

Canterbury Acclimatisation Society. We should be obliged if you would lay the petition before His Excellency.

We have, &c.,

HARPER AND Co.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

To His Excellency the GOVERNOR of the Colony of NEW ZEALAND in Council. The humble petition of the undersigned sheweth,—

1. THAT your petitioners are fishermen residing at or near Lake Ellesmere, in the Provincial District of Canterbury, or in or near the City of Christchurch, in the said provincial district.

2. That a large number of your petitioners are at the present time engaged in pursuing, and have for many years past pursued, their several callings as such fishermen by fishing with nets or otherwise in the Lake Ellesmere, in the said Provincial District of Canterbury.

3. That thirty at least in number of your petitioners reside permanently on the said Lake Ellesmere, and own stock-in-trade to the value of some £2,140 or thereabouts, such stock-in-trade consisting of twenty boats, worth from £15 to £30 each; gear and fishing-tackle of each boat, comprising twenty nets valued at £50, eighteen traps with two horses apiece, valued at £30 each.

4. That such of your petitioners as are resident on the said lake are in the occupation of well-built cottages purchased from their own earnings, and in many cases have wives and families who are dependent upon them.

5. That a large number of your petitioners are employed in the fish industry in the City of Christchurch, in the said provincial district, in connection with fish obtained from the said Lake Ellesmere.

6. That the total number of men to whom the Lake Ellesmere fishing industry affords a means of livelihood exceeds two hundred.

7. That the output of fish obtained from Lake Ellesmere averages from fifteen to twenty cases of fish per diem, the same being carried into Christchurch by train every morning, bringing in a source of revenue to the country from the railway of £1 per day gross carriage of the fish and 10s. per day for passenger-traffic by the fishermen.

8. That your petitioners are informed, and verily believe, that a petition is being or about to be presented to your Excellency by the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society praying that the said Lake Ellesmere may be closed to all net-fishing for a period of two years.

9. That such petition, if granted, would deprive over two hundred fishermen, including your petitioners, of their present means of subsistence and employment, and inflict great hardship upon them.

10. That a large number of Maoris residing at the Tamutu Pa, near Lake Ellesmere, depend almost entirely upon the fish caught by nets in Lake Ellesmere for their daily food, and would be reduced almost to a state of starvation in the event of their being deprived of this means of sustenance by the closing of the lake to all net-fishing, as prayed for in the said petition of the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society.

11. That your petitioners are informed that the principal reasons urged in support of the said petition of the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society are that the flounders inhabiting the said Lake Ellesmere are rapidly decreasing in size by reason of your petitioners using nets of small meshes, and, further, that your petitioners frequently catch salmon which have been liberated in the Selwyn River.

12. That your petitioners contend that the closing of the said Lake Ellesmere would in no way affect the size of the said flounders, inasmuch as the large flounders obtained from the lake are, for the most part, washed into the lake from the sea, and do not consist exclusively of flounders which have come to maturity in the waters of the said Lake Ellesmere.

13. That the flounders are as plentiful at the present time as they have been heretofore, and of equal size and quality.

14. That nine years ago flounders were far less plentiful than at the present time.

15. That your petitioners are ready and willing to obey and abide by any regulations or restrictions, and become subject to any penalties which your Excellency may see fit to make or impose upon them, with regard to the netting or catching of small-sized fish, or the size of the meshes of the nets used for fishing, or with regard to catching fish of any species or description other than flounders, as your Excellency may direct.

16. That the making of such regulations, and the imposition of penalties, as in the last preceding clause mentioned, would effect the result sought to be attained by the said petition of the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society in as effectual a manner as the closing of the said lake would do.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray—(1.) That your Excellency may be pleased to reject the petition of the said Canterbury Acclimatisation Society, praying that the Lake Ellesmere be closed to all net-fishing for a period of two years. (2.) That your Excellency may be pleased to protect the interests of your petitioners in the fish industry attaching to Lake Ellesmere to such extent and in such manner as he may think fit.

And your petitioners will ever pray.

JOHN OBERHUBER and 73 others.

I certify that the facts stated in this petition are correct.—R. B. WILLIS, J.P.

WE, the undersigned, being residents in the vicinity of Lake Ellesmere, do humbly petition your Excellency against closing the Lake Ellesmere for net-fishing, and we consider that by so doing a great hardship and injustice would be inflicted on a large number of fishermen, as well as depriving a large section of the community of a very valuable food in the shape of flounders and numerous other kinds of fish which are caught in the lake, and have been sold in our district for a number of years. We also consider that the proposed closing of Lake Ellesmere would be an in-