

2. *Mr. McClure.*] Mr. Bragg, in reference to putting the small fish back, do you think they live?—I have had a little experience. One of the vessels I had had a well for keeping the fish alive. In those days we would try and get the fish off as carefully as we could, but there was always a lot that died in the wells.

3. *Mr. Ayson.*] How long would you keep them in the wells?—Never longer than about a week.

4. You kept them about a week?—Yes; but we had to be very careful to have the vessel lying out in a place where there was a roll, so as to get the circulation of the water. There was always a percentage of the fish that died even in the wells.

5. Would you expect that even if the netted fish had been put in?—The netted fish always lived if you did not overcrowd them in the well.

6. What grounds have you been fishing in principally?—I have fished all round Stewart Island, and from Waipapa through Foveaux Strait, and right round the South Island.

7. Have you been fishing off Half-moon Bay and round there lately?—I have fished all around Stewart Island and right round the south coast of the South Island for the last twenty years, and I have not missed a season.

8. I think you stated that there were as many fish on the grounds you fished this year, but of a smaller average size?—Yes. It may have been in the quantity of fish caught. We get more individually now than when I started fishing. We catch more fish while the season lasts.

9. But they are a smaller average size?—Yes; more small fish in the catch.

10. What percentage of the fish you catch?—I do not know. Some days you get more large fish than small ones: next day more small fish than large ones. There are certain grounds where you get 75 per cent. of small fish and other grounds 75 per cent. of large fish.

11. Would you say there are as many fish on the grounds handy to Half-moon Bay and Paterson's Inlet as there were twenty years ago?—Yes, I think so. When I started fishing, if we got 600 lb. weight in a day (two of us fished) we considered that an extra good day's fishing. Well, last season—this year—I have seen two men come in with 1,000 lb. for the day.

12. Off these old grounds?—Yes. I have seen two men for four days of the week bringing in the smallest catch, say, 700 lb., and the biggest 1,000 lb.: 700 lb., 800 lb., and 1,000 lb. for the four days.

13. Then, in your opinion there has been no decrease in the quantity of blue-cod on any of the fishing-grounds?—I do not say that exactly, but I think the fish shift about. Just like a paddock where you put sheep—they eat that paddock out; and I think the fishing-ground is the same—the fish eat that ground and shift to the next ground.

14. Do you think the size of the hook used has any influence on the size of the fish caught?—No, I do not think so.

15. You can catch small cod with a groper hook?—You might catch one in a day.

16. I have caught a 2 lb. cod on a groper hook?—Well, I have caught a $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. cod on a groper hook for that matter.

17. It has been suggested that the destruction of small fish—*i.e.*, fish, we will say, under $\frac{1}{2}$ lb.—can be prevented to a considerable extent by the size of the hook used. What is your opinion?—No, I do not think the size of the hook would count at all.

18. Have you any recommendations to make further than what you have made with regard to the protection of blue-cod. Do you think they require protecting?—Well, I think the fish should require to be a certain length, for it is very hard to weigh a blue-cod when it is alive. If, say, any fish of anything under 10 in. was let go again, and it had a chance whether it lived or died (of course, we know the best part of them die).

19. Well, if your experience is correct that there is no decrease in the quantity of blue-cod on the old grounds, why is there any necessity for protection?—Well, there is necessity for protection.

20. If it is a fact that the fish are not decreasing on any of the old grounds which have been fished for twenty years, what is the necessity of having any limit?—We do not need any limit, but I understand the Department means to have a limit of some sort, so I think 8 oz. is a fair thing—say, any fish under 10 in.

21. But fish under 8 oz. will be caught?—Yes, fish under 8 oz. will be caught no matter what sort of hook you use.

22. And all the fishermen about Foveaux Strait unhook their fish by jerking them off?—Yes, you have to.

23. But when turning them in the well-boats you unhooked them?—No, we did not unhook them all. In those days we only used the wells in the summer-time. We generally plugged them up for the winter. In the summer we did not catch as large fish—we had to go all round, and, of course, the fishermen were satisfied if they only made half as much as in the winter. It is in the winter that they expect to do well, from February to August. After that they make up their minds that they will not do much, and pick up other jobs.

24. I am given to understand from the shareholders of the Pegasus Company that they insist on all the fish being unhooked?—We know nothing about them.

25. One of the managing directors informed me that they stipulated that all the fish must be unhooked, for the reason that the jerking bruises them?—That may be why all the men are leaving there.

Mr. Ayson: He says they pay them a higher rate than is usually paid for blue-cod.

Mr. Crockett: Mr. Chairman, I wish to contradict that statement. The fish-merchants of Bluff at the present time are paying considerably more than the Pegasus people pay for their fish, and we put no restrictions on regarding unhooking them.