

The effect of the new legislation is to bring the whole of the licensing of fishermen and fishing-boats under the control of the Sea-fisheries Licensing Authority. This replaces the dual control of the Bureau of Industry and Marine Department which had existed since 1937. As a matter of interest it should be pointed out that this dual control was brought into force while the Sea-fisheries Investigation Committee, under the chairmanship of Mr. James Thorn, M.P., was collecting its evidence throughout New Zealand and compiling its report. There was never any intention of leaving the dual control in existence, but the outbreak of war prevented any further action being taken until this year and the dual control had to remain in force to keep the position in check until the Fisheries Act could be amended.

The change over was effected very smoothly considering the individual nature of the licenses, the large number of licenses, and their scattered distribution.

It was decided that owing to the late passage of the legislation—November—it was not practicable to decentralize the issue of licenses, as the licensing year commenced on 1st January, 1946, and with the closeness of the holiday season there would be no time to get the licenses printed and instructions issued in time for the main rush of applications in January. It is hoped that in 1946 the issue of renewal licenses will be done by the local officer in at least the main ports. In some of the smaller ports the difficulty arises that the officer in charge is an official of another Department, in some cases already overloaded with his own job plus other part-time appointments. The issue of new licenses or the authorization of a variation to any license must always remain the responsibility of the Licensing Authority. The passage of the Amendment Act was followed by the Sea-fisheries (Boats and Licenses) Regulations 1945. These set out the details of the licensing system. A copy of these regulations is issued gratis to every licensee.

One note of warning must be struck here, and that is that fishermen should not buy boats or alter the power of the engines installed without the permission of the Licensing Authority. In too many cases a larger boat is bought or a more powerful engine installed and then the permission of the Authority is sought. In the case of those ports where the fishing power of the existing fleet is already near the danger mark, sooner or later some one will find his request refused and will suffer financial loss. After so many years of licensing, the people in the industry cannot plead ignorance on this point, and they are quite well aware that any effort to replace an obsolete unit will meet with favourable consideration from the Licensing Authority, provided the new unit is not so fundamentally different from the old one as to endanger the fishing-grounds.

In regard to ordinary fishery regulations, these have been so amended and added to since the last consolidation in 1939 that it has been found necessary to undertake another revision, and the results of this will, it is hoped, be brought out in 1946. The revision of such complex regulations is, however, a major task which cannot be done quickly by an over-busy staff.

STAFF

With the cessation of hostilities we are looking forward to having the staff back at full strength in 1946. It is proposed also to go ahead with the programme of expansion which was started just before the outbreak of war. With the high intensity of commercial operations right round the coasts of New Zealand, part-time Inspectors, with only occasional visits from fully trained Inspectors, are quite inadequate to cope with the inquiries and demands for investigations. Many of the districts require a thorough overhaul after the enforced laxity of the war years if our fisheries are to be preserved.