

a 2-inch gauge should be established in certain localities; while at Boston Deepes and Lynn Deepes the gauge is $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Mr. Austin is in favour of a $2\frac{1}{2}$ -inch gauge; Mr. Hall recommends $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch for "natives;" Mr. Digby proposes a 2-inch for oysters from the Blackwater. Mr. Hart is of opinion that the gauge for the south of England and the Channel oysters should be a little larger than 2 inches, while Mr. Brazier approves of a 3-inch gauge for the Channel oysters, objecting to a uniform gauge for all fisheries, recommending it should be made local according to the different sorts of oysters. The penalty for a breach of the regulations fixing a gauge should be heavy, and a large proportion of it given to the informer, as it may be more easily evaded than most of the other regulations, particularly if an export trade in oysters is established with the Australian colonies. It is the export of too small oysters from New South Wales to Victoria which has ruined the Sydney oyster fisheries; and I am inclined to think that this year very small oysters have been sent from Stewart Island to Dunedin.

(3.) *Appointment of Inspectors.*—I would propose that Inspectors of Oyster Fisheries should be appointed, with full powers to enter and examine into all the circumstances under which, not merely the public oyster-beds are being worked, but also any leaseholds for artificial cultivation, or natural beds, such as those at Port Adventure, which may have been leased; a penalty being imposed for refusal on the part of a lessee of an oyster-bed to furnish information to the Inspector, or for obstructing him in the discharge of his duty. The Commissioners of Crown Lands in their respective districts might be appointed, and thus no extra expense would be entailed for this duty. That Inspectors should be appointed is a self-evident proposition. To stipulate by Ordinance that a business is to be conducted under certain restrictions without providing any machinery for supervision is absurd. If, however, such inspection is conducted by the Commissioners of Crown Lands, it should be an instruction to them that they must make a study of the subject theoretically and practically, so that their advice to the Government might have the weight of authority. The theory can be readily obtained from books, and the practice by observation and inquiry. In England the Parliamentary Committee of 1876, in their report, recommended that the regulations of the Oyster Fisheries Act "should be enforced under the superintendence of Inspectors."

(4.) *Provision for making By-laws or Regulations.*—The provision for making by-laws or regulations by Proclamation from time to time to suit the circumstances of a locality, or meet the requirements of a larger experience, is a very necessary one. It is the power of making these by-laws which has proved so beneficial to the oyster-culture of France, more particularly in the Basin of Arcachon, as I have previously noticed in this report. In starting any new industry, constant change in its treatment is a chronic phase, and these changes can be more conveniently and speedily met by by-laws or regulations than by perpetual alteration of the Act itself. In New Zealand oyster-culture is in its earliest infancy, and capable of a very large extension if judiciously managed.

31. *Appointment of Parliamentary Committee suggested.*—As my remarks apply only to the oyster fisheries at Stewart Island, and as, so far as I am aware, there is no report regarding this matter from other parts of New Zealand, more particularly the North Island, where I have heard the oyster-beds are very prolific, I may be allowed to throw out a suggestion that it might be well if a Parliamentary Committee was appointed to investigate and ventilate the subject, with the view, not merely of protecting and developing the industry, but of affording information to those who are prosecuting it. I may further suggest that statistical information should be obtained as regards the export of oysters from the different oyster-fields during the few past years, either coastwise or to the adjacent colonies. One of the prominent peculiarities of the evidence collected by the Parliamentary Committee of 1876, from which I have quoted, is the divergence of opinion on the various points connected with the propagation of oysters by those whose length of experience and careful study of the subject would naturally lead to the belief that any opinion expressed would carry the weight of authority. This difference of opinion is probably owing to climatic and other local causes, and indicates that a careful local examination and supervision of the habits of the oyster should be held by persons theoretically as well as practically acquainted with the subject, to preserve for posterity what nature has so bountifully supplied, and which will prove, before many years are passed, a beneficial source of revenue, and a thriving industry supporting a large population.

The Hon. the Secretary for Crown Lands,
Wellington.

I have, &c.,
WALTER H. PEARSON,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

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