing to weather conditions and other causes the local supply of fish at New Plymouth is erratic, and as a consequence the bulk of Taranaki's requirements is drawn from outside sources, mainly Napier, Auckland, and Thames, with certain quantities occasionally from Wellington. An unsatisfactory feature of the trade at New Plymouth is that the local fishermen receive payment upon a relatively low scale compared with the cost of Auckland fish landed into the retail shops—e.g., 3d. and 3½d. per pound for gutted snapper, when the same fish is 3½d. gutted on rail Auckland plus a cost of approximately ¾d. per pound railage and cartage, making 4¼d. altogether. The irregularity of local supply as against the certain supply from Auckland is, however, only one part of the difficulty, another being the quantity of "spent" fish brought in and not rejected by retailers. When weather conditions are favourable there is often a minor glut in local supplies, with the result that the fishermen, having no freezing space available, are forced to quit these supplies to the shops and elsewhere at prices competitive amongst themselves. There is no wholesale market in New Plymouth. Retail prices as quoted in Appendix E are rather high, but these are cut in some instances to a lower figure. Investigations made into the operations of two retailers show that one shop was reasonably profitable, whilst the other has only recently been able to turn a trading loss into a profit.

*Wanganui.*

Any local supplies at Wanganui are sold to the public by the fishermen direct, and all shop requirements are drawn from Auckland, Napier, and Wellington at stipulated "on rail" prices at these points. The principal complaint in the trade in this centre was the high wholesale price of fish generally, together with the cost of railage. These are matters outside the control of Wanganui and are dealt with elsewhere. Retail prices are correspondingly high, but an investigation of retailers' accounts showed that profit margins are by no means high.

*Palmerston North.*

In common with Wanganui, supplies for Palmerston North are drawn from Wellington and Napier and occasionally from Auckland. Complaint was made as to the general high level of wholesale prices compared with those ruling over twelve months ago. It was claimed that the full amount could not be passed on in retail prices, mainly for the reason that competition has kept these low. An investigation into the accounts of the principal retailer shows that, while a loss was sustained over the latest twelve-monthly accounting period, a small profit is now being made. This retailer also conducts a minor wholesale trade to restaurants and the like, to which he sells usually at 1d. per pound lower than retail prices. He submitted a number of suggestions for improvements in the trade, and these are actually dealt with specifically or generally in other parts of our report.