

officer is entitled to know in advance whether he is required to work during a weekend or on a public holiday, and if he is not required to do so there is little point in tying him down to his district if he desires to leave. If, however, it appears to the officer-in-charge that an officer will be needed over the weekend - as for example in the flush of the crayfish season - he is to be notified to that effect a reasonable time beforehand.

WHALING

A slight improvement in the rate of catch appears to have taken place at the Nor'-West Whaling Company's station at Carnarvon this year. Assistant Inspector E. Barker, reporting from Carnarvon, says that 206 humpbacks and two bryde whales had been taken up to the week ending July 29. Last year the first whale was taken at Carnarvon on June 20 (nine days earlier than the first one this year) and up to July 29, 1960, only 203 humpbacks had been taken.

The bryde whale, the scientific name of which is Balaenoptera brydei, Olsen, belongs to the same group as the Fin-backs or Rorquals. A Whale of this group can be distinguished from other members of the family of baleen whales (which includes the humpback) by its great distensible food pouch which is marked externally, when empty, by a number of parallel grooves and ridges on the throat, and by its smaller head, the straight edge of its lower lip, smaller whalebone plates, and longer and more elongated body with the presence of a dorsal fin. The bryde whale has on its ventral (belly) surface a grey band in front of the umbilicus and has slender flippers with a moderate dorsal fin. Rather surprisingly for a baleen whale, it is described as being voracious and has been seen hunting large schools of small sharks, specimens of which up to 2 ft. in length have been found in their stomachs. They have also been found to contain large penguins, although they seem to feed generally on herring or mackerel up to a foot or so in length. Three of the species were taken in 1958 by the same company. These were reported to have been feeding when killed and their stomachs contained large quantities of small fish - mainly anchovies under two inches in length, but also a few other fish up to about four inches. The Western Australian Museum is anxious to obtain photographs of any further bryde whales found or taken off the coast, as well as samples of its baleen.

While the difference in the sex-ratio of humpbacks caught this season does not appear to be significant, it is of some interest to note that a slightly higher percentage of males has so far been taken.

The Cheyne Beach Whaling Co., which took its first humpback for this season on June 5, completed its quota of 105 on July 15. This was a great improvement in the rate of catch compared with previous years.