

somewhere about that time, the fish begin to leave the islands roundabout Half-moon Bay, and it is hardly worth while after that time for any fisherman to go out and try to earn his living, for he can make very little at it. The fish seem to go away, but about January they come back as thickly as ever round about the islands. I do not think the fishing-grounds are getting depleted, or we would not be able to get the same fish every year round. At the first of the season you go somewhere about the north—that is where you get the fish then—and about a month or two afterwards they seem to go away to the other islands and the fishermen in the boats follow them up, and when it comes to the end of August the fish knock off biting, and of the few you get the majority of them have spawn in them—some of them, at any rate—and I think if anything should be done the fish should be protected when they spawn. Another thing I would like to say is that it is very unfair to the fishermen to make weight regulations, for it is impossible for a fisherman to weigh a live blue-cod when it is twisting and wriggling about all the time, and I think it would be fairer for the fishermen that they should go by measurement, for he can have a mark on the boat, and get an idea of the measurement from that; but you cannot weigh a live blue-cod, for the fish wriggles about and you stand the chance of having your fingers pricked and your hands poisoned, and no fisherman would do it, for it takes too long a time and he stands a chance of getting injured.

1. *Mr. Ayson.*] I would like to ask you, if you say you caught more fish last year than any previous year, did you refer to the individual catch of any boat?—I referred to my own catch.

2. You are referring now to twenty-two years ago?—Twenty-two years ago you could not catch any more fish in a day with your boat than you can now.

3. With the same number of fishermen?—Yes.

4. How many in a boat—two?—Three in a boat.

5. I think you said the fish disappear in the spawning season?—Yes.

6. And you said, or at least I understood you to say, that you thought a close season would be sufficient protection: did I understand you aright?—Yes; I certainly think it is better for the fish, for it stands to reason if you catch fish with the spawn in, look at the number of fish that are getting destroyed, even if over 1 lb.; and I say this without hesitation, that after the end of August there is not a living in it for anybody.

7. Well, then, the cod practically have a close season?—Yes, they close their own season.

8. So it would be quite unnecessary for the Government to close the season?—Yes. There are a few fishermen who get a few cod after the end of August, and some of them—a good many of them—have spawn in them.

9. Would you say that the average size of the fish caught now off Half-moon Bay is as high as it was twenty years ago?—I think so. I think there is no difference. In the olden days we used to sell the fish by the dozens. The large fish we got so-much for and the smaller fish we got less for, and I have always noticed there was a good deal—over one-third—of the fish caught reckoned as small fish.

10. Twenty years ago?—Yes. I would like to say that the reason the small fish are more noticeable just now is because there are more fish caught, and it stands to reason that if there are more fish caught there are more small fish, because in a small quantity of fish you would not notice the small ones, for there are not so many of them.

11. It has been represented to the Department that, say, fifteen or twenty years ago the percentage of small fish which was brought in did not amount to more than about 20 per cent. of the catch; now, within the last few years, it is represented that the percentage of small fish weighing from half a pound to a pound is quite 50 per cent.?—I do not think so. I beg to differ from that.

*Mr. Crocket:* I would like to ask Mr. Jensen if he is prepared to swear that in his catch for this season the average has been that more than half the fish have weighed over 1 lb.

*Mr. Jensen:* No, I simply cannot swear to it, because I have not weighed them. You do not expect me to swear to what I do not know. I have not weighed the fish since these regulations came into force. I have knocked off fishing.

*Mr. Crocket:* I would also like to ask him if he is prepared to swear that his catch is bigger this year than any year?

*Mr. Jensen:* Yes, I am prepared to swear that for the time I have been fishing before these regulations came into force.

*Mr. Crocket:* Not for the year?

*Mr. Jensen:* No; I knocked off fishing since the regulations came into force, for I could not make a living at it, and it was no use going on at a thing I could not make a living at.

THOMAS BRAGG, Fisherman, Half-moon Bay.

I have been fishing for twenty years. This last season has not been the best season that I have ever had, although I have heard several fishermen say it has been their best. I did more fishing this season among the islands near Half-moon Bay than I have done for the previous five years. Previous to those five years I used to fish a good deal at the back of Stewart Island, and, of course, did very well.

1. *Mr. Ayson.*] Excuse me: when you say “the back of Stewart Island,” you mean the north-west side of Stewart Island?—Yes. This last year I noticed that on the grounds I used to fish on when I started I got as many fish on this last season as I got when I started fishing, although I noticed there were more small fish than when I started fishing. I hold with previous speakers that a fisherman cannot make a living with the present regulations in force, but I believe that the old regulations, with nothing under the 8 oz., would meet the case. I believe the fishermen could make a living right enough with the old regulations in force.