

1903.

NEW ZEALAND.

# TRAWLING AT PORT CHALMERS

(REPORT OF INSPECTOR OF FISHERIES ON), TOGETHER WITH EVIDENCE.

*Return to an Order of the House of Representatives dated the 11th day of August, 1903.*

*Ordered, "That there be laid before this House the report of the Inspector of Fisheries on an inquiry into matters connected with trawling in November, 1902, together with the evidence in connection therewith."—(Mr. McNAB.)*

The CHIEF INSPECTOR OF FISHERIES to the SECRETARY OF THE MARINE DEPARTMENT.

SIR,—

Wellington, 18th December, 1902.

I have the honour to report that, as instructed by you, I have inquired into the complaint by fishermen at Port Chalmers that trawling was injuriously affecting their interests, and into their request that trawlers should not be allowed to work within a certain distance of shore.

I met the secretary of the Seine-net Fishermen's Union (Mr. J. R. Holden) at Port Chalmers on the 25th October. From statements he made then with regard to other fishermen besides those belonging to the union complaining about the effect of trawling, and, as the settlement of the question may have an important bearing on the future development of the fisheries, I considered that it would be advisable to hear the statements of every person interested before advising what should be done in the matter. I accordingly arranged with Mr. Holden to meet representatives from all classes of fishermen, and also any other persons interested, on my return from the lakes and Bluff. The Collector of Customs at Dunedin kindly allowed me the use of a room at the Shipping Office at Port Chalmers on the 14th November, and, as instructed by you, I advertised the date and place of meeting once in the Dunedin daily papers. While attending the meeting at Port Chalmers on the 14th November I received a request from some of the Dunedin fish-dealers to meet them the following day at Dunedin, as they wished to give information about the fish-supply to the Dunedin market. I accordingly arranged to meet them as requested at a room in Farley's Buildings.

At Port Chalmers, on the 14th November, four fishermen representing the "outside" or line-men; four representing the seine-men, with their secretary; Mr. F. J. Sullivan, owner of the two trawlers working from Dunedin; and the master of the trawler "Express," attended at the Shipping Office. At Dunedin, on the 15th November, four fish-salesmen, the master of the trawler "Napier," and the mates of the trawlers "Napier" and "Express" attended at the place appointed. The statements of fishermen and others who attended were taken down in shorthand, and I attach typewritten copies with this report.

On returning north I visited Puketeraki, Moeraki, and Oamaru, and I also attended at the fish-markets at Christchurch, in order to get information about the supply of fish at these places during the last six months. The statements of fishermen and fish-salesmen at Dunedin and Christchurch show that fish were exceptionally scarce during the past winter and spring. I was aware of this, and that the scarcity was felt most along the east coast from Napier to the Bluff.

In their statements at Port Chalmers the fishermen asserted that trawling is injuriously affecting the supply of fish generally, that it destroys the fish-feed, that it prevents fish from coming into the entrance to the harbour, and that the small boats have always been and are still able to fully supply the Dunedin market with fish all the year round. On the other hand, the owner and men working on the trawlers asserted that trawling in no way interferes with the line or any of the small-boat men, as the trawlers generally work outside of where the small boats go, and they get quite a different class of fish from what the small boats get. They ridiculed the statement that the trawlers destroy the fish-feed and drive the fish away, and they unanimously stated that a three-mile off-shore limit would seriously affect trawling. In their statements the fish-salesmen, both at Dunedin and Christchurch, unanimously asserted that trawling gave a more regular and plentiful supply of fish, and also a much better variety than can possibly be provided by the small-boat men. They assert very positively that the small-boat men cannot supply anything like the quantity of fish required all the year round, and that during the winter months they had to depend almost entirely on the trawlers for their supply. The Dunedin men stated that if it were not for the trawlers working they would have to close their shops during the winter season.

I do not think that the Port Chalmers fishermen have brought any proof that trawling is the cause of the decrease which they allege has taken place in the supply of fish off the Otago Heads. It would seem from what they state about trawlers "destroying the fish-feed on the bottom, and driving the fish away," that they do not understand its effect on fish and fish-feed. I think they