

He wished the fishermen to discuss the matter, and if the size he had mentioned was not approved of, then the fishermen could move any smaller size they wished. Mr. Williams seconded the motion.

Mr. Elliott, on behalf of the fishermen, said that they proposed, for dragging-nets, 4in. mesh, and for setting-nets, 5in. He wanted to point out that Mr. Spackman had spoken of the 5in. mesh at Akaroa, and he said that they got more valueless fish from Akaroa than from Lake Ellesmere. As to mullet-nets, the fishermen proposed 2½in. mesh, but they asked that they should be protected from those who used 1½in. mesh at Sumner and New Brighton. The fishermen wanted to unite with the society, and they were greatly obliged to the society for asking them to attend the conference.

A fisherman from the lake said that no matter what the size of the mesh was they were bound to catch small flounders, as they got into the nets and were drowned.

Mr. Spackman said any resolution which provided for the alteration of the size of the nets would be given twelve months' notice of, so that the fishermen would not be called upon to sacrifice their property.

Mr. Ferron would propose, "That the drag-nets be 4in. and set-nets 5in., and the mullet-nets 2½in. All fish caught in these nets to come into the market." He would show them why this was. A breeze of wind came down and a man had all he could do to get in the net. Then he had no time to see whether they were all 9in. long. Besides, they would be dead, and was it any use to put them back into the lake. He did not see the necessity for the size of the fish being fixed, only the size of the mesh of the net. The lake had been opened now for some eleven months, and they had been sweeping the lake out of fish. There was also set-net fishing now, which made the fish scarce. They had more fish this summer from the sea than at any other period.

Mr. Husband said that he thought it was very generous on the part of the society to grant the fishermen twelve months to replace their nets; but he would like to know whether the acclimatisation society could prevent the Collector of Customs or the police coming down on the fishermen.

Mr. Spackman said that any united resolution proposed to the Government that the new regulation should come into force twelve months hence would no doubt be given effect to.

Mr. Husband said the reduction of the mesh spoken of by Mr. Spackman had been carried out on the petition of the fishermen in Lake Ellesmere that they could not earn sufficient. He dissented from Mr. Elliott as to the small size of the Akaroa fish. He that day had given 3s. per case more for fish from Akaroa than from the lake, because they were larger. He had been in the business now some seventeen years, and he might say that they had never had so many small fish as they had had lately, until a stop was put to it. As regarded the size of the mesh, he had measured a flounder that day from the lake which measured 10in. or 11in. long, and 4½in. across. He therefore thought that a 5in. mesh would catch a flounder 11in. long. They as vendors could not shut their eyes to the fact that the larger the fish brought into the market the more the fishermen would get for them. He therefore thought that the fishermen would be going against their own interests by having too small a mesh.

After some further discussion, Mr. Spackman amended his resolution as follows: "That the Government be requested to fix the size of the set-nets to be used for flounders in Lake Ellesmere at 5in., drag-nets at 4in., and the net for mullet or herring at 2½in., measured in the usual way. Such regulation to come into force twelve months after the present date."

Mr. Husband moved, as an amendment, "That the size of the drag-nets be 4½in. mesh."

After some further discussion, Mr. Husband's amendment was put and carried unanimously.

Mr. Perceval said that the conference would be useless unless the fishermen were agreed as to the amendment. As he understood it, the fishermen were opposed to the amendment, but they had not recorded their disapprobation.

Mr. Ferron said the fishermen were of opinion that the 4½in. drag-net was too large. No man could make anything.

Mr. Spackman said he thought the fairest way would be for the chairman to state that the resolution was carried unanimously, all except that portion with regard to the drag-net being 4½in., three of the fishermen present objecting to this, and wishing to have it made 4in. Mr. Spackman then moved, "That the length of the flounder be increased by the regulations from 9in. to 10in." Mr. Elliott seconded the resolution.

Mr. Husband moved, as an amendment, "That the minimum size of the flounders be 11in." Mr. Catchpole seconded the amendment. Mr. Elliott said if this were carried the fishing at Lake Ellesmere would be stopped.

The amendment was then put and lost, and Mr. Spackman's resolution put and carried.

Mr. Elliott asked whether the society would consider the licensing of fish dealers to sell trout. Mr. Spackman said that the matter was under the consideration of the council.

The meeting then terminated.

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The ASSISTANT SECRETARY, Marine Department, to Mr. W. H. SPACKMAN.

SIR,—

Marine Department, Wellington, 11th May, 1888.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 17th ultimo, forwarding copy of a resolution passed at a meeting of the acclimatisation society, the fish vendors at Christchurch, and the fishermen on Lake Ellesmere, with regard to the size of the mesh of nets to be used on that lake; and, in reply, I have been directed by the Minister having charge of this department to state that the whole question was carefully considered when nets with 4in. mesh were allowed by the regulations of the 10th January last, and the Government do not see their way to make any further alterations at present.