

sized fish, it follows that more fish will be destroyed than if the same weight of larger fish were taken. If, as seems quite clear, the shallower waters of the bays and inlets are inhabited by small fish, it is to be expected that trawling anywhere in their vicinity will lead to the catches containing a considerable proportion of smaller, even if not undersized, fish. In any event the interests of the line and net fishermen require consideration. Trawling would interfere with their operations, and even though there may be a considerable area inside the present line which is not in fact now being fished by the line and net fishermen, it is suitable ground for their operations, and it is quite reasonable to provide a protected area in view of the considerable increase in their number which may be expected when all our men have returned from the war, when the ordinary increase in population has taken place, and when further encouragement is given to the industry.

Mr. Ayson, after having heard all the other evidence brought before the Commission, gave it as his opinion that the advantages of fixing the line farther out than at present were outweighed by the disadvantages, and he suggested a slight variation in the present line—namely, to start from Mahurangi Heads and run thence to Tiritiri, and thence to Cabbage Bay. His reason for suggesting the concession to the trawlers of a small additional area at present protected is that in his opinion the advantage of affording them an area where they may work protected from northerly weather, and so permitting more continuous fishing, outweighs the disadvantage that this allows trawling in such protected waters as those between Kawau Island and the mainland. Mr. Ayson is also of opinion that, considering purely the question of the preservation of fish, trawling should not be permitted so close in to Cabbage Bay as is likely with the line fixed as at present, and he at first suggested that the line should be put farther out. But, after weighing all considerations that were brought out by the inquiry, he is of opinion that that part of the line should remain as at present.

In fixing the line as proposed by Mr. Ayson the only point which has not received as much consideration as we should have liked to give it is that of selecting prominent headlands for the points of the line. The greater part of the line would remain as at present, but where a change is made it is an improvement from this point of view. The landmarks are not all as prominent as we should have liked, but that, after all, is a question of secondary consideration. It was strongly urged on the part of those interested in the trawling industry that fixing a line which permitted trawling farther into the gulf would save the trawlers time in their trips to their fishing-ground, and so reduce the cost of catching fish. The evidence is that trawlers are usually engaged about thirty-six hours upon a trip. As it takes a trawler less than three hours to reach the present line, any alteration of the line in the way suggested could not save the vessel more than an hour or two per trip, and this appears to us a matter of minor importance when weighed against other considerations.

Taking all the circumstances and all the varying interests into consideration, we beg to recommend that the line be fixed from Mahurangi Heads to Shearer Rock, off the north-east point of Tiritiri, and thence to Cabbage Bay.

#### THE MESH OF TRAWL-NETS.

The evidence adduced before us does not justify us in recommending any alteration in the present regulations dealing with the size of the mesh in trawl-nets. The size of the mesh at present used apparently gives the best results. To increase it would certainly not altogether stop the taking of some undersized fish, and would probably result in the loss of a considerable number of fish of marketable size.

#### SALE OF UNDERSIZED FISH TAKEN IN AUTHORIZED NETS.

There seems to us to be strong reasons against permitting the sale of undersized fish, whether caught in authorized nets or not. The regulations at present permit the sale of snapper as small as three-quarters of a pound, and this question is only of importance in reference to snapper. Snapper under the size of three-quarters of a pound is not satisfactory, the amount of available flesh upon it not being great, and we do not think that the public would be fairly treated in being offered fish of a smaller size than that fixed by the present regulations. There is also the point that if the sale of fish under this size is prohibited trawlers will be discouraged from working in any area where they catch a large proportion of undersized fish.

We do not recommend any alteration in the present regulations.

#### LIMITS ON CATCHES.

The Commission was empowered to inquire whether any limit has been imposed on fishermen on their catches of fish, and the reasons for such limit (if any). It was admitted by the Auckland City Council, by Sanford Limited, and by the Thames Fisheries (Limited) that limits were at times imposed on the fishermen restricting, if not their catches, at any rate the number of fish that would be purchased from them. This was shown to be entirely due to the variations in the fish-supply. At times fish are caught in greater numbers than can be absorbed by the market, and in such cases the dealers, if they accepted a greater number of fish than they could put upon the market, would incur the expense not only of purchasing fish which they did not require, but of getting rid of them. There was no evidence of any description from which it might be inferred that such limits on catches were due to an arrangement among the dealers in order to keep up prices. The difficulty is one that could be overcome only by the provision of a large amount of cold-storage room, and even this would not wholly get over it, because flounder, which is one of the classes of fish as to which this difficulty particularly arises, does not lend itself to satisfactory freezing; and mullet, the other class of fish to which it particularly applies, has, as compared with the other fish caught in the Auckland district, a more limited market.