

would like you to notice that the first part of this year there was a big increase owing to more boats being working and more boats in the grounds. Since these regulations have been in force there is a falling-off, compared with what we would naturally expect from the increase in the first part of the year, of 1,500 cases. Now, the value of this to the fishermen is something like from £800 to £1,000, so that the fishermen from Half-moon Bay and Stewart Island have lost from £800 to £1,000 owing to these regulations having been enforced, and I think it is no wonder the fishermen have indulged in some very unparliamentary language—no wonder they have been squealing over this business to a certain extent. I beg to hand into the Court this statement, which has been testified and sworn by the Chairman of the County Council and the Secretary. “Stewart Island, 25th September, 1912. Export of blue-cod from Half-moon Bay and Horse-shoe Bay for the months of February, March, and April—1910, 2,304 cases; 1911, 2,318 cases; 1912, 3,102 cases: for the months of June, July, August—1911, 2190 cases; 1912, 1,261 cases (under new regulations). I hereby declare that this is a correct statement of the number of cases of fish on which export dues were charged by the Half-moon Bay and Horse-shoe Bay Harbour Boards for the periods stated.—WALTER ROBERTSON, Secretary.—Witness: John Stirling, J.P.” A number of representatives have been sent over from the island, and they are here prepared to give any information they can as to the actual working of the grounds. There is one point they are very strong upon, and they are prepared to give testimony on this point—that is that the grounds at Stewart Island are not being depleted, and that the fishing-grounds can still be fished to as good advantage as thirty years ago. Before these regulations were brought into force there was a decided increase over previous years, which seems to bear out what they maintain—that the grounds have not been depleted. I think these are all the points I wish to lay before you at present. If there are any other points brought up in opposition to what I said I ask the leader of the Court to refute them if possible, and the other representatives from Stewart Island are here present and are prepared to give their evidence on any points that are necessary.

1. *Mr. Ayson.*] Mr. Traill, you have been in Stewart Island many years?—Nearly forty years.

2. Do you know to your own personal knowledge that the fishing-grounds are as good now as, say, in 1877?—Yes. I have not been fishing in the grounds lately, but I have seen the returns from day to day, and there is hardly a day when the fishermen do not come in and I say, “What sort of a day have you had?” and they say, “We have had quite a good haul to-day and good fish”; and it seems that the returns now are as good as I can remember.

3. Mr. Traill, when you settled in Stewart Island what was the condition of the fishing in Paterson Inlet: was blue-cod very plentiful in Stewart Island?—Yes.

4. Do the fishermen fish Paterson Inlet to any extent now?—Not to any extent now. In Paterson Inlet I fish a great deal myself—in fact, I fish in that inlet a great deal more than any other. I generally choose a fine day and put it in as a sort of holiday to myself, and I fish there and it is rather amusement to me to study the ocean-flow, and therefore I go there, and I maintain that I know a good deal about fishing, and the fishing-grounds are good; but there are certain points in the inlet which if you fish continually you fish out, but in time they recover.

5. They recover?—Yes.

6. Since the new regulations came into force you say there has been a decrease of about nine hundred cases?—Yes.

7. Have the weather-conditions had anything to do in your estimation with the decrease?—Last year the weather has been pretty average.

THOMAS CROCKET, Fish-merchant, Bluff.

Mr. Chairman,—Mr. Traill made the statement about a young fisherman being out from 6 o'clock in the morning and arriving back at 12. Unfortunately, the young fisherman had no luck; he got no fish and came back. Is it not a fact, I would like to ask Mr. Traill, is it not a fact that during the past month certain boats have fished right around Stewart Island—started at Half-moon Bay and gone right around the island—with very little success, and also to the working-grounds, where there are practically no small fish to be caught? Can he explain the reason why these boats went around there and caught so few fish?

*Mr. Traill:* No, I cannot explain the reason that the boats got so few fish, but this fisherman I refer to said, “We are catching any amount of fish out here, but they are only about 1 lb., so it is not worth while wasting any more time. The point I wish to bring out is that if he had been allowed to catch these fish it would not have been a waste of time.

*Mr. Crocket:* The point I wish to bring out is this—the fishermen who go there are just as likely to find the fish are not biting as the large boats going round Stewart Island.

*Mr. ROBERTSON:* I think I can explain Mr. Crocket's question. The fish begin to disappear about July. They begin to get scarce about July.

*Mr. Crocket:* There is another question I would like to ask Mr. Traill. Is he prepared to substantiate his statement that fish are just as plentiful on the grounds now as they were thirty years ago?

*Mr. Traill:* I will call upon the representatives of the fishermen who have been fishing for the last twenty years to give evidence, and you can hear what they have to say on the matter.

*Mr. Ayson:* We will take the evidence of the fishermen now.

N. J. JENSEN, Fisherman, Half-moon Bay.

I have been a fisherman on Stewart Island for twenty-two years. I can say without hesitation that this year, before the new regulations came into force, we have got more fish for the time than any previous year, and I also beg to state that at the end of August, or just in the middle of August or