

Mr. TUNNAGE.

Mr. Sullivan employs four boats. Outside there are five cutters, average about 15 tons, and twenty-one small boats; inside there are seventeen three-men boats at Port Chalmers alone, four in Portobello, two in Broad Bay, one at South Dunedin, and one at Ravensbourne. There are also three Chinese boats and four European boats working in the upper harbour.

Mr. HOLDEN, Secretary of the Fishermen's Union.

I will supply the number of fishermen employed in Port Chalmers and Dunedin at this particular season. Several are working elsewhere instead of fishing.

Mr. HILL.

One great drawback is that in previous years there were cod in the river. The trawlers are preventing them now from getting in, and we have to depend entirely on the flounder, which we cannot realise a living out of.

Mr. HOLDEN.

For several seasons here these boats have not only been able to fully supply the market, but much fish has been returned and had to be thrown away. That was about two years ago. Several quantities of red-cod were sent back only last year, and sometimes mackerel, cod, and mullet.

Mr. D. MACKENZIE, Outside Fisherman.

I should like to say something about these small fish that come about here in the winter. It is the small trevalli. We are not allowed to send them to the market. They come here every season. We get them very small, and they do not seem to grow any larger. The trawlers are getting tarakihi very large. The trevalli that come here are only about 3 oz. or 4 oz. The larger ones were here about ten years ago, and we used to make fair wages working at them. I would like the restrictions about the size done away with altogether. This restriction has done a great deal of harm here. They come in in such shoals. The trawlers sometimes get very large ones. I indorse all that has been said about the trawler limit.

Supplementary Statement by Mr. NELSON.

I also think it would be a great boom to have a public market. There is not half the quantity sold in Dunedin that was sold ten years ago. The price is kept up because there are not so many retailers.

Mr. MALCOLM.

Long years ago, before there were many men here, the boats used to take the fish right up to Dunedin, and the hawkers bought it from the boats. People used to get fish cheaper and bought more of it. Fish was made more of a meal than it is now, because it now passes through the hands of the market-men, and it seems impossible for the poor men to buy it. If we had a fish-market here any mother could send her child to the market, and get fish at about one-third of the price that she has to pay now, and the public would be better supplied, while the prices would be ruled by the supply and demand.

Mr. W. G. ROBERTSON, Wholesale Fish-salesman.

I am a wholesale fish-salesman, having bought this part of the business from the Otago Fish Company. Previously I was engaged by the company as clerk and salesman, and previous to that I was employed in the wholesale fish business for ten years. My experience during the whole of that period has been that some seasons are very good and some are very bad for the supplies of fish. Until recently we had to depend for supplies upon the seine and line fishermen. I also sell fish on its arrival on the platform of the railway-station, and it is delivered to the highest bidder. The fishermen fix a limit, and if this limit is not reached the fish are returned to Port Chalmers, where they are dumped over the wharf. For several years past we have had no moki or sprats, which formerly were very plentiful here, and even red-cod have not come to the fishermen's nets and hooks. Consequently we have had to rail them from long distances—even from Christchurch. Five years ago barracouta was so scarce here that I remember Mr. Sullivan getting large quantities frozen from Melbourne, and paying 20 per cent. duty on them. Since we have had the trawlers here the supply has been very much increased, and undoubtedly so has the demand. Trawlers get different sorts altogether from the seine and line men, and I do not see how their interests clash unless it is when, because of the large increase of the supply available, the prices may be less, but the turnover and volume of business is very much greater. Increased supplies increase buyers, as unless the fish curers and hawkers can depend upon a supply they have to leave their calling, and the fish-distribution is neglected. I also sell all the trawler's catch, and in no case have I known any of these fish returned and thrown away. They have to be sold for something, or either cured or frozen. I cannot see that making a three-mile limit will assist the small boats, and I certainly think it may do the trawlers considerable harm, and prevent them from catching fish when they are close inshore. If it can be proved that the three-mile limit is the best for the fisheries here, I think the same law should apply to the whole of the coast of New Zealand. It would be a public calamity, in my opinion, to pass legislation that is likely to make trawling unprofitable in New Zealand, especially as that industry has so far had a struggling existence, and it is most difficult to get people with money to invest their capital in the fitting of the necessary boats and gear. I employ at present five constant hands and a number of casual hands, but if there were no trawlers here I should have required only one hand all last winter. I have noticed that we generally get the most fish from the small boats in January, February, March, April and May, when shoal fish frequent our coast, coming close inshore, even right up the harbour; but they invariably disappear again as soon as we get the first frosts, and during the whole of the winter they are comparatively few. As soon as