

When it is realized that it took thirty-nine full-time and four part-time Danish-seiners to land 61 per cent., the capacity of the steam trawlers as a stabilizing influence on the market will not be doubted.

The questions of the distances which the trawlers have to travel and of operating-costs were fully dealt with in the evidence tendered. No objections to the Bay of Plenty restrictions proposed some time previously by the Marine Department were raised, so long as some shelter in easterly weather was left on the Auckland side of East Cape. The trawlers are manned under an award which limits their time at sea, and they have to compete with seine boats working under no such time-limit.

To a suggestion by the Committee that the size of the mesh in trawls should be raised, some objection was taken, but we feel that if a seine boat has to have 5 in. mesh in the cod-end, then the trawler should be under the same restriction. It may be stated here that the research work done in other countries with relation to the escapement of small fish from trawling-gear should be closely followed, and its results in determining satisfactory methods of preventing wastage should be adopted in New Zealand. With their large trawling-fleets and highly qualified staffs, which have specialized in this type of research, other countries have means of information that should form a sure guide and save the necessity of any investigation in the Dominion, unless it is required to check the effect of such improved gear on our own types of fish.

Trawlers should be subject to the same restrictions as recommended for Danish-seiners in the area between East Cape and North Cape.

New Plymouth and Wanganui.

At New Plymouth trawling has been tried by a small motor trawler from Lyttelton, but the results were unsatisfactory, and thereafter this vessel went lining and has now returned to Lyttelton.

At Wanganui the ground is not suitable for trawling, there being too many patches of rock.

One of the "Cam" boats from Australia was reported as having been seen off Kawhia lately.

A boat belonging to N.Z. Fisheries Ltd., prospected the grounds in this area, but could not trawl till she got off the Rangitikei Heads. The catch was then so poor that after a month spent in trying the grounds she went back to her home port.

Wellington.

At Wellington there are only two trawlers, the vessels "Futurist" and "Nora Niven." These vessels were responsible for 65 per cent. of the total landings of fish at this port last year. Obviously without these there would be no stability in the fish-supply in Wellington. They are fitted with refrigerators, and the catch is cleaned at sea, an improvement on the method used by the Auckland fleet of keeping the fish with the gut in for a week at a time.

Most of the fishing done by these boats is off Cape Campbell, Kaikoura, Kapiti Island, and Palliser Bay, tarakihi being the principal species landed. With the exception of a complaint against their working in Palliser Bay, no complaints were received about their operations.

In regard to Palliser Bay, it was maintained by Wellington line-fishermen that this is a nursery ground for small groper, and that it should be protected from operations of trawlers, so that the young fish might have a chance to mature. This argument is quite sound, but it can equally be applied to the operations of line-fishing vessels using "windy buoy" lines. The records of the Marine Department show that the trawlers made only eight trips to Palliser Bay during the last year, hence the problem cannot be so pressing as many others facing the Administration. Until such time as an investigation can be undertaken to prove definitely the statement that this is a nursery ground, it would be illogical to close it to all forms of fishing throughout the year.

Before passing on to its recommendations, the Committee wishes to draw attention to the value of large ocean-going trawlers for defence purposes. For mine-sweeping and general patrol duties they are invaluable, so that any factor which threatens the dispersal of their crews must be regarded as serious.

Recommendations.

New Zealand.

1. That the size of the mesh in the cod-end of all trawls be raised to 5 in. immediately, exemption being granted to those vessels operating at present to allow them to use up the gear in hand.
2. That all research carried on abroad as to the escapement of undersized fish from trawls be studied and adopted if found satisfactory under our conditions of fishing.

Napier.

3. That at Napier both trawlers and seiners be kept off the inshore grounds.
4. That at Napier there be no further increase in the number of fishing-boats using power-drawn nets for at least five years, unless statistics show a remarkable increase in the total annual landings of flat fish over a period of at least three years.
5. That efforts be made to find a suitable outlet for the excess catches of gurnard, red cod, skate, and other varieties, which are at present dumped by the Napier trawlers. With proper treatment, it should be possible to utilize all the red cod and gurnard caught.

East Cape to North Cape.

6. That trawlers be subject to the same restrictions as first-class Danish-seiners.