

Mr. E. DEMETRY to the Hon. Sir J. HALL.

HONOURABLE SIR,—

Taumutu, 11th August, 1891.

In following up the various letters, &c., that have been forwarded to you, we would also like to point out to you that we who have a practical idea of the flounder question in all its details (and not working on the hearsay of others who know nothing whatever of catching fish) that the great cry has arisen from one or two fishmongers in Christchurch, who are anxious to stop hawkers from selling fish, and thus securing a monopoly in this manner. Flounders at 11in. will be very difficult indeed to catch, and, of course, will be dear; and naturally the shops, who have the patronage of most of the rich people, will be the only place where the few can be bought, and of course the poor man, who generally buys through the hawkers, will be unable to have any flounders. In a petition which we forwarded to Mr. J. Joyce we stated that we would not object to the size of the fish being altered to 10in., but what we did object to was persons suggesting alterations (who had not got many hundred pounds' worth of nets and boats, gear, &c., at stake, and who knew nothing whatever about the vicinity or the ways of catching the fish) in the regulations. It is within your knowledge that two or three times during the year the lake has to be run out, and naturally the fish goes too; it therefore only leaves a few intervals during the year to which the fish can be allowed to grow again; and when the larger fish goes out to sea they never come into the lake again. We have lived on the lake for many years and have from time to time added to our gear, nets, &c., until at the present time we have several hundred pounds' worth; and to go and alter the size to 11in. (2in. more than before) means a great loss indeed to us all. Another view is this: We have all made our homes here for many years, and have reared our children, and have never interfered with any other portion of the labouring community of this country; and we therefore think that the Government should look these facts fairly, and not crush us altogether. We are also prepared to (and think it fair to all concerned that a trial should be made) grant the use of any of our boats and nets to any person to come and make a week's labour, or a month amongst us, and see how the work is conducted, and the chances there are in connection with the increased size of fish, and will assist any persons that may be so appointed all in our power.

We sincerely hope, sir, that whatever is done should be done without causing injury to a working community at the instance of one or two.

And your petitioners will ever pray.

E. DEMETRY,  
(On behalf of the lake fishermen.)

The Hon. Sir J. HALL to the Hon. the MINISTER of MARINE.

SIR,—

Wellington, 24th August, 1891.

With reference to my letter of the 21st instant, on the subject of the proposed interference with the fishery in Lake Ellesmere, I have now the honour to enclose a communication which has just reached me from the secretary of the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society. This gentleman is an enthusiastic fisherman, and probably better acquainted with the subject now before you than any person in the colony. I feel sure, therefore, that you will give the fullest consideration to what he states as to the unnecessary character of the restrictions which have been proposed, and the ruinous consequences to a large body of men which would result from their being enforced.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Marine.

JOHN HALL.

Mr. W. H. SPACKMAN to the Hon. Sir J. HALL.

MY DEAR SIR,—

213, Hereford Street, Christchurch, 10th August, 1891.

I see by the *Press* yesterday that the Government have some intention of making the limit of the size of flounders 11in.; the present legal size is 9in. The acclimatisation society has no interest whatever in this matter, but it has always tried to deal with scrupulous fairness with the fishermen on the lake; and I cannot help thinking that, if the limit is fixed at 11in., the main livelihood of some twenty of your constituents will be gone. No one without a good deal of practical experience can imagine what difference an inch in length makes in a flounder. And I am certain that not one flounder in fifty reaches 11in., much less 12in.

It is nonsense to talk about the extinction of the flounder. I do not believe Professor Hutton ever could have said this. There is no doubt that it is very desirable to increase the length-limit within reason; but if it is wished to take away the living from the fishermen it could not be done more certainly than fixing that limit at 11in. or 12in. for flounders. A 10in. limit is, in my opinion, ample; and I should think it would be worth your while to hear what the fishermen have to say about it.

I am, &c.,

Sir J. Hall, Wellington.

W. H. SPACKMAN.

MEMORANDUM from the COLLECTOR of CUSTOMS, Christchurch, to the Secretary, Marine Department, Wellington.

I UNDERSTAND there is still a movement being made to preserve the fishing interests at Lake Ellesmere and Sumner Estuary. I would venture to suggest that the minimum size of flounders should be increased to not less than 12in. from snout to end of tail. The present size is too small—9in.—and results in actual depletion of the tidal and brackish waters and lagoons of this valuable fish, and flounders of 9in. or 10in. have not enough flesh to be worth eating; and, owing to the depletion of their haunts, none are left to multiply, being too small, and do not grow to maturity.

1st August, 1891.

ALEX. ROSE, Collector.