

with the facts. It starts by saying, "Also that there appears to be a tendency on the part of the societies to regard moneys received for licenses as private property of the societies, while as a matter of fact license fees are in every sense public moneys, and under the Fisheries Conservation Act these fees are bound to be expended by the societies on the protection and distribution of fish." Naturally it does; but in dividing a district, as the Department proposes, it is only a small portion of the district that is proposed to be taken—considerably less than one-half of it—whereas five-sixths of our income is being taken. The remaining income, with which we should have to deal with more than one-half of the present district—£130 per annum instead of £650—would be totally inadequate, and so far as we can see we should have to cease our operations altogether. The report goes on: "In reference to the petition, I would point out that in dividing the district, which reduces the revenue, it at the same time reduces the area of the district on which the moneys of the society have in the past had to be expended." I beg to protest against any such statement as that. It is absolutely contrary to fact. We never looked upon these revenues as private property. We have expended every penny for the last twelve or fifteen years on the propagation and distribution of fish. The funds have never been looked upon as private money, and a balance-sheet has been published every year, to which every one had access. We are quite aware that it is under the Fisheries Conservation Act, and have spent the whole money in restocking, importation, and so forth. "I should like to remark that the Auckland Society, notwithstanding the fact that for many years its chief source of revenue has been the Hot Lakes district, has provided no ranger until the last two seasons, when pressure was brought to bear on the society by the Government, and special concessions granted it." That is not true. For many years before the Tourist Department was in existence we had a ranger there. No pressure has been brought to bear by the Government. I should like to be allowed to state on behalf of the society that, in my opinion, the gentleman who wrote this report should be present here. The statements are so extraordinary that they must be contradicted. The ranger has a small house provided by the society, grazing for a horse, and a boat. "With the number of officers which the Government has employed in the Hot Lakes district, who are distributed widely, a very much more systematic and complete method of ranging can be carried on than is possible under the society's management." That I beg to dispute. We have at least one paid ranger, and have also honorary rangers who are probably as good as paid rangers. In addition, there are generally three members of the council at Rotorua during the whole fishing season, and I dispute that any paid official can do such work as this in addition to his own, as well as the rangers or officers of the society, paid or otherwise. I should like to ask how these rivers have got stocked if the Auckland Society did not stock them. The Kaituna, Tarawera, and Rangitaiki are the three finest streams there. We have stocked them because they begin in our district, although the bulk of the rivers is outside, and the rest of those rivers referred to are absolutely outside of our district. He says, "The Tourist Department has had to stock them." We have presented the fish free to the Department for stocking these rivers. This year we gave them twenty-five thousand fish. We did everything we could to assist, although these waters are absolutely outside of our district. Whakatane County is not in the district of the Auckland Acclimatisation Society. I deny on behalf of the society that there has been any confusion or divided authority in the past, nor need there be in the future. This gentleman is confusing two things—the fishing public and the tourists. We do not regard tourists as fishermen. Some are so, perhaps, for one or two days, and for their benefit we have created one-day licenses; but the gentlemen who take whole-year licenses are very numerous indeed, and these can scarcely be considered as tourists, as they spend weeks or months in the neighbourhood for the fishing alone. To show this, I may point out that out of the total sum taken for fishing licenses, over £650, there were 633 whole-season licenses, so that it does not leave a very great sum as being derived from the one-day licenses. There are a very large number of people from the Old Country and Australia who come out every year specially for the fishing. They are not tourists. They stay a long time and do no sight-seeing. There is a gentleman staying with me in the Royal Oak now who was in Rotorua for five months last year for the fishing, and I do not think we could call him a tourist. That disposes of that letter.

34. *The Chairman.*] Mr. Symes raises the question as to your gazetted boundaries?—The district within which the society carries on operations includes Rodney, Waitemata, Eden, Manukau, Coromandel, Thames, Raglan, Waikato, Ohinemuri, Waipa, Piako, Kawhia, West Taupo, and Rotorua, or any other portion of the North Island the inhabitants of which may desire to become incorporated with the society. I may mention that there are many other societies in the North Island similar to ours. We are bounded in the north by Whangarei and in the south by Taranaki and Hawke's Bay.

35. *Mr. Symes.*] How was it specially constituted a district? Was it by Provincial Orders, or did local people just take it on themselves to form a society to administer a certain area?—In the first instance the Government was asked to undertake the work of acclimatisation, but would not. A number of Auckland gentlemen formed a society. This was in 1867. I think, in the first instance a suitable locality was settled upon and it was gazetted.

36. I suppose it started in a small way and increased?—In a very small way. Until 1895 the income from fishing licenses was only £20, or something of that sort. In the last three years the increase has been very great—quite abnormal.

37. The Fisheries Conservation Act was passed in 1884, but your society was dragging on an existence for twenty years before the Act was passed?—That is so.

38. The Government have never interfered in any way since the passing of the Act?—We have never had interference until one or two minor details lately, which are not important.

39. They practically recognised your society?—Yes, it has always been recognised.

40. The present matter has been only quite recently spoken of?—Only within the last few days.

41. Do you know anything of a Rod and Gun Club at Rotorua?—I have heard something of it. It was started, I think, as a sort of mild opposition to us, but I am not quite certain of that. I am not certain whether it was started as a branch or in mild opposition.