

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

quite misapprehend the effect of trawling on fish-life. As the unusual scarcity of fish experienced during the last winter and spring was felt quite as much in localities where no trawling was carried on as off Otago Heads, the reason for this exceptional scarcity must be looked for apart from trawling. Fishermen at Bluff, Moeraki, Oamaru, and Christchurch attribute the scarcity to the peculiar weather conditions experienced; and this, I think, would seem to be a reasonable explanation of the cause.

There is no doubt that trawling insures a more plentiful and regular supply of fish than it is possible to provide by any other method of fishing; therefore in order to develop the fisheries of the colony it is necessary that this and any other up-to-date system of fishing which may be introduced should be encouraged, and no restrictions imposed unless proof is forthcoming that injury is being done to the fisheries. I do not think that there is any necessity at the present time to fix an off-shore limit for trawlers off the coast of Otago, as asked for by fishermen at Port Chalmers. I would, however, again point out the necessity for regulating the size of the mesh of trawl-nets in order to minimise, as far as it is possible to do so, the destruction of immature fish by trawlers, and would ask that the recommendations made by me in this direction (*vide* my report dated the 9th April) should be given effect to. I would also recommend that a regulation should be made prohibiting trawlers from coming within half a cable's length of any boat which is first on and occupying any fishing-ground. I have had complaints from fishermen in different localities with regard to trawlers bearing down on them when they have been at work. Such a regulation as this would not impose the slightest hardship on trawlers, and it would tend to promote good feeling amongst men engaged in different systems of fishing.

I have, &c.,
L. F. AYSON,
Chief Inspector of Fisheries.

The Secretary, Marine Department, Wellington.

INQUIRY INTO FISHING,

HELD AT PORT CHALMERS AND DUNEDIN ON FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, 14TH AND 15TH NOVEMBER, 1902.

Mr. F. J. SULLIVAN, Owner of Two Trawlers working here, the S. Trawler "Napier" and the S.S. "Express."

I AM attending here in answer to the advertisement in the *Otago Daily Times*. I should like to be given an opportunity of refuting any arguments among the fishermen, and explaining anything that may be required to be explained, after you have heard all they have to say. I have brought the captain of the "Express" with me, who will also give you any information that you may require; but the other boat, the "Napier," is at present outside the Heads fishing, and her captain, or any of the crew, will be at liberty to answer any questions or give any information that you may require. I should also ask you, in the interests of the public, to interview some of the leading fishmongers of Dunedin, to verify any of the statements that I make, and satisfy yourself as to the statements made by the fishermen. I have been engaged in this industry here for the last twenty years, and therefore claim to have some knowledge of the local conditions. I understand that some fishermen at Port Chalmers claim that fish are extremely scarce this season close inshore and in the harbour because the trawlers are working here. Fish are very scarce this season throughout New Zealand where the trawlers are not working—for example, at the Bluff, Invercargill, Nuggets, Moeraki, Oamaru, Timaru, Christchurch, and Wellington—which, no doubt, in your official capacity, you are well aware of. All the people engaged in this industry at the various places will tell you that they never remember fish being so scarce. It has been impossible to buy whitebait at Christchurch at anything like a price this season, though formerly it was not the case. At Westport and Greymouth the firms there cannot get sufficient to make the business payable. Therefore I consider we must look for other reasons than trawling to explain the scarcity of fish. As a matter of fact my trawlers cannot get fish at present in less than 30 fathoms of water, and are working about eight miles off the land, which can be proved by the masters of my boats, and also by the independent evidence of the signal-master at Taiaroa Heads, who sees them daily. I understand that the small boats are never, or very seldom, near them. To my mind, fish are migratory, and, for reasons we cannot explain, have confined themselves to deep water this season; but at other times we may expect them close inshore, also in the harbour, where we have them in large schools. Therefore I consider it unreasonable to prevent trawlers from working inshore when the fish are there and there are none in deep water. Recently the line-men would have been unable to catch fish at all if it had not been for the assistance given them by the trawlers in giving them bait free by my instructions. After getting the bait they were able to catch fish. The Government has spent a considerable amount in prospecting our trawling-grounds, and I and others have invested a considerable sum in the interests of the trawlers here and elsewhere, under the impression that the laws would be allowed to remain as they are. It would be a considerable hardship to find that we could not fish here or there at the dictation of discontented fishermen, who are under a wrong impression as to the principal reasons why fish are so scarce in the harbour and close inshore this season. There are at present fourteen men employed on my trawlers, and they are paid wages at a higher rate than is paid by the Union Company. More trawlers would mean more employment, and I have been giving the Port Chalmers fishermen the privilege of employment. The public have also to be considered, and it is said that for the past three months Oamaru, Timaru, and Christchurch have had to depend on the supplies from the trawlers, as there

have been very few fish available from any other source. If there had not been trawlers here the public would not have been able to buy fish at any price, except imported, tinned, or frozen, in the importation of which no New Zealand labour would be required. At Home there is a three-mile limit, not because the trawlers would catch all their fish within that limit, or because the fish spawn there, but principally to protect the long-line men from losing their lines, as these are mostly set close inshore, and gunboats have to be constantly employed in endeavouring to prevent the evasion of the law; but in New Zealand there are no long lines used. The trawling industry is only in its infancy, and I consider it would be most injudicious to pass any legislation that is likely to strangle this industry here. If after a few years it is undoubtedly proved that trawling does frighten fish away from the coast, I would be one of the first to attempt to prevent this undesirable end, provided that the trawling industry was of less importance in the production of wealth in the colony than the present line and seine fishing. Legislation that does not attain its object, and that cannot be enforced, tends to create a desire at all possible times for its evasion. You will remember, sir, a few years ago a trawler visited Molyneux Bay and remained there two days, and the fishermen thought that in consequence of the visit of the trawler they were at that particular time unable to catch fish in the quantities they formerly caught; and they still believe there are very few fish even now, and that it is in consequence of the trawler's visit some years ago. I shall be only too pleased at any time to answer any questions you may desire to put. If the fishermen can prove that the trawling has been the reason of the scarcity of fish right through New Zealand, and especially at this port, I shall be only too happy to assist them by doing anything that is possible to prevent that scarcity. The quantity of fish that we get now is very much greater than it was twelve months ago, but we were not fishing in the same depth of water, and this captain was not in charge of the boat then. Since this captain came we have had a very much greater variety of fish. The season has been exceptionally boisterous, and there have been days when small boats could not go outside the Heads. We use the largest boats in the country, and we have been able to go and catch fish in all weathers, when other fishermen could not venture out. I have a freezer at Moeraki, and a considerable number of small boats there, and this is the first season we have been unable to open it for want of supplies. I own several of the small boats, and I employ about 90 per cent. of the people that are here, and I am most anxious for their welfare. I feel that there is a great deal of jealousy—that it is a dog-in-the-manger business. Because they cannot get fish themselves they would like to stop us from increasing the supply of fish; or, if not absolutely to stop us, to harass the industry by passing such legislation that it might become unprofitable to continue it. There is a Fishermen's Union down here to which about 10 per cent. of the fishermen belong. They have never discussed the matter with me, and therefore I am unable to answer any of their arguments. Some time ago I offered to allow the masters and men working on the trawlers to join the union, but they refused to admit them to the union. A deputation from their union waited on me to ask that the trawlers should not be sent to sea on Sundays; but I pointed out to them that it was absolutely necessary to send trawlers to sea on Sundays so as to have the supply for the Monday's market, and that their Sunday was on Saturday. The object of registration on fishing-boats at Home is principally to have them under control and to prevent smuggling; but there is no smuggling going on here, or likely to be, and I do not think there would be any advantage here except to obtain revenue for the Government. It would be a tax upon the fishermen, and they are quite sufficiently taxed now through the Customs, as they have to pay duty on all the material that they use, and all the manufactured oil is admitted into the colony free.

Captain RYFFEL, of the S. Trawler "Express."

I have been employed nearly twelve months on the trawler. I have formerly been line fishing in Iceland. I never did any trawling. I usually trawl in between 20 or 30 fathoms of water. You get 20 fathoms within a mile and a half of Papanui, but I have worked east-north-east off Otago Heads. In Papanui Bay last winter I tried to get a few soles, and I got one or two hauls that paid me. I have also tried in Blueskin Bay, but with no results. I am getting principally large tarakihi, moki, soles, and kingfish. In deeper water I always get kingfish and ling. Yesterday I was in 28 fathoms of water, and got a big quantity. I never make a point of trawling in shallow water, but always in deep water. I keep on the same ground for eight or nine miles from the Point, and have been on the same ground for twelve months. I have worked in a radius of about twelve miles. I found, about three weeks ago, some very good hauls of tarakihi, but they have shifted now. The weather affects them greatly. When we can get shelter, and it is too rough, we try here. It would pay better in certain seasons to trawl near the shore. The three-mile limit would handicap trawling. It would affect it at times. We got very good hauls in 15 fathoms of water last winter. The principal fish we get from the trawl the fishermen do not get. They do not get moki, tarakihi, and soles, though they get groper and barracouta. In regard to the employment of Port Chalmers fisherman, I do employ some of them, but recently I have had to discharge several of them. You get no English soles in water over 15 fathoms. The lemon-soles you get in deeper water. We have never got any red-cod yet this season. On account of the whale-feed they will not take the hook. All the fishermen who apply for bait, irrespective of for whom they fish, are supplied with bait, and I have had instructions from Mr. Sullivan to supply them all. My mate ("Express") is an old North Sea hand, having served his apprenticeship there, and the master of the "Napier" is an old fisherman who has been here for the last twenty-five years. The trawlers never go where the groper-ground is for the small boats.

MR. GEORGE HILL, President of the Seine Fishermen's Union.

Our request in meeting you is to see if you can keep the trawlers outside of a definite line placed, if possible, from headland to headland, and keep the trawlers out of the Heads, for they are disturbing the influx of fish into the harbour.

Mr. FRANK KEENAN, Outside Fisherman.

The outside fishing-ground extends from Cape Saunders to Shag Point. We go ten miles from Otago Heads, and get groper, red-cod, ling, barracouta, kingfish—all by line fishing. The trawlers are injuring my fishing. I have been ten years fishing, but the last two or three years the fish have been terribly scarce. We used to be able to get plenty of fish near Otago Heads, but we must go further off the land now. This year we had to go much further than in other years, and the supply has been shorter. Trawling over the ground where the fish feed is disturbing the fish. The limit should be fixed outside our fishing-grounds. If trawling had to be given up it would not injuriously affect the fishing trade. The fishing-boats could supply all the fish required. The small boats are quite capable of supplying the market with fish.

Mr. JOHN MALCOLM, Outside Fisherman.

In the first place, I would like to ask you, sir, if you could give us any idea as to the trawling limits of the Old Country. I can refer you back about fifty years in my native place, Scotland, where fishermen are fishing much as we are here now off Otago Heads. They were, of course, fishing on a different system from that in use here. They used the long line, where we use the hand-line here. They used to go from five to twenty miles off the land, sometimes keeping closer. They used to bring in handsome loads of fish, and made a comfortable living. I have been fishing here for twenty-eight years, more or less, and now I am told by good authorities that owing to the trawlers going over that ground there are now no fish on it, and that these men are all over the water. Now, taking the ground around Otago Heads altogether, we think that if the limit is not put on these trawlers we should be in the same position as those in the Old Country. My comrades here will bear me out on that point. If a trawler goes over the bottom it disturbs the whole bottom, and it picks up all the small fish that other fish are living on. For every fish they take ashore they kill five. I am prepared to say that if you can bear with me you will find my words to be a fact. Many years ago the boats used to keep the market more than supplied, and they have done it all along. They were limited very often perhaps to two dozen a day. They could take in perhaps thirty or forty barracouta, and two dozen groper. I consider that if a limit is not put on these trawlers outside of a head-line we shall have no fish. The trawlers disturb the bottom. That is the reason. The decrease the last four years is very marked. Sometimes there is a decrease in cod, but we always get enough to supply the market. I consider that fishing in New Zealand is only in its infancy. There is a season when we lose the groper altogether, and there is a season when we lose barracouta altogether. The deepest of the banks off Otago Heads is only about from 25 to 30 fathoms. If the fish are spawning they seek shallow water at this time, and if the trawlers are working near they must disturb them. I observed, on the 3rd of last month, that one of these trawlers dropped a trawl about 2 or 3 chains off the land, and for about four miles he was within a chain of the rocks. He then lifted his trawl, and put it down again about a mile off the land, right on the banks where we used to get the fish. Now, these trawlers working along the shore are preventing the fish from getting into the rivers and bays. The decrease may be owing to the heavy weather we have had, for I have little doubt that there are fish on the coast.

Mr. JOHN H. TUNNAGE.

About seven years ago there was a decrease here in the barracouta, but next season it came in thicker. Since the trawlers had been working nine miles north we have not had any groper whatever, and that was one of our chief fishing-grounds at this time of the year. I have been here all my life. I have observed the supply of fish that has been brought in for a long time. The trawlers are doing a great deal of harm. They kill the small fish and the feed, and they keep in right amongst us. One fisherman when lying at anchor had his anchor nearly taken up by a trawl. The Moeraki season comes in so much earlier than ours does.

Mr. EDWARD NELSON, Inside Fisherman.

I have been fishing eighteen years, and I have been seine fishing nearly all that time from the Port to the Heads. I sometimes go round Blueskin Bay. At times flounders have been very scarce, and at others they come in very plentifully. I have never seen a season like this one, or only once perhaps, and that was about twenty years ago, five or six weeks before Christmas. We have always made a living until now. Since the trawlers started we rarely get a sole. We used to get six and eight dozen, now we cannot get one. The supply of flounders has kept pretty well inside, but we never see moki. I think it quite necessary to put a limit to the trawlers. Altering the mesh of the net would lessen the destruction of the small fish. For the last ten years there has been a decrease in flounders. There are no more seiners than there were fifteen years ago. Mr. Sullivan has ruined the Dunedin market. He is selling fish by auction. The trawlers bring in a lot of fish, and of course he has it in his own hands and sells it before he comes into town at any price on the station. When he spoils the living of one hundred and fifty men what are we going to do? The trawlers bring down prices in the summer time. The small fishermen are quite capable of supplying the Dunedin market and district. I indorse all that is said about the trawler limit.

Mr. MALCOLM.

It seems to be the opinion of all the fishermen here that a limit of five miles should be for a start. Our forefathers made a limit in the Old Country of five miles of a start, and, as far as I can understand from a good authority from the Old Country, it is now sometimes from fifteen to seventy. I suggest Papanui because it would be a better line from there to Shag Point than to the Cape, because it lies further out. I am fully of opinion that if immediate steps are not taken all the seine-men (over two hundred) will be knocked out of employment. There are twenty-seven outside boats and crafts, with two or three men in each of them.

Mr. TUNNAGE.

Mr. Sullivan employs four boats. Outside there are five cutters, average about 15 tons, and twenty-one small boats; inside there are seventeen three-men boats at Port Chalmers alone, four in Portobello, two in Broad Bay, one at South Dunedin, and one at Ravensbourne. There are also three Chinese boats and four European boats working in the upper harbour.

Mr. HOLDEN, Secretary of the Fishermen's Union.

I will supply the number of fishermen employed in Port Chalmers and Dunedin at this particular season. Several are working elsewhere instead of fishing.

Mr. HILL.

One great drawback is that in previous years there were cod in the river. The trawlers are preventing them now from getting in, and we have to depend entirely on the flounder, which we cannot realise a living out of.

Mr. HOLDEN.

For several seasons here these boats have not only been able to fully supply the market, but much fish has been returned and had to be thrown away. That was about two years ago. Several quantities of red-cod were sent back only last year, and sometimes mackerel, cod, and mullet.

Mr. D. MACKENZIE, Outside Fisherman.

I should like to say something about these small fish that come about here in the winter. It is the small trevalli. We are not allowed to send them to the market. They come here every season. We get them very small, and they do not seem to grow any larger. The trawlers are getting tarakihi very large. The trevalli that come here are only about 3 oz. or 4 oz. The larger ones were here about ten years ago, and we used to make fair wages working at them. I would like the restrictions about the size done away with altogether. This restriction has done a great deal of harm here. They come in in such shoals. The trawlers sometimes get very large ones. I indorse all that has been said about the trawler limit.

Supplementary Statement by Mr. NELSON.

I also think it would be a great boom to have a public market. There is not half the quantity sold in Dunedin that was sold ten years ago. The price is kept up because there are not so many retailers.

Mr. MALCOLM.

Long years ago, before there were many men here, the boats used to take the fish right up to Dunedin, and the hawkers bought it from the boats. People used to get fish cheaper and bought more of it. Fish was made more of a meal than it is now, because it now passes through the hands of the market-men, and it seems impossible for the poor men to buy it. If we had a fish-market here any mother could send her child to the market, and get fish at about one-third of the price that she has to pay now, and the public would be better supplied, while the prices would be ruled by the supply and demand.

Mr. W. G. ROBERTSON, Wholesale Fish-salesman.

I am a wholesale fish-salesman, having bought this part of the business from the Otago Fish Company. Previously I was engaged by the company as clerk and salesman, and previous to that I was employed in the wholesale fish business for ten years. My experience during the whole of that period has been that some seasons are very good and some are very bad for the supplies of fish. Until recently we had to depend for supplies upon the seine and line fishermen. I also sell fish on its arrival on the platform of the railway-station, and it is delivered to the highest bidder. The fishermen fix a limit, and if this limit is not reached the fish are returned to Port Chalmers, where they are dumped over the wharf. For several years past we have had no moki or sprats, which formerly were very plentiful here, and even red-cod have not come to the fishermen's nets and hooks. Consequently we have had to rail them from long distances—even from Christchurch. Five years ago barracouta was so scarce here that I remember Mr. Sullivan getting large quantities frozen from Melbourne, and paying 20 per cent. duty on them. Since we have had the trawlers here the supply has been very much increased, and undoubtedly so has the demand. Trawlers get different sorts altogether from the seine and line men, and I do not see how their interests clash unless it is when, because of the large increase of the supply available, the prices may be less, but the turnover and volume of business is very much greater. Increased supplies increase buyers, as unless the fish curers and hawkers can depend upon a supply they have to leave their calling, and the fish-distribution is neglected. I also sell all the trawler's catch, and in no case have I known any of these fish returned and thrown away. They have to be sold for something, or either cured or frozen. I cannot see that making a three-mile limit will assist the small boats, and I certainly think it may do the trawlers considerable harm, and prevent them from catching fish when they are close inshore. If it can be proved that the three-mile limit is the best for the fisheries here, I think the same law should apply to the whole of the coast of New Zealand. It would be a public calamity, in my opinion, to pass legislation that is likely to make trawling unprofitable in New Zealand, especially as that industry has so far had a struggling existence, and it is most difficult to get people with money to invest their capital in the fitting of the necessary boats and gear. I employ at present five constant hands and a number of casual hands, but if there were no trawlers here I should have required only one hand all last winter. I have noticed that we generally get the most fish from the small boats in January, February, March, April and May, when shoal fish frequent our coast, coming close inshore, even right up the harbour; but they invariably disappear again as soon as we get the first frosts, and during the whole of the winter they are comparatively few. As soon as

snow falls or cold weather sets in schools of fish go off into deep water. The line-men cannot work in rough weather, except in the three cutters we have here, for it is not safe for them to go out. Even these cannot work for several days after rains, as the water is too dirty to see the baits used. For several days after and before thunder fish are very shy to take the hook. When their natural food is plentiful fish do not take the hook so readily as when it is scarce. The trawlers, again, can work and catch fish in spite of unfavourable conditions; therefore I am in favour of the trawlers being left alone, especially for the present, so as to induce others to put on more trawlers and so increase the supply and cheapen fish for the public. I shall be very glad at any time to answer any questions you may desire to put. I sell quantities of fish for the small boats also. The small boats are not able to supply the market during the whole year. There are certain times when they could, but the fish would be mostly groper, barracouta, and ling.

Q. What quantity of fish have the small boats brought in during the last winter and spring months?—Very little indeed. The market would have been bare if there had been no trawling. I know that fish have been very scarce everywhere this season. I have had wires from Wellington and Christchurch asking to supply them.

Mr. W. STEWART, Fishmonger, Princes Street.

Lately there has been a very poor supply of fish. For the last few years it has been getting worse. A few years back there used to be good sales. For the last six months there has been a very poor supply of any sort. The only fishermen that have been getting anything to speak of are the trawlers. It has been a very bad year so far as supplies have been concerned. I have been about sixteen years in the business. Sometimes fish are scarce everywhere, but the following season the supply will be back to its normal. As for flounders, they seem to be going out of existence altogether. This last winter we have had flounders only perhaps about two or three times a week, and no quantity whatever for the last three months, not even enough to supply one day's sale. Flounders are less plentiful during winter than during summer. About June or July, when they are ready for spawning, we get large quantities, but from that time they get scarcer and disappear. We get fish from both trawlers and small boats. We had three boats of our own, but it did not pay. Now we have only one boat. We used to catch all our own fish, but we cannot get it now.

Q. Do you think the small boats would have been able to supply the market this winter?—A. No, no; nothing like it. We should have had nothing at all if it had not been for the trawlers. In rough weather fish are scarcer. We sometimes freeze fish for the winter, but it would pay us to shut up from four to six months every year. The fish the trawlers have been getting have been the fish that the small boats do not catch, principally tarakihi. We never got them before. Tarakihi is a good market fish; it is better keeping fish than moki, and better for smoking.

Q. Do you think the fishermen can supply the whole market?—A. Nothing near it. The trawlers get their fish sooner. It would be doing the public an injury if the trawlers were prohibited. The demand for fish is on the increase, and if the supply were getting better it would increase still further, but everything is so scarce. As for the outside boats, it does not make any difference whatever. They can come inside with the seine-nets. The cutters go outside with hook and line. I cannot see how trawling could injure the other men, as the trawls get different fish, and they are caught further away.

Q. Why have the fishermen brought about this agitation?—A. It is jealousy, I think, on the part of the small men that new methods have been brought in, and they do not like Mr. Sullivan personally. Fishermen in general do not care about going out unless it is fine weather. They go for one day, get a big haul perhaps, and stay in for the rest of the week. They only trifle with the trade. They all go out on the same day and all get a big haul; but do they care what is the quality? They do not follow out their trade. Flounders have lately been from 4s. to 9s. 6d. a dozen wholesale. They are about 9 in. in size. Cod is sold in casks or in trays, probably about two or three dozen in a tray. Of course, if large they are sold by the dozen. The barracouta are always sold by the dozen. One cutter caught sixty dozen this season. Just now they are 6s. a dozen, or 1s. to 1s. 3d. each. I do not see anything in the agitation whatever. It is purely spite on their part. Of course, it is a new industry, but it ought to do all right in the years to come. Flounders are disappearing from here altogether.

Mr. H. KENTON, Master of the S.S. "Napier."

I have been residing in Port Chalmers since 1874 (twenty-eight years). I have been engaged as a fisherman, seine inside and line fishing outside, until I was appointed master of the trawler "Napier." This season has been an exceptionally bad one for the shore-men and also for the hook-and-line men, and I am sure I have done very much better on wages as master of the "Napier" than I could possibly have done fishing on my own account. I am of opinion that trawling has not had the slightest effect in shortening supplies, and I think the trawlers have been getting considerable quantities. It is because we have been fishing off the shore in deep water. Many of the varieties of fish we catch are not caught by the seine-men or the line-men in anything like the same quantity, and if the trawlers had not been working here Dunedin would have been without supplies for the last three or four months. Groper and barracouta are not caught in the trawl because they frequent the rocky bottom, and it would not be safe for us to trawl in anything other than smooth sandy or muddy bottom. Therefore it cannot interfere with the fishermen catching these fish. Barracouta being a floating fish, they are not caught in the trawl. Therefore the fact that we fish outside cannot affect the supply of barracouta. There are times when fish are more plentiful inshore than in deep water, and I certainly think it would be detrimental to the trawling industry if we were not allowed to fish within three miles of the land, more especially in rough weather, when we are able to go out and the small boats cannot because it is not safe for them.

It would be impossible for us to trawl unless we were allowed to shoot the trawl under the lee of the land close inshore and tow out into the deep water, as this place is so exposed to the weather. The sea is sometimes so very rough that it would be impossible and not safe to attempt to shoot the trawl into the deep water where we get the fish. Any questions I may be asked I am willing to answer to the best of my knowledge. Mr. Sullivan instructed me at all times where possible to give the line-men bait to enable them to catch line fish. I have done so on every occasion possible, and I am sure that without the bait the men would not have been able to catch the few they did. We have had very good catches. I have seen it worse than this in 1876, when all the seiners hung their nets and went quarrying. Fish are scarce every winter from a fortnight in August to about the 28th of September. The trawling is not injurious to the fishermen. They go out on the same grounds, or near about there, and in another month or so they will be out on the ground where we are now. We get soles, tarakihi, moki, and kingfish. They get groper, ling, and barracouta. We are getting a different class of fish altogether from what they are getting. It is like this: if it is blowing hard from the south-west we "shoot" perhaps in 16 fathoms and tow out into 25 fathoms, say about twelve miles off, and come home again. That is our day's work. I have not set a net under the three-mile limit for the last six weeks. I was trawling in shallow water last year in Papanui Bay. All the tides sweep down there. We got ten to fourteen dozen soles. It paid us better to trawl there. You can go into Blueskin Bay in February or March and get from fifty to sixty dozen soles in a haul. I do not think the supply of flounders is going down. They were very scarce in 1876. The fishermen do not altogether depend upon fishing; they turn their hands to other things. I have been fishing for the past twenty-eight years, and if I do not know what is wanted nobody else does.

Mr. FRANCIS HEWITT, Mate of S. Trawler "Napier."

I have been twenty-nine years fish-curing and fishing, nineteen years of that time curing I have had no experience in trawling before. I can remember one year in particular, about twenty-seven or twenty-eight years ago, when fish was as scarce as now. I was fishing at the time. Seine fish and outside fish were very scarce indeed. We were catching leather-jackets and skinning them and sending them to town and selling them to the shops. My experience of the winter time here is that flat fish—flounders—always go off, and then the only thing that the seine-men have to live upon is red-cod. Five years ago we were catching nothing but red-cod, and it was owing to that that Mr. Sullivan took up the trawling business. I think the trawlers have done more good than harm in supplying the market with fish. It cannot decrease the supply of any kind of fish. Tarakihi they never get in the boats, and kingfish they very seldom catch. They catch altogether different kinds.

Q. Do you think that the small boats are capable of supplying the market even in the summer time?—A. No, no. With certain kinds perhaps. In winter the shops would have to be shut up. We have brought in a considerable variety of fish. Trawling is a boon to the country. I say that spite is the cause of all this. I have cured fish and have had to import fresh frozen fish from Australia in the winter time before the trawlers were here. I have also got it from Napier and cured it here. I have imported barracouta even from Melbourne.

Mr. W. ANDERSON, Mate of "Express."

I have been in the country for twelve years. During most of the time I have been working for Mr. Sullivan and the Otago Trawling Company. I served an apprenticeship for seven years in Yorkshire, and I produce my indentures. I have had considerable experience in seine, trawl, and line fishing, but principally on the trawl. I have seen great differences in the supplies, because of the varying seasons and the conditions of the weather. Some seasons fish are much more plentiful in deep water, and some seasons they are much more plentiful in shallow water. The fish caught by the trawlers, with very few exceptions, are quite different from those caught by the seine and line men. I consider that, as this coast is very rough and the weather boisterous, it is principally on this account that the smaller boats are unable to go out, as it is unsafe, whereas the trawlers, being the largest in New Zealand, are out fishing days and days in weather in which it would be impossible for the small boats to live. I do not think the conditions here are the same as those at Home, and therefore it is not necessary to have a three-mile limit, as the limit at Home is mostly to protect the long-line fishermen. To fish close inshore, unless we are unable to "shoot" within a three-mile limit under the lee of the land, would be impossible in very bad weather. I am mate of the trawler "Express," and have been fishing at Lyttelton, Napier, and here. I feel sure that if this limit is made to apply to the whole of New Zealand the trawling industry would not last long, and my calling would be at an end. Undoubtedly the trawlers have considerably increased the supply of fish, and had it not been for the trawlers this city and the inland towns would this season have been very badly off for fish. I shall be very glad to answer any questions at any time, and be pleased to give you any information of this industry, as I consider myself an expert, for I can make and mend nets and take charge of any vessel. When I was on the "Napier" we went seven to nine miles near the shore in from 12 to 14 fathoms, and we were getting good hauls of fish. I was brought up on the water, sir. The conditions around here are different to those at Home. We never catch fish in our trawl that is not fit to go to the market for sale. The width of the mesh of our net is from 3 in. to 5½ in., 3 in. at the cod end. It does not matter what sized mesh the net is. Trawling is doing no harm.

Q. What proportion of small immature fish are taken up in the trawler of the "Express"?—

A. I have never seen any to speak of as long as I have been here. If we get fifty or sixty dozen soles—good saleable soles—we will throw perhaps not a dozen overboard.

Mr. WILLIAM GALVIN, Fishmonger.

I have been fifteen years in the fish trade. Sometimes it fluctuated at different seasons. This season has been the worst for six years. I remember a very bad season six years ago, in the winter. The supply is never so plentiful in winter. I buy my fish at the public market. I think that the boats are not capable of supplying the Dunedin market in the winter time. In the

summer time they could with the sort they get, but they do not get the variety that the trawlers get, such as tarakihi, soles, &c. We should have to shut up the shops. The trawlers even cannot supply the whole place. The small boats never get such big hauls, and if we had had to depend on them for the past four months we should have had to shut up altogether. I have been trawling myself. I have also been on the outside and inside fishing. I cannot see where the trawlers do any harm to the fish. Trawlers do not get groper or barracouta; the small boats principally catch that kind. The trawlers get better variety than the small boats. The Fishermen's Union fixes a price on certain fish, and if that price is not realised it must be returned to Port Chalmers, and then it is dumped overboard, after paying freight. You must return it to the Fishermen's Union, if you belong to it. Three-fifths of the supply belongs to the union. A public market is needed. It would be better for the fishermen, the retail men, and the public. There is an increasing demand for fish. We import fish from the Bluff and Moeraki.

Mr. GEORGESON, Fish-merchant, Rattray Street.

I have been twenty-four years in the trade in Dunedin, and a fisherman all my life. I have never known anywhere the supply of all fish to fail as it has done this season round the coast of Otago. In the Old Country I have frequently known one or two species of fish to be very scarce during occasional seasons, but here during this season all fish were scarce, the small boats scarcely catching anything. Only for the trawlers at work we should have had to shut up shop. I cannot account for this scarcity, as I believe it has been general all over the colony. I do not think the trawlers are responsible for the scarcity of fish this season. At the same time I do think that they should be kept a certain distance off shore. I have had no experience in trawling, but I should imagine that in the shallow water they would both disturb the fish and destroy the feed. I am of opinion that legislation that would make it unprofitable for trawlers to work at all should not be enacted. Any system of fishing that will give a better supply of fish should be given a fair trial. I purchase fish from the trawlers as well as from the line-men, and I certainly think that trawling has been a boon to the people of Dunedin this winter, as without it we should have had very little fresh fish.

PETER FARRAN, Wholesale Fish-dealer.

I have been thirty years in the fish trade in Christchurch, and during the whole of that time I have never known fish to be so scarce as they have been during the past winter and spring months. In June, July, and August scarcely any local fish were brought to market. There is no trawling off the coast of Canterbury. I consider trawling would be a great benefit; at any rate, it has been to the Dunedin people, where the market has been well supplied through the past winter with a good variety of fish.

Mr. C. T. SULLIVAN, Fish-dealer, Christchurch Wholesale Fish-market.

I have had experience in the fish trade in different parts of this colony and also in America. I have worked at Port Chalmers for a number of years both as a fisherman and on board the trawlers. The Port Chalmers Union men said years ago that the dumping of refuse from the dredges affected the fish-supply. A three-mile-off-shore limit would certainly injuriously affect the trawling there. Trawling should be given a fair trial before restricting it. There was very little local fish in the Christchurch market all through last winter and spring, the supply required being obtained from Wellington, Napier, and South.

Mr. THOMAS KNUDSON, Wholesale Fish-salesman, Christchurch.

During the past winter and spring the local fish-supply was the poorest on record. At my sale-rooms on the 23rd June the record price for fish was reached, one dozen black flounders bringing £1 6s. 9d., and one small ling was sold for 9s. This constituted the supply of local fish on that date. I have never known anything like so bad a season. I think trawling would give a more plentiful and regular supply, as well as a better variety, of fish than can be obtained by the small boats.

Mr. MUMFORD, Retail Fish-dealer, Christchurch.

I have had sixteen years' experience in Christchurch as retail fish-dealer. I have never known anything like so bad a season for local fish as during last winter, and even up to the present time the supply of local fish is very poor. I think the sale of Lake Ellesmere trout should be allowed. The large quantity of trout in that lake destroys immense quantities of small flounders. There is a ready sale in Christchurch for any quantity of these trout.

Mr. SMITH, Retail Fish-salesman, Christchurch.

The fish-supply in Christchurch all through last winter was very poor; in fact, there was no local fish to speak of. The supply required was imported from Wellington, Napier, Dunedin, and Bluff. There is no trawling done anywhere off the Canterbury coast. It would be a great benefit to fish-dealers and the public generally if we had a number of trawlers, as a more plentiful and regular supply of fish would be obtained, as trawlers can go out and work when the small boats cannot look at it. There is a demand in Christchurch for any quantity of Lake Ellesmere trout if they were allowed to be marketed.

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