

Abrolhos area. During Mr. Crawford's absence Inspector B.A. Carmichael, who completed his term as whaling inspector at the Nor'-West Whaling Company's Babbage Island Station, is temporarily acting in charge of the Geraldton district and is not expected to arrive at Head Office until about the middle of October. Inspector Carmichael plans to marry Miss Rona Atley in Geraldton on November 3, when he will be on annual leave.

Senior Inspector J.E. Munro, who had been unable to take his leave in September as planned, now proposes to commence it on October 15.

Assistant Inspector R.J. Baird expects to proceed on annual leave in November.

INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION

The eighth annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission took place in London from July 16 to 20.

In welcoming the delegates, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. G.R.H. Nugent, M.P.), offered congratulations to the Commission on its work and underlined the increasing urgency of conservational measures as whaling efficiency increased and whale stocks decreased.

With the exception of Brazil, all of the 19 contracting Governments were represented. Delegates or observers were present from Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Portugal, South Africa, Sweden, the U.S.S.R., the United Kingdom and U.S.A. The Food and Agriculture Organisation, the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea and the International Association of Whaling Companies were represented by observers. Australia's representatives were Mr. F.F. Anderson, Director, Commonwealth Fisheries Office, Canberra, and Dr. R.G. Chittleborough, Research Officer, Division of Fisheries and Oceanography, C.S.I.R.O., Perth. The

Chairman of the Commission (Dr. G.J. Lienesch, of Holland) presided.

Information before the Commission showed that a total of 19 factory ships with 257 chasers were engaged in the Antarctic during the 1955/56 season. Inclusive of sperm oil, the total oil production was 2,134,012 barrels (= 355,668 tons) as against 2,061,789 barrels (343,631 tons) in the 1954/5 season. Some idea of the magnitude of the industry can be gained by considering that at £A87 to £A100 a ton, the total value of last season's take was of the order of £A33 million.

The primary purpose of the International Commission is to endeavour to maintain a balance between killing and natural recruitment rates by restricting the total catch of whales. The views of scientific observers concerning the size of the whale stocks, and of the whaling companies on the economics of the industry, are placed before the Commission.

Scientific opinion was almost unanimously in favour of a reduction in the catch because stocks appeared on the available evidence to be suffering a decline. The Commission recommended (with one dissentient) that the existing catch limit of 15,000 blue whale units be reduced in the 1956/7 Antarctic season to 14,500 units.

It was reported that there was generally a decrease in breaches as compared with the year before. Information was made available by the Soviet delegates concerning the use of porous rubber fenders as an alternative to the present use of whale carcasses for this purpose. The U.S.S.R. agreed to place full particulars of these fenders at the disposal of the Commission.

A decision was reached that the scientific sub-committee meet again if necessary prior to the next meeting of the Commission, which will commence on June 24, 1957, in London.

(Note: Whether next year's Antarctic catch will be reduced is as yet uncertain. The opposition to the proposed reduction by 500 units came from one country, Holland. If the opposition is followed by an official

protest to the Commission within 90 days, the catch will remain at 15,000 units, regardless of the warning by scientists that too heavy a toll is being placed on the whale stocks).

FISHERMEN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

As intimated in the previous issue, the Fishermen's Advisory Committee last month heard evidence in Geraldton and Fremantle in respect to the conservation of the Geraldton - Abrolhos and Fremantle district crayfish fisheries. After consideration of all the points raised, the Committee decided to recommend that the opening and duration of the next open season in each district should be similar to the last ones.

A number of recommendations made by the Committee in relation to closed waters and other restrictions are receiving consideration and will be reported as decisions on them are reached.

MULLET IN THE SWAN

It will be remembered that in Vol. V, No. 3, of March, 1956, Senior Inspector J.E. Munro reported great quantities of sea mullet in the Swan and Canning Rivers during February. In a further report Mr. Munro says that large concentrations of 5" fish were seen during April also, and that at the present time sea mullet of about 8" continue to inhabit the upper reaches and, in addition, can be seen in Perth Water.

He points out that while there is no proof that the fish now in the river are the same population as observed during the latter part of last summer, the possibility that they are the same cannot be overlooked. It will be interesting to watch the mullet catch figures during the coming summer.