

1867.' District specified in registration; again registered under Act of 1880. Original district reduced by formation small societies such as Bay of Islands, Whangarei. Right to revenue, game licenses, section 33, Animals Protection Act. Right to fish licenses, see section 10, 'Fishing Conservation, 1902.' Previous to that Act by regulations gazetted under Act 1884. Gazetted 23rd October, 1899." I was in doubt as to the details, and I simply said last week that the society had, as far as I was aware, been registered. That fully confirms what I then said. A good deal of what I had to say in reply to Mr. Robieson the other day was contained in a little statement I had drawn up, and which I need not refer to again to-day. There are one or two points, however, I should like to mention. As to the question of complaints, it has been suggested that complaints had been made against the society. The only complaints that we have had made against us have come from a small section of what I might call the business community at Rotorua, who are interested in fishing in the way of commerce—such as fishing-tackle sellers, launch-owners, and so on. I think the reason we have incurred the hostility of this section is because we have, through our rangers, had to keep an eye on some of these gentlemen to prevent breaches of the law. One name was mentioned by Mr. Robieson last week as the author of a telegram to the Premier, giving an account of an enthusiastic meeting approving the action of the Government; and he is a man that our society has this year proved to have sent down to Auckland in pretty regular weekly instalments nearly 2 tons of trout to hotels, clubs, freezing companies, and others. I leave it to you to say whether that has been done out of pure love for the hotels and freezing companies. At present we have no actual proof that money has been received, but actual proof of the trout having been sent and delivered is in our hands. This has been done by a gentleman who a short time ago wired to the Premier that a large meeting of influential residents of Rotorua had been held, at which it was resolved unanimously to send a telegram of congratulation to the Premier about the proposed taking-over of the Rotorua fishing. I am in a position to state that this meeting was practically a private one. It took place in the house of the man of whom I have been speaking. It consisted, I think, of seven or eight launch-owners and fishing-tackle makers, and the meeting was not unanimous. One man, at least, protested against the telegram being sent at all. I only mention this because I am quite sure the Premier is too fair a man to do us an injustice if he knows the facts of the case. I have not had the honour of speaking to him about it, but I should like to have done so. I may say that one of the very few suggestions we have had from the Tourist Department came about two years ago, as to appointing this gentleman who sent the telegram—and also sent the 2 tons of trout to Auckland—as an issuer of licenses for the Rotorua district; but under the circumstances, and with the knowledge we possessed, we begged leave to decline to do so. I would like to say that all throughout we have been under the jurisdiction of the Government, and that the control of the regulations in connection with fishing have been in the hands of the Government. Our society has merely made suggestions suited to local requirements, and we have not seriously disputed any suggestion made by the Government at all. One suggestion which seemed to us to be a bad one we protested against, and the Rotorua section which is now so vigorous against us was still more vigorous then against the Government. That was as to the 30 lb. limit of fish. Our objection was that Rotorua Lake was enormously overstocked, and that the overstocking had undoubtedly caused disease. Generally speaking, the attitude of the Tourist Department to us till quite recently has been one of entire apathy. We have on many occasions asked for information and written to them on many points, and had no reply whatever. One particular instance I have already mentioned. I do not want to go over ground that I touched upon last week, as I know the time of the Committee is limited, but I would like to say that I had a wire on Saturday stating that very vigorous leading articles in both daily papers in Auckland—the *Star* and the *Herald*—had appeared strongly protesting against the proposed Act, showing that there is no party feeling in the matter, as the papers representing both the parties in politics are unanimous on this point. In conclusion, I would say that if we could think the giving-up of the control of this fishing to the Government was for the good of the colony we should agree to it; but we have one thing we must not forget, and that is this: We have received in voluntary subscriptions and donations beyond all licenses the sum of about £3,500 in support of our society, which has helped to build up the magnificent fishery we have at the present time; and can we, in justice to ourselves, give up without protest the results which we have largely secured by these means? I do not think it is for the good of the colony to give over to a number of paid servants the control of a large district, which has been undoubtedly well managed up to the present time by a committee of amateurs, enthusiasts, and experts. I do not think there is anything more I need say. I have endeavoured to cut my notes short this morning, but I hope I have put my case clearly before you. So far as we are aware, we have no enemies at all in the Auckland Province, barring the two or three Rotorua people, who are the chief agitators and who are commercially interested in this work. On that account it is, in our opinion, undesirable that they should in any sense have control of the fishery. I beg to read one or two telegrams received by our society to show that it has the sympathy of kindred societies [see telegrams in Appendix]. I beg leave to hand these copies to the Committee, together with a copy of the report, which gives the whole of our transactions for the year. I do so because Mr. Robieson tried to make out that we considered our society in too private a light, and the perusal of one of these will flatly contradict that statement. The society courts full public inquiry, and I am quite prepared to answer any questions put to me.

92. *Mr. Symes.*] I think one of your contentions was that the society was, at least, as competent to manage the work as the overworked Tourist Department?—I did not use the word "overworked."

93. No; that was my word. The Tourist Department must be overworked if it could not answer letters. I did not quite get the date, but I think it was about two months ago you said?—In that particular instance about the Tarawera Lake, I think that was from six weeks to two months ago. It must have been fully that. We have had two monthly meetings since then, at any rate.

94. This report of the society, I think, has been circulated before?—This particular one has only been circulated within the last few days, and I was only able to bring down two copies, but since then the secretary has posted me a dozen more.

95. It must have been the previous year's issue that I saw?—Yes. I believe similar reports and balance-sheets have been circulated every year for some forty years.