

have been very few fish available from any other source. If there had not been trawlers here the public would not have been able to buy fish at any price, except imported, tinned, or frozen, in the importation of which no New Zealand labour would be required. At Home there is a three-mile limit, not because the trawlers would catch all their fish within that limit, or because the fish spawn there, but principally to protect the long-line men from losing their lines, as these are mostly set close inshore, and gunboats have to be constantly employed in endeavouring to prevent the evasion of the law; but in New Zealand there are no long lines used. The trawling industry is only in its infancy, and I consider it would be most injudicious to pass any legislation that is likely to strangle this industry here. If after a few years it is undoubtedly proved that trawling does frighten fish away from the coast, I would be one of the first to attempt to prevent this undesirable end, provided that the trawling industry was of less importance in the production of wealth in the colony than the present line and seine fishing. Legislation that does not attain its object, and that cannot be enforced, tends to create a desire at all possible times for its evasion. You will remember, sir, a few years ago a trawler visited Molyneux Bay and remained there two days, and the fishermen thought that in consequence of the visit of the trawler they were at that particular time unable to catch fish in the quantities they formerly caught; and they still believe there are very few fish even now, and that it is in consequence of the trawler's visit some years ago. I shall be only too pleased at any time to answer any questions you may desire to put. If the fishermen can prove that the trawling has been the reason of the scarcity of fish right through New Zealand, and especially at this port, I shall be only too happy to assist them by doing anything that is possible to prevent that scarcity. The quantity of fish that we get now is very much greater than it was twelve months ago, but we were not fishing in the same depth of water, and this captain was not in charge of the boat then. Since this captain came we have had a very much greater variety of fish. The season has been exceptionally boisterous, and there have been days when small boats could not go outside the Heads. We use the largest boats in the country, and we have been able to go and catch fish in all weathers, when other fishermen could not venture out. I have a freezer at Moeraki, and a considerable number of small boats there, and this is the first season we have been unable to open it for want of supplies. I own several of the small boats, and I employ about 90 per cent. of the people that are here, and I am most anxious for their welfare. I feel that there is a great deal of jealousy—that it is a dog-in-the-manger business. Because they cannot get fish themselves they would like to stop us from increasing the supply of fish; or, if not absolutely to stop us, to harass the industry by passing such legislation that it might become unprofitable to continue it. There is a Fishermen's Union down here to which about 10 per cent. of the fishermen belong. They have never discussed the matter with me, and therefore I am unable to answer any of their arguments. Some time ago I offered to allow the masters and men working on the trawlers to join the union, but they refused to admit them to the union. A deputation from their union waited on me to ask that the trawlers should not be sent to sea on Sundays; but I pointed out to them that it was absolutely necessary to send trawlers to sea on Sundays so as to have the supply for the Monday's market, and that their Sunday was on Saturday. The object of registration on fishing-boats at Home is principally to have them under control and to prevent smuggling; but there is no smuggling going on here, or likely to be, and I do not think there would be any advantage here except to obtain revenue for the Government. It would be a tax upon the fishermen, and they are quite sufficiently taxed now through the Customs, as they have to pay duty on all the material that they use, and all the manufactured oil is admitted into the colony free.

Captain RYFFEL, of the S. Trawler "Express."

I have been employed nearly twelve months on the trawler. I have formerly been line fishing in Iceland. I never did any trawling. I usually trawl in between 20 or 30 fathoms of water. You get 20 fathoms within a mile and a half of Papanui, but I have worked east-north-east off Otago Heads. In Papanui Bay last winter I tried to get a few soles, and I got one or two hauls that paid me. I have also tried in Blueskin Bay, but with no results. I am getting principally large tarakihi, moki, soles, and kingfish. In deeper water I always get kingfish and ling. Yesterday I was in 28 fathoms of water, and got a big quantity. I never make a point of trawling in shallow water, but always in deep water. I keep on the same ground for eight or nine miles from the Point, and have been on the same ground for twelve months. I have worked in a radius of about twelve miles. I found, about three weeks ago, some very good hauls of tarakihi, but they have shifted now. The weather affects them greatly. When we can get shelter, and it is too rough, we try here. It would pay better in certain seasons to trawl near the shore. The three-mile limit would handicap trawling. It would affect it at times. We got very good hauls in 15 fathoms of water last winter. The principal fish we get from the trawl the fishermen do not get. They do not get moki, tarakihi, and soles, though they get groper and barracouta. In regard to the employment of Port Chalmers fisherman, I do employ some of them, but recently I have had to discharge several of them. You get no English soles in water over 15 fathoms. The lemon-soles you get in deeper water. We have never got any red-cod yet this season. On account of the whale-feed they will not take the hook. All the fishermen who apply for bait, irrespective of for whom they fish, are supplied with bait, and I have had instructions from Mr. Sullivan to supply them all. My mate ("Express") is an old North Sea hand, having served his apprenticeship there, and the master of the "Napier" is an old fisherman who has been here for the last twenty-five years. The trawlers never go where the groper-ground is for the small boats.

MR. GEORGE HILL, President of the Seine Fishermen's Union.

Our request in meeting you is to see if you can keep the trawlers outside of a definite line placed, if possible, from headland to headland, and keep the trawlers out of the Heads, for they are disturbing the influx of fish into the harbour.