

believe, in Lake Taupo—destroying those beautiful fish. Our contention is that if the fish are going to be destroyed in that way they should be netted in the season, and that the fish should then be put on the market in either Auckland or Wellington; that it is quite possible to transport them, and that instead of having this fearful waste going on by pulling fish off the spawning-beds—as I believe they are doing at the present time in Taupo—and digging a hole and burying them, those fish should be allowed to spawn, and when they get back into condition there should be netting in all the lakes, and the fish should be put on to the market. That has always been our contention. Of course, it should be under proper control. We believe that no netting should be allowed within a certain limit—say, 300 yards or 400 yards—of where the other fishers are occupied. There is a fearful waste of trout taking place in the lake district owing to what we consider to be bad administration. I might mention in connection with the administration that it is not any personal matter. We are not attacking officers, or anything like that—it is the system. Our Conservator, for instance, came to Rotorua, I think, somewhere about four or five years ago. He came as a Ranger. He was a very efficient Ranger indeed. I do not think he professed to have any knowledge of fish-culture in those days. We had succeeded in getting a promise from Sir Joseph Ward that he would appoint a thorough expert from Canada. He told us so at a meeting of our Chamber of Commerce one night. While this gentleman was being sought for in Canada Mr. Moorhouse got a lift as far as his title was concerned, and he became Acting Conservator of Fish and Game. That was all right. That went along for quite a while. Then the appointment of the Canadian fish expert did not come off. They were unable to obtain such a man—the salary was too low, or they required too much from him, or something. Mr. Moorhouse then had the “Acting” struck off his title, and he became Conservator of Fish and Game, whereas in the first place he had simply been a Ranger amongst us.

4. What is he now?—Conservator of Fish and Game, and, I believe, with still greater powers. Some months ago the Hon. Mr. Russell was up in our district, and a deputation of four or five of the prominent fishermen went to him and met him in connection with ranging. We said that the place was being very badly served as far as ranging was concerned, that poaching of all sorts was rife, and we considered that in view of the size of the district, which comprised some 7,000 square miles, we should have another Ranger appointed. This had nothing at all to do with the Tourist Department: they never asked us to do anything; but we realized that there should be more efficient ranging. After some little talk he agreed to give us a Ranger. I think it was about six months ago that a Mr. Rutherford came along. We were very pleased indeed to see him, because we thought it would be a good thing. He came there, and he ranged all about. I think he was a very wideawake officer, always on horseback travelling about the country. I could see that he was quite wideawake to his work and was doing his best. He got to know the district fairly well in the six months of his appointment. Then we discovered just the other day that he was discharged, being told that the term of his appointment had expired—this after he had just got conversant with the district. The strange part about that is that he was no sooner out of the office than a Mr. Peter Graham—he was the Chief Guide at Mount Cook, I believe—came into the district. He is a very nice gentleman. I had seen him two or three years previously. I asked him, “What are you doing?” “Oh,” he said, “I am taking up Rutherford’s work. I am going to be a Ranger.” “But you do not know anything about our district,” I said. “No,” he replied, “but I hope you fellows will help me all you can.” I told him that we were disgusted about the Rutherford episode—that he should have just got accustomed to the district and then been put off.

5. What became of Mr. Rutherford?—He took another job, I believe.

6. He was not transferred?—No. He was an old Government servant. I met him two or three days ago, and he said he was absolutely sick of this last pill, as he called it, and had taken a private job. This appointment of Mr. Peter Graham to come up to spend two or three months amongst us till things were got right down at Mount Cook, I think, is very funny indeed. He has absolutely no idea at all of our district, of what is required, or even the rudiments of ranging. Let me give you some idea about the administration. When Mr. Robieson took charge after Mr. Doane left the Department he imposed a limit—not more than twenty-five fish or 50 lb. weight of fish should be taken out of the lake in any one day by an angler. I think most anglers know the great rate at which fish multiply, and that ordinary legitimate rod-and-line fishing would never clear them out: it would be impossible to get them down even. I spoke to Mr. Robieson about it. I said it was an absurd regulation altogether. He pulled out papers from his pocket and showed me statistics from England and Scotland and Ireland regarding different lakes which had had to be filled up again, and so on. I told him the conditions were entirely different out here in New Zealand—that where in these older countries they had thousands of anglers we had only dozens. He still persisted that it was the right thing, and that he would enforce it. He thought we were going too far altogether—that we would absolutely clear the lake out. And what is the result at the present time? The result is that the fish have deteriorated because they have become so numerous, and I have no doubt also the feed has gone down. The petition, I think you will find, has over six hundred signatures attached, with these additional ones that I have produced. I was the secretary of the local club up there, and in sending the petition forms out to the outlying districts I specially asked that no Maoris or visiting anglers should be allowed to sign, also that no ladies should be allowed to sign unless they were actually sportswomen. I said that we preferred to have a representative petition, that we only wanted male anglers within the acclimatization society; and we got over six hundred signatures. We have also received many letters of appreciation in connection with the whole thing. Would it be permissible to read any of those?

7. Mr. Dickson.] It would be better to hand them in and attach them to the petition?—Very well, I will do so. [Documents handed in.]