

The ASSISTANT SECRETARY, Marine Department, to the COLLECTOR, Her Majesty's Customs, Christchurch.

(Memorandum.)

Wellington, 1st September, 1891.

WITH reference to your memorandum of the 1st ultimo, in which you suggest that the minimum size of flounders should be increased to not less than 12in., I have to inform you that this question is now under consideration.

LEWIS H. B. WILSON,

The Collector, Her Majesty's Customs, Christchurch.

Assistant Secretary.

The ASSISTANT SECRETARY, Marine Department, to Mr. H. S. FISH, M.H.R.

SIR,—

Marine Department, Wellington, 27th August, 1891.

With reference to the proposal to increase the minimum size of flounders that may be caught, I have the honour, by direction of the Minister having charge of this department, to state that it would appear that the fishermen generally do not object to the size being increased to 10in., and the Government are considering the question of raising it to that size; but, before finally deciding to so, they would be glad to be furnished with the views of the Dunedin fishermen thereon.

I have, &c.,

LEWIS H. B. WILSON,

Assistant Secretary.

H. S. Fish, Esq., M.H.R., Wellington,

Mr. H. S. FISH, M.H.R., to the Hon. Mr. MCKENZIE.

DEAR SIR,—

Parliament House, 27th August, 1891.

In reply to the letter of the Assistant Secretary to the Marine Department under this day's date, I have the honour herewith to hand you a letter upon the subject from a Mr. Sullivan, a Dunedin fisherman, as also a report of a meeting held by the trade in connection with the matter. Hoping you may be able to see your way to give effect to their wishes,

I have, &c.,

H. S. FISH, Jun.

The Hon. John McKenzie.

THE FLOUNDER QUESTION. (Extract from newspaper.)

A MEETING of fishermen was held at the office of Mr. Sullivan, Stafford Street, this afternoon, when there were about fifteen present; and, although the meeting was small, it was pointed out that it was a representative one, as there were present those from various fishing-grounds in the district.

Mr. Davidson, who occupied the chair, mentioned the object of the meeting, which was to discuss the Bill before Parliament concerning the length at which flounders should be taken, and expressed an opinion that if the Bill became law it would simply mean the closing up altogether of the fishing at Port Chalmers. It was their place to take steps to try and prevent the Bill passing. He pointed out that the 9in. fish were very good and saleable, and equal to a larger fish caught in the vicinity of Lyttelton.

One of those present said he had telegraphed and written to Mr. James Mills, M.H.R., on the matter, and if the Bill became law they might all stop fishing. In answer to Mr. Sullivan, the speaker said he did not, after an experience of twenty years, think the fish were any scarcer, nor did he consider that the passing of the Bill would have any effect in increasing the number of flounders in the vicinity. He was of opinion that it was beginning at the wrong end, and that if from 12in. to 15in. fish were protected, which were the fish which actually spawned, that would be much better. Others present, with experiences of thirty-five years downwards, gave somewhat similar views.

It was suggested that a petition should be forwarded to Wellington; but, on it being pointed out that there might be insufficient time, it was moved by Mr. Holden, seconded by Mr. Kerr, and carried unanimously, "That, as the passing of the Bill would be disastrous to both fishermen and dealers, the members in Wellington be communicated with with the view to their using their most strenuous efforts to prevent the Bill passing into law."

The matter of carrying the resolution into effect was left in the hands of Mr. Sullivan, and it was pointed out that if the Bill passed it would throw about seventy men out of employment, and cause about a thousand pounds' worth of boats and nets to be sacrificed. It was further pointed out by one of those present that unless there was some mode of inspection the passing of the Bill would be a great encouragement to illegal taking.

Mr. F. J. SULLIVAN to Mr. H. S. FISH, M.H.R.

DEAR SIR,—

Dunedin, 24th August, 1891.

I beg to hand you report of the meeting of fishermen held here on Saturday. I ask you to use your utmost exertion in preventing the passing of the proposed Flounder Bill. In the face of the opinions of practical men of twenty and thirty years' fishing experience in this district we cannot believe that Professor Hutton was referring to this port when he expressed his opinion that flounders were being exterminated; but that, if he did so, he knows nothing about our grounds, and we shall be happy to prove it to him. Possibly flounders are scarcer elsewhere than they were formerly, but that should be no reason why seventy men should be thrown out of employment here and a thousand pounds' worth of property rendered useless, and no benefit to be obtained. Should this Bill become law it will be necessary for the Government to employ Inspectors day and night to enforce it at considerable cost. As the law stands at present 9in. is the limit, and works very well, and can be proved by the police reports. No conviction for selling under size has been recorded here for five years or so. As it is a matter of great importance not only to the fishermen and dealers,