

boats one is a trawler and the other a seiner. This company operates the largest seine boat at Napier, and was of the opinion that Danish seine netting is not a great success in these waters. This is to some extent borne out by the fact that the other seine boats occasionally go line-fishing, and they would not do this if the seining operations were successful.

The usual statements were made by the trawler-men as to the damage done by the seine ropes to the bottom, the effect seine-net operations had in disturbing the fish when they were congregated together, the high catching-capacity of seine boats in comparison with trawlers operating on the same grounds, and the destruction of undersized fish by seine boats. As to this last, it was stated that the crews left the small fish on deck until they had strung up the marketable fish, after which the small fish were swept overboard either dead or in a dying condition.

The fact that at the time of the Committee's sitting three of the four seine boats were line-fishing was given as evidence that the flat-fish stocks had declined so seriously as to make net fishing operations no longer profitable.

In these circumstances, it is regretted that none of the practical seine-net men attended the Committee's sittings to state their case, more particularly as they must have known of the strong opposition to their method of fishing the trawler-men would express. In every other port the seine-boat men submitted evidence, but apparently the Napier men were content to let their case go undefended.

The case with regard to depletion at Napier is covered under the heading "Trawling." The evidence relative to the decline in the flat-fish stocks suggests that the Danish seine is too severe for these grounds, and is likely to be more so seeing that the fleet has increased during the last few years.

At Napier the effects of the earthquake on the fishing-grounds and certain other factors render our decision difficult. We conclude, however, that as other small vessels can fish profitably by trawling out of this port the gradual elimination of Danish-seining would save further depletion of the inshore waters at a later date. At the very least, the seine boats should be on the same restrictive limits as the trawlers.

Gisborne.

There are no Danish-seiners at this port. One from another port did fish in this district, but only for a few days. It was stated that the small tidal range made these grounds unsuitable for seining operations.

Bay of Plenty—Whakatane and Tauranga.

At Whakatane all the witnesses with one exception stressed the necessity for the restriction of Danish-seining in the inshore waters. As elsewhere, their contentions were that there has been a steady depletion of the fish-supplies from the local grounds since the Auckland Danish-seiners commenced operations in the Bay of Plenty, that the seine boats by working close inshore have depleted the grounds used by the local line-fishing vessels to such an extent that the men cannot make a reasonable living, and that the food-supply of the Natives, both coastal and inland, has been seriously affected by the depletion. Finally, at recognized holiday resorts such as Whakatane and Ohope Beach the inshore fisheries are an asset as an attraction, and serious depletion affects the tourist trade to these places, a trade which is of material importance to the towns and townships of the district. The exception to these contentions was the operator of a Danish seine boat based on Whakatane. In his evidence he admitted that the grounds were not standing up to the fishing altogether satisfactorily, but he blamed the intensive operations of the Auckland boats for the depletion.

At certain periods, up to ten of the large Auckland boats have worked off Whakatane at the one time. One Auckland vessel was reported as having worked so close inshore that one of the crew was using a sounding pole continuously to avoid risk of the vessel going aground. The Auckland boats were further blamed for fouling the grounds by dumping overboard dead fish not only undersized and of species which are not marketable, but good edible fish usually marketed but not required by the Auckland markets at the time of capture.

At Tauranga the case was substantially the same as at Whakatane, except that the depletion had reached the stage where the small local seine boats have had to lay up because they can no longer make catches of sufficient value to enable them to be operated economically. With the laying-up of these vessels, and the severe reduction of the catches by the local line-fishing boats, the wholesale fish-markets at Tauranga have been seriously embarrassed because they cannot get sufficient supplies from the local boats.

Naturally, the operators of the Auckland Danish seine boats will object to any restrictions in this area, but in the Committee's view a firm stand must be taken. The people in these towns and districts are as much entitled to a local fishing industry as is Auckland, and they are entitled to receive fresh fish from their own boats in preference to fish which have been caught by the Auckland boats, carried for several days with the guts in on ice, taken to Auckland, and then railed back to the seaport towns off which the fish were originally taken. It may also be mentioned that a large proportion of the fish taken by the Auckland boats from these waters is caught almost solely for the export market. Apart from this, the question of the depletion of the inshore waters must be taken into account and measures of conservation adopted wherever necessary.