

*Mr. McClure* : No, they were only gazetted in March, 1912.

*Mr. Crocket* : We have seen whales this year.

*Mr. McClure* : Have the Norwegians seen them and caught them ?

*Mr. Crocket* : We have seen the steamers.

*Mr. McClure* : Yes, I suppose it is possible to see steamers almost any day passing up and down the strait.

*Mr. Crocket* : You do not quite understand me, Mr. Chairman—I say we have seen whaling-steamers since that date.

WILLIAM STIRLING, Fisherman, Riverton.

I have been fishing off and on for these last twenty years, but for the last ten years steadily. I find there has been very little difference in the catches of fish for the last ten years, with the exception of this year. It has been very poorly with us round about Centre Island, but I put that down to the inclement weather, and so much wet and floods coming down the several rivers which has shifted, I suppose, the natural-food of the blue-cod. I always find whenever there is a flood the fish round our way become scarce, but as soon as the weather-conditions and the water become clear the fish bite as well as ever. As regards the small fish, we find it a loss to us to the extent of about, I should say, from 15 to 20 per cent. We have a mixed sort of fish up there. We have not a great deal of small fish, but we find we have that loss, and lots of other fishermen say it is very hard to tell the difference when you pull up a fish—you cannot tell exactly what he will be, and you say to yourself, “I will chance it—I think he will be within the regulations”; but when you come to clean that fish you find he is 1 oz. or  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. under, and I think it is a pity to see that fish wasted. As regards protection, I reckon cod should be protected in this way—the small fish should be protected. If the fishermen would study and take a little time—I have proved it, and it does not take very much time to unhook a cod and chuck him over if under the size. It is for their own protection. Some will get away—and then there are the natural enemies, the mollymauks—some will get away all right, but some, as I say, will be taken by their natural enemies, and I think if we could restrict them to  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb cleaned it would be a fair thing.

1. *Mr. McClure.*] Half a pound cleaned : that would be, in the green state, how much ?—About 12 oz. As far as this close season is concerned, the rest of the fishermen of Riverton are not in favour of the close season, for the very time that you want to close the season—about the spawning season, I should say, about October—that is when we notice spawn mostly down our way—is generally our best fishing-time, and some of the families depend mostly on fishing, and they can go out and get a few whenever they want to, and if we close the season it puts those people out of a living, and naturally, I suppose, the cod close their own season : when they are spawning, of course, they do not bite.

*Mr. McClure* : Then they are wiser than the average human being, these cod.

ARTHUR WILLIAM TRAILL.

Gentlemen,—These are all the representatives of the fishermen that are present. I would like to submit the suggestion respectfully to the Commissioners, and request them to lay before the Government, on behalf of the fishermen—that is, in any new regulations that are under consideration, or alterations in the Fishing Regulations—that the fishermen of Stewart Island and other centres should have an opportunity in some way of being represented and their views being expressed in some way. You know in this case, when certain alterations have been made after fishing-permits have been taken out and paid for it has had a very disastrous effect as far as fish in Stewart Island are concerned, and I know some people have left the islands because they could not make a living since this took place, and I would like to make this suggestion to the Commissioners. Of course, the fishermen were suggesting trying to form a union and have things in their own hands. Well, unions have been tried in connection with the fishing industry, and I am speaking my own view, and most of the fishermen agree with me, that these unions have been most disastrous to an industry that is subservient to the tides and winds which wait for no man, and I think it would be better if the Government allowed the fishermen to express their views on any regulations that are under consideration.

1. *Mr. McClure.*] You mean that any regulations before being gazetted should be submitted to the fishermen ?—Yes.

2. *Mr. Ayson.*] Then you would require that the fishermen should have a Fishermen's Association or have some union ?—Yes : have a meeting and consider the regulations then.

3. I may say that in Kaitia the fishermen have what is called a “Fishermen's Association,” and they have regular meetings and discuss matters affecting their interests. I would like to ask you, Mr. Traill, whether we are to understand that the fishermen wish to revert to the old size-limit ?—Yes, they wish to revert to the old size-limit, or the 10 in. measurement.

4. You have heard what Mr. Stirling has said : he said a  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. cleaned limit would be a fair thing ?—That is not the opinion of the fishermen of Stewart Island.

5. Have they discussed that point ?—Yes.

6. A  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. cleaned fish would probably mean a fish about 12 in. in length ?—(Voices)—About 11 in.

7. Would you suggest 10 in. as a measurement in lieu of the  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. ?—Yes, that would be satisfactory to the fishermen.

8. As you know, a lot of the fish come in headed and gutted, so it would also be necessary to have a specified measurement for the headed fish ?—Yes ; that would be about 8 in. : 8 in. headed and 10 in. with head on is what the fishermen of Stewart Island suggest.