

of the 40-ft. twin-engined patrol vessel by the contractors, Messrs Back Bros., of North Fremantle. The engines, a pair of matched General Motors 4-cylinder diesels, became available for supply to the contractors at the end of the month and will be installed as soon as they have been checked by engineers of the Public Works Department.

NEW OFFICES

A report from Geraldton late last month said that the area for the Department's new offices and yards at Geraldton had been pegged and work was due to start on July 30. The building will be constructed in a fenced area at the base of Fishermen's Wharf on the west side of the road. It will include offices, staff quarters and a garage, all in brick. Not so many years ago the Geraldton district was run comfortably by one officer. These days he usually has at least one assistant and will require more in the near future, if recommendations arising from conferences of all sections of the industry are adopted. The patrol vessel "Dampier" and her crew are also stationed at the port and regular crayfish research is being conducted there by Research Officer B.K. Bowen and Technical Officers J.S. Simpson and L.G. Smith.

The new offices at Mandurah are under construction, and tenders have been called for the building of new quarters and offices at Shark Bay.

At Jurien Bay and Lancelin land has been set aside for quarters for the use of inspectors at those centres, but while plans have been prepared, progress is subject to the availability of loan funds.

At Bunbury, a final decision on the land to be made available is awaited, but it is anticipated that a commencement will not be made on the new offices this financial year as the plans have not yet been prepared for the buildings required.

It also seems likely that it will be some time before new buildings are provided for the Department at Fremantle. While some consideration has been given to the growing needs of the Department there, further progress will probably have to await the completion of the reclamation work being carried out in the fishing-boat harbour.

WHALING

Inspector B.A. Carmichael reports from Albany

that humpback whaling has become a secondary consideration to the Cheynes Beach Whaling Co. Ltd. From July 26, he says, the company's chasers recommenced sperm whaling and humpbacks will be taken only if conditions on the shelf are unsuitable for sperm chasing. Even then, he adds, probably only one chaser will look for humpbacks. This company took its first humpback on June 16, and to July 26 only an additional 39 had been captured. Last year, the company had filled its quota of 105 humpbacks by July 16. On the other hand, 230 sperm whales have been taken to July 6, compared with 152 to the same date last season.

At Carnarvon, the Nor'-West Whaling Company's first humpback for the season was taken by its chaser "Gascoyne" on June 9. Although only 5 more were taken that month, the total had reached 194 by July 28. Earlier, in May, the company had secured 4 blue whales, while in June two sei whales had also been captured. Up to the time that their chasers concentrated on humpbacks, 26 sperm whales had been taken this season.

For some reason which is not clearly understood in the Department, the price of humpback oil is well below that of sperm oil. This is just the reverse of the position which obtained for many years. With the lower price, humpback whaling today is considerably less profitable than sperm whaling. In any case, humpbacks do not seem to be available, not only in Western Australia but also in the eastern States, where the whaling companies are going through an unusually lean period.