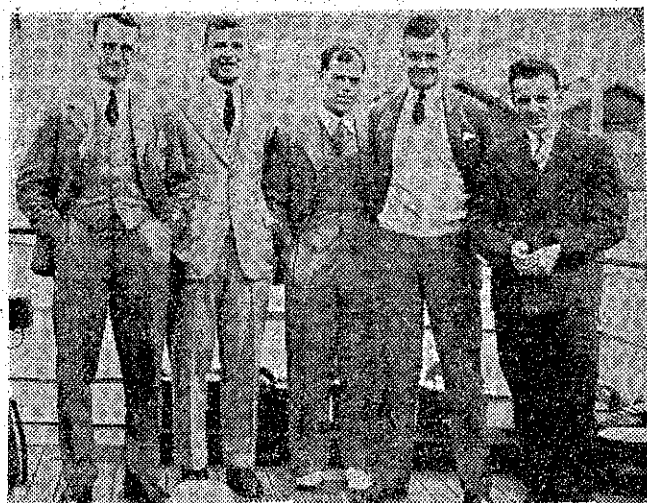


SOUTH to the ANTARCTIC

A talk given from 2YA by Mr. Dilwyn John, leader of a scientific expedition which is leaving Wellington shortly by the Royal Research ship "Discovery II," to investigate the whaling industry in the Antarctic.



Scientists of the Expedition.
Mr. Dilwyn John, leader, Mr. G. Deacon, Mr. J. W. S. Marr, Mr. G. Rayner, Mr. F. D. Ommanney.

THE Royal research ship, "Discovery II", in which we have visited New Zealand in the course of circumnavigating the Antarctic in the winter months, is carrying out a part of what are known as the Discovery investigations. These investigations consist of research into the whaling and sealing industries and other economic resources of the dependencies of the Falkland Islands. Of these researches, those into the whaling industry are by far the most important, and it is of them that I will speak.

The Falkland Islands lie to the east of the extreme southern tip of the South American Continent. They are almost permanently windswept and, as a consequence, are quite treeless. The population is only 3000, and there is one town. The only industry is that of sheep-farming.

Their dependencies consist of truly Antarctic islands, or islands having permanent snow and ice caps, lying further to the south. The names of the islands are South Georgia, the South Shetland Islands, the South Orkney Islands and the South Sandwich Islands. The Falklands and their dependencies form a British Crown Colony.

The Discovery investigations are paid for by a fund known as the Research and Development Fund of the dependencies of the Falkland Islands, and this fund was built up by the taxation of the whaling industry which, early in this century, was based in certain of the dependencies and has since grown to great importance there.

Whaling in the Antarctic is now of greater importance than that of all other parts of the world put together. Indeed, it may be said that whaling elsewhere than in the Antarctic is negligible. And yet the industry is a new one, dating only from 1904.

The history of whaling is an extremely interesting one. At three times in history the hunting of the whale has become an industry of world importance. The first time was in the 16th century—the time of the English and Dutch fishery along the edges of the Arctic ice. The whales on which this industry was based were right whales, which were valuable, not only for their blubber, but also for the long boleen plates, or whalebone, in their mouths. Hundreds of ships were employed.

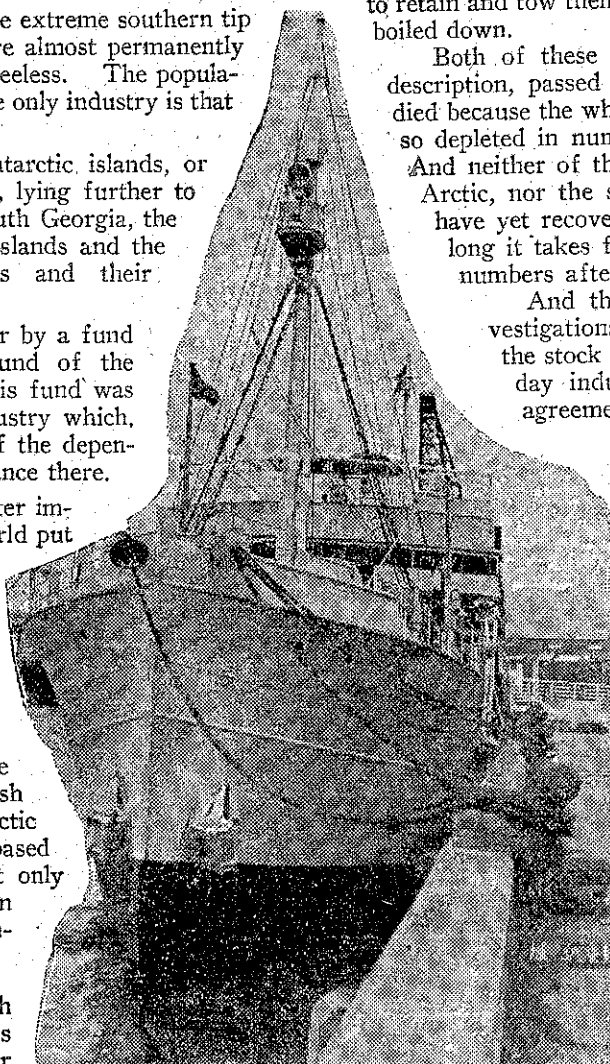
The second time was in the 18th and 19th centuries, when North American colonists built up the sperm whale fishery. Their ships—and at one time there were a thousand ships employed—hunted all the temperate and tropical seas of the world for sperm whales.

In both these industries the whales were chased by open rowing boats, lowered from the

ship, and were secured by means of hand harpoons thrown by a harpooner in the bows of the boat. Both right and sperm whales float when they are dead. If they didn't, it would not have been possible to retain and tow them to the parent ship, where they were cut up and boiled down.

Both of these industries, of which I have given so brief a description, passed through a boom period and then declined and died because the whale populations on which they depended became so depleted in numbers that further fishing became unprofitable. And neither of these whale populations—the right whales in the Arctic, nor the sperm whales in the high seas of the world—have yet recovered their numbers. It is not yet known how long it takes for a whale population to recover to its natural numbers after it has been over-fished by man.

And that brings me to the main purpose of our investigations. It is to find out as much as possible about the stock of whales which forms the basis of the present-day industry in the Antarctic, so that if international agreement can be reached, the industry may be controlled and the stock of whales not unduly depleted.



THE "DISCOVERY II."
Claimed to be the finest and best-equipped research ship afloat. The vessel is equipped with two laboratories—one for zoological and the other hydrological work. Contact by radio is established daily with England.

THE present-day industry in the Antarctic marks the third time in which whaling has become an industry of world importance, and, if history is not to be repeated and over-fishing of the whale is not to take place, that industry must be controlled. Such an industry, based, as it is, on the slaughter of large numbers of animals of which little is known, can only be intelligently controlled when as much as possible is known of the life, history, breeding habits, food, and migrations of the whales hunted. It is the purpose of our investigations to attain that knowledge.

And now I must describe very briefly the present-day industry. It is very different to the whaling of older times. At the end of the 19th century there were not sufficient numbers of either right or sperm whales left in the seas to supply the world with whale-oil. But it was discovered by Norwegians that there were enormous numbers of blue and fin whales in Antarctic waters. These animals are bigger and faster than either right or sperm whales, and they sink when killed. The Norwegians invented the method (Continued overleaf).