

"NEW MEXICO'S" TROUBLES.

Bad luck still dogs the l.f.b. "New Mexico", which was launched last September. It may be remembered that the vessel figured in a sea-air search in December after it disappeared from its moorings at Geraldton. It was intercepted off Horrocks Beach, under control of two youths who were subsequently brought to trial. The twin engines were found to have been badly damaged and were only recently repaired at a cost of some thousands of pounds. Early in March, while fishing in the Southern Group of Houtman's Abrolhos, she received further damage during a southerly gale. A heavy mooring line caught in her rudder and pulled it off. A crew member had to leave for Perth to obtain a new rudder. This vessel is valued at £22,000 and is owned by the well-known Basile family, of Geraldton.

The two youths mentioned above were sentenced last month by Court Chairman, Mr. K. A. Philp, S.M., to prison terms. The first, Brian John Meredith - a naval rating of Geraldton, was sentenced to two years' hard labour and the second, Richard Leslie Baugh - apprentice butcher of Mingenew, to eighteen months' imprisonment. In imposing the sentence, Mr. Philp said that the fishing fleet in Geraldton must be protected. He said that the punishment should act as a deterrent to others who might be tempted to steal a fishing boat. Mr. Philp told Meredith and Baugh that had it not been for their age, longer sentences would have been imposed.

BAN ON JAPANESE PEARLERS.

Reports from Canberra at the end of March indicated that the prohibition against Japanese pearlery operating off the Western Australian coast was likely to be continued. Negotiations between the Australian and Japanese Governments are being conducted by diplomatic representatives. Although it appears that the quota Japanese pearlery are allowed to take in northern waters may be increased, they will probably be banned from the waters of the Western Australian Division.

WHALING.

Telegraphic advice has been received from the Fisheries Division of the Department of Primary Industry that the humpback whaling quotas of Western Australian whaling stations have been amended. The Nor'West Whaling Co., of Carnarvon, which in recent years has been allotted a quota of 1,000 humpback units, has had its quota reduced to 750. The Cheynes Beach Whaling Co., at Albany, however, has had its quota increased from 120 to 150 humpback whales. Despite repeated promises that quotas would not be fixed without consultation with the Western Australian Government, the Commonwealth announcement was the first intimation received that the quotas were being reviewed. The grounds

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on which the Commonwealth decision was based were not stated, but the inability of the company at Carnarvon to fill its quota in two successive years was probably the main contributing factor. Last year, the Cheynes Beach Whaling Company's quota was twice increased, first to 150 and then to 176 humpback units. Including blue whales, the Company's final catch was the equivalent of 174 humpback units.

Inspector B.A. Carmichael, writing from Albany, recently advised that the latter Company had resumed sperm whaling operations on March 30. He said it was expected that the sperm season would cease temporarily when the humpbacks made their appearance, but would resume after the humpback season had ended. How long the search for sperms continued after that would depend on market price and the availability of these whales. Mr. Carmichael said that the Company would again be operating two catchers, the "Kos VII" and the "Cheynes". They will be skippered, as last year, by Captains C. Stubbs and A. Christiansen respectively.