

Bookstores and Fisherpersons

● In the August number of MFR, I listed the NMFS Scientific Publications and said that most of them can be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. This is true, but I should have mentioned that they are also available from the several Government Printing Office Bookstores across the country. Often service will be faster if one orders publications from the nearest Bookstore. The bookstores will accept subscriptions to our periodicals.

The Seattle Bookstore is the newest in the group. If it will serve as an

example, you may expect prompt, knowledgeable, and courteous service.

● Peter Pownall, editor of that fine publication *Australian Fisheries*, dropped by Seattle recently on a vacation trip that was to take him around the world. He had a good many interesting things to say, both about *Australian Fisheries* and Australian fisheries.

Per capita fish consumption in Australia is about the same as in the United States — around 12 pounds a year. The country is exporting most of its fish catch. The carefully regulated rock lobster fishery off Western Australia has been thriving, with prices for rock lobster tails reaching \$5.40 a pound recently.

The prawn fishery, mostly in the Gulf of Carpentaria, in the tropical north of Australia, has been growing prodigiously — from a total catch of

less than a million pounds five years ago to a predicted 40 million pounds in 1973.

There are about 200 vessels in the prawn fleet that fishes the Gulf of Carpentaria. Even at the height of the season, they must be pretty well scattered out: The Gulf of Carpentaria is just about the same size as the Gulf of Mexico.

Australia has become the second largest exporter of abalone (Mexico is the first), which are caught in the cool waters around Tasmania. Most of the abalone are exported to Asia.

One of the oldest and most colorful fisheries in the South Pacific, if not in the world, is still in business, by the way. That is the fishery for pearls in the Torres Strait, at the northeastern tip of the continent. Plastics, of course, have long eliminated mother-of-pearl, formerly the mainstay of the fishery, and used for buttons, as a valuable fishery product. However, oysters are still cultured for the pearls they produce. The oysters are immense: "as big as a dinner plate." One oyster can be expected to produce three marketable pearls in its lifetime. These are large, premium pearls, selling for about \$250 each retail. They are exported to Japan and used chiefly in necklaces.

Mr. Pownall had one item of information that may raise the hackles of any male chauvinists among our readers. It is becoming a fairly common thing for women to work as fishermen, particularly in the prawn fishery. There are some vessels with all-female crews. The women fishermen are working out well. They come from all over the world. Some have had training as nurses and teachers. Most are young, in their late teens or early twenties. They make good fisherpersons (a word Mr. Pownall did not use, by the way). Many of them "are more intelligent than the average man." Certainly they are pretty well paid: the average fisherman (woman) (person) makes ten to fifteen thousand dollars a year, and some make a great deal more.

T.A.M.

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