

SESSION II.
1912.
NEW ZEALAND.

BLUE-COD COMMISSION

(REPORT OF THE), HELD AT BLUFF ON FRIDAY, 27TH SEPTEMBER, 1912; TOGETHER WITH
MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

Laid on the Table by Leave of the House.

REPORT.

SIR,—

Wellington, 10th October, 1912.

We have the honour to report that at the inquiry directed by the Hon. the Minister of Marine in regard to the weight at which blue-cod may be taken, and held before us at Bluff on the 27th September, 1912, there was a representative attendance of fishermen from Half-moon Bay, Stewart Island, and Riverton, and of the retail and export fish-merchants.

The fishermen were represented by Messrs. Traill, Robertson, Jensen, H. and A. Hansen, and T. Bragg, from Half-moon Bay, and W. Stirling, of Riverton; and the merchants by Messrs. Pasco and Sullivan, Invercargill, and Crocket, Bluff.

Exhaustive evidence was given by both the fishermen and merchants. The evidence of the fishermen may be summed up as follows:—

(1.) That the blue-cod fishing-grounds off Half-moon Bay and in Foveaux Strait are not depleted to any extent, and can still be profitably fished.

(2.) That a close season is not required, as the taking of blue-cod practically ceases about the end of August, when the fish will not bite, and they disappear evidently for the purpose of spawning.

(3.) That only a small proportion of the undersized fish that are caught live when they are returned to the sea, owing to the injuries they receive in being unhooked.

(4.) That, allowing for weather-conditions affecting the fishing this season, fishermen have suffered considerable loss through the size-limit of blue-cod having been raised to 16 oz.

(5.) That blue-cod from 8 oz. to 16 oz. in weight are marketable fish.

(6.) That there is necessity for protecting the small fish, and that a size-limit at which they may be taken is necessary. Both fishermen and merchants consider a length-limit, owing to its adaptability, is preferable to a weight-limit; and both agree that if a regulation were passed fixing a limit at 10½ in. in length in the green or natural state, or 9 in. when headed, it would meet the requirements of the industry.

After carefully considering the evidence which was given, we have to recommend that the regulation gazetted on the 14th March, 1912, fixing the size-limit for blue-cod at 16 oz. should be revoked, and an amending regulation brought into force fixing the size-limit at which these fish may be taken or sold at not less than 10½ in. in length in the green or natural state, or 9 in. in length when headed properly—that is, the head cut off at the back of the eyes.

We have, &c.,
G. H. E. MCCLURE.
L. F. AYSON.

The Secretary, Marine Department, Wellington.