

93. *The Chairman.*] We have it there are forty-two boats engaged: how many men are engaged in them, do you think?—I should say about a hundred.

94. These are all in and around the Thames?—Yes.

95. *Mr. Bruce.*] What is the most you ever made in one week?—Thirty-six pounds. Others have made more.

96. You were generally recognized as a hardworking and successful fisherman?—I think so.

97. *Mr. Clendon.*] Were there any oil-launches seventeen years ago?—No.

98. And how many fishing-boats?—Fifteen or twenty boats.

99. How do you compare the number of fish caught now by these forty-two oil-launches with the number caught by these sailing-boats seventeen years ago?—I think there would be three or four times as much caught now.

100. Would the presence of these forty oil-launches fishing daily in the gulf have any effect on the scarcity of fish in the river?—Well, if the fish came into the river they would thin them out quickly.

101. Does not the presence of these forty oil-launches fishing in the gulf show the reason of the scarcity of fish in the river at times?—No, I think not.

102. You only fish in the river during the summer months?—Generally. Of course, we have fished all the year through in the river.

103. Would you be surprised if some fishermen go into the box to-day and state that last summer was one of the most successful summers they have had in the Thames River?—I should not be surprised at anything.

104. To what cause do you attribute the dead fish?—In my opinion it is the difference in the bottom of the river—to the mud changing its nature.

105. Are there not some fishermen who set their nets on Sunday morning, and leave them set until Friday night, working them all the time except when they are delivering their loads to the steamers?—I will not say it has not been done.

106. Is it not very frequently done?—Yes, that has often been done.

107. Would that fact conduce to the death of a number of fish?—Not if they worked the nets regularly.

108. That is, the nets have to be worked once on the ebb and once on the flow?—Yes.

109. And do fishermen sometimes go to sleep and fail to work the nets once on the ebb and once on the flow?—Yes, a few.

110. Are there not a number of Maoris and settlers who leave their nets constantly in the Thames River below Turua?—Not while I have been fishing. I have not been fishing for the last two years.

111. Do you mean to say that none of the residents of Turua were fishing during the time you were fishing in the Thames River?—Occasionally.

112. Did they leave their nets set all the time?—No, they dare not.

113. You said it was not easy to drown an eel: is it not a fact that when the nets are being overhauled a number of eels slip into the dinghy?—Occasionally a few do.

114. Have you taken any samples of this hard bottom in the Thames you have spoken of?—No.

115. For the last two years you have had no personal knowledge of the Thames River?—No.

116. Would the fact of small fish such as whitebait being killed up the Thames River affect the scarcity of fish at the mouth, or conduce to that scarcity?—Not of flounder, I think.

117. You stated there was £20,000 invested in boats and gear: tell us the biggest price paid for a fishing-boat here?—I do not know.

118. What did you pay for yours?—The boat was a little over £300.

119. The gear, as a rule, I suppose, represents £40 or £50?—I have had as much as 150 pounds' worth.

120. I am taking the average fisherman: what is the value of his gear—more than £40?—I should say more than that. I should say nearer £100. I should say about £80 or so.

121. Are the nets used now longer and bigger than the nets used seventeen years ago?—About the same.

122. Is the bottom any harder on the western side of the gulf now than it used to be?—I did not notice any difference.

123. Which particular area, to your knowledge, is harder than it used to be?—All along this side, from Opani Point to Tararu Point.

124. What other area?—That is all I know of.

125. Do you notice any falling-off in the fish in the Piako River?—Not while I was fishing there last—two years ago.

126. Is it not an accepted fact that the fish have gone into deeper water in recent years owing to the number of fishing-boats?—I do not know about going into deeper water, but more boats catch them quicker coming into shallow water.

127. There are other freezing-works besides yours on the Thames?—Yes.

128. And both of these works send large quantities of fish to Auckland?—We do not.

129. Does the other firm?—Yes.

130. Do you not send large quantities of fish daily up-country?—Yes.

131. For how long have you been doing so?—About two years.

132. Is it not a generally accepted fact that the fishing industry on the Thames is in a more flourishing condition now than ever it was?—There is more fishing, and more fish caught and sent away.

133. Have the quantities of *débris* and peat coming down the Piako and Waitakaruru Creeks had any effect on the fishing industry?—It impeded the catching of the fish for a little while.