

easterly weather, and that is a thing we do not get very much of at Stewart Island some months, and then you may have had it good enough, and never have had a chance to get round about. As for the size of the fish, you go on to one ground to-day and you might get a splendid run of good-sized fish, and you go back to-morrow and you might get nearly all small fish on the same plot where you got the big fish the day before, which shows that the fish must shift about. You see that very often out on the middle grounds between Ruapuke and the islands.

2. *Mr. Ayson.*] What size-limit do you think would be fair?—The old regulations.

3. Do you favour a length-limit instead of weight?—It would not make any difference to me—whatever the other people think. The measurement is very much easier than the weight, because we have a mark cut in the rail of the boat 12 in. long, and that goes just about the bare thing for 11 oz. when clean. When you catch a cod, he is always wriggling around, and you can tell when he is nearly the size, but you cannot take hold of him and put him on the rail to measure him, so to make sure of him you give him a bash on deck, and when he is nice and safe, if you are doubtful, you measure him, and if not long enough you let him drop gently over the side.

4. *Mr. McClure.*] He will not recover then?—No, for any cod that is nowhere near the size you make sure of him.

5. *Mr. Ayson.*] If you make any doubt of it?—Yes. If in doubt give him a gentle tap on the head over the rail: they say they are a very hardy fish.

6. *Mr. McClure.*] Give them a bash on the head for the purpose of getting the hook out?—Yes, to get the hook out.

CHARLES ROBERTSON.

In regard to the question of the beds being depleted, I may say I have been connected with the fishing about thirty years. In fact, my brothers and I—I think we came from Kaipipi to Horse-shoe Bay in 1884, and we were told we would get plenty of blue-cod there; but for some reason or other that was the worst season I have ever known on the island in regard to getting fish. There were six of us, and we could not get any blue-cod. We came there in April, and it was well on into August before the fish came about. We tried from the Saddle to Port Adventure and about the islands, and there were very very few fish to be got; and I think myself, from my own experience while I was fishing, that the fish fluctuate. The year before was the best year I ever knew, and I think the fish fluctuate: that is to say, there are lean and fat years.

1. *Mr. McClure.*] I should think that very probable: you will find that in everything?—But that year I speak of we had to leave. We went to Dunedin. We could not get any fish, and the reason that was given for it by the old fishermen who were there then was that the dredging outside—of course, you must understand that at that time, or just before that time, the oysters used to get outside of Horse-shoe Bay, and the old fishermen attributed it at that time to the dredging outside having spoilt the feed; but my experience since then has led me to believe that was not the reason. Of course, I cannot speak of recent years, for I have not been fishing, but I think there is no doubt the fishing-grounds are much the same as they were, but I would not like to say whether the fish are as large. We were the first that started buying by weight, and, in some of the catches, I could mention men who got nothing else but small fish.

2. Were they marketable?—Well, we canned them. We did not care what size the fish were. We did not see the small fish until we started buying by weight. I believe buying by weight is the reason why we see so many small fish nowadays.

Mr. Traill: There is a gentleman here, a delegate from Riverton, Mr. Stirling: he is now prepared to give his experience in connection with the fishing-grounds off Riverton.

3. *Mr. Crockett.*] Mr. Robertson, do you think the fact of the Norwegian vessels whaling there this year has made any difference to the catch of the fish?—Well, I should not be surprised; at any rate, they brought hawks around.

4. They started about the time this new Act was brought in?—I think so.

5. Do you also think the vessels oystering this year have had anything to do with it?—I should not be surprised at that either.

6. Is Mr. Robertson aware that on the old oyster-bed at Stewart Island—on the very middle of it—they used to catch blue-cod?—Yes, I am aware of it, but not in my time.

7. What year did you say you went to Stewart Island?—When I started there it was in 1884.

8. That is just about my time too, and we used to catch fish in the very middle of the bed?—Well, that was the reason I got, and you know some of the men I had fishing for me.

Mr. Hansen: You were speaking about sharks. None of us have seen any sharks since the whalers have been there; and as far as altering the ship is concerned, I do not think that the ship itself would have any effect in the fishing industry, and they have not got a whale since the new regulations have been in force, and the fact of the whaler being there would not have any effect on the fishing outside Half-moon Bay.

Mr. Crockett: I would like to ask the speaker, is it not a fact that several whaling-steamers have been racing up and down getting whales this season?

Mr. Hansen: Not since the new regulations came out. There has not been a whale caught there for the last four months.

Mr. Crockett: I am very pleased to hear that. How long have these regulations been in force?

Mr. McClure: Since the 14th March, 1912.

Mr. Crockett: I certainly think there have been whales caught since that time, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Hansen: I was speaking about since these new regulations have been enforced, and they have not been enforced over twelve months.