

the mouths of the creeks with spears. The black flounder, in my opinion, was more plentiful than now. The leaseholders on the borders of the lake used to arrange with the Maoris to let out the lake. It was then generally let out in the spring. Since the Little River Railway was made the lake has never been allowed to get so high as formerly. There is a drainage district for the Halswell part. The great difficulty is to get an outlet for the water, owing to the lake backing up; and the Selwyn County Council are advising the Government to create a drainage district that will include the whole of the land affected by the lake, including the outlet. From inquiries made we consider that the lake can be prevented from keeping so high as at present, and this would have the effect of keeping it at a more uniform level. Some years ago I went down and met the fishermen on the ground, to consider the possibility of having the opening at a different place, so as to prevent the loss of spawn and young fish which they represented as occurring through the lake being let out through the present outlet. We selected the point which they considered would be advantageous, about a mile to the east of the place where the opening is made now. Since then I have had the opportunity of inspecting tracings prepared by the Railway Department, showing the soundings and depth of the lake in the immediate neighbourhood. There is a deep channel from the present opening running east, along the point known as Fishermen's or Low Point, but opposite the proposed place of opening is comparatively shallow, and consists of shallow water, and I do not think it would be of any use opening the lake at the proposed new place unless this proposed new opening is connected with the deep channel. There are about 20,000 to 24,000 acres of Crown land affected by the rise and fall of the lake. Part of this acreage would always be subject to the rise and fall of the lake, but not more than, say, 10,000 acres.

*Nicholas Bassi* (further evidence): The flounders come out of the mud in the beginning of September. In October they are shifting down towards Taumutu, and breeding there. They are there for two months. I find them in full roe in October, and in November none. After November I find them all over the lake, and so till the month of April. The largest fish I get are near the shores, on the clear bottom, and the smaller ones in the middle of the lake. When I first knew the opening, eleven or twelve years ago, it was shallow water where it is now deep, but the depth has been occasioned by the flow of water through the channel to the sea, and, in my opinion, the same effect would be produced by letting the lake out at the proposed new place. In my opinion, there ought to be supervision of the fishery so as to prevent the destruction of small fish. Within my knowledge the channel leading to the present opening has never been blocked or made smaller by shingle washed into it over the spit from the sea. I think the fishermen ought to be allowed to use the floating herring-net of 2½ in. from April to September. I do not think these nets would interfere with the flounders or any other fish. I think a limit ought to be put on the quantity of fish taken by each fisherman. Twelve years ago the fishermen used to employ only eight or ten nets, now they have from twenty to thirty nets. I would limit the daily average of fish to be taken by each fisherman to twenty-four dozen. I think it is possible, in case of a glut, to keep flounders alive in pounds. I have not found them difficult to keep in the well.

*John Stretz* (fisherman, Lake Ellesmere): I have been engaged fishing at the lake for the last twelve years. I began working with set-nets, 4½ in. to 4 in., and I used to work about 20 yards from shore, and we used to catch flounders from 9 in. up to 11 in. We began working from September till July. After July used to work in deeper water, in the mud, say two miles from shore. There we caught flounders from 9 in. to 10 in. Then we used to go to Taumutu and work drag-nets of 3½ in., catching flounders running 9 in., 10 in., and 11 in. These fish were full of spawn. After November the fish used to go back towards the Selwyn for feed. At the present time we cannot fish close to the shore owing to prevalence of water-grass; now we can only fish, say, two miles from the shore, and the fish we catch are from 9 in. to 10½ in., with a few larger. I think large fish could be caught along the shore were it not for the weed, and in larger quantities than the small ones we get from the mud. The weed has increased considerably of late years. I do not think the present channel would silt up if the lake was opened in another place. I have had some experience of flounder-fishing round the coast at the Pilot-station, Port Levy, and other places. At these places I caught few flounders, say, about twelve dozen a week. These were caught in the drag-net. There are less flounders caught now at these places than when I was fishing there. I think herring-nets of 2½ in. should be allowed to be used from 1st May to 1st September. Nine or ten years ago we used to be able to send one hundred cases a day to market at 10s. to 12s. a case. Then there were only eleven or twelve boats working, with nine to twelve nets each boat. Every year since till 1889 they were getting less and less. Since the lake has been opened less frequently the flounders have slightly increased. Now we are sending thirty to forty cases of flounders, and there are about fourteen or fifteen boats with eighteen to twenty nets, and five or six boats with eight or ten nets. I think the flounders grow about 5 in. or 6 in. a year. The average sized fish I have seen with spawn would be 9½ in. to 10 in., but I have never seen spawn in fish less than 9 in. long.

*Alexander Lazaretti* (fisherman, Lake Ellesmere): Have been fishing for twenty years on the lake. Have not fished anywhere else. The flounders are not as numerous now as they used to be twelve or thirteen years ago, as then the fish died. Could not catch two dozen a day. Previous to that time the lake was occasionally open. About that time the Little River Railway was constructed, and the lake was kept open for nine months. The reason was, the lake became so shallow from its being constantly open that the water was much rougher when strong breezes were blowing, and the disturbance killed the flounders and other fish. At this time we caught more dead fish than live ones in our nets. The tidal changes drove the dead fish into the nets. Some were putrid and smelt very bad. Since that time the fishing has recovered, every year more fish being taken, and the fish increased in size as well as number. The fish caught about eleven years ago were very small, from 7 in. to 8 in. and 9 in. only. You could catch a few large ones with the drag-net to put on top of the case. Average catch three years was two cases to a boat. Average catch at present time, say, three cases to a boat all the year round. Fish were generally smaller three years ago.