

27. All he wants is the necessary cash to buy a boat?—That is so.

28. Or some one to advance the money to buy the boat?—I do not think any one would do that unless the owner had a considerable amount. There is no freehold in a boat, because there is no certainty you will come back when you go outside. It takes practically £200 to provide a fishing-boat.

29. *The Chairman.*] You have insurance?—No. They charge £22 10s. per cent. to insure a fishing-boat. I think only one fishing-boat has been lost outside the Heads in the last twenty years.

30. *Mr. Veitch.*] The result is that you do not insure at all?—That is so.

31. *The Chairman.*] Is it your experience that the price of fish has been rising steadily in the last ten years?—I believe fish has gone up a little in the last ten years. I believe we get more now than previously, and they are dearer to the public. The reason is that the boats cost more. Previously £20 would supply a man with a boat and net, but a man to start now wants at least £200. It is necessary to have an engine.

32. Is that because the fish have gone farther out?—Yes. Fish are more scarce than previously. At the present time we have to go twenty miles out for groper.

33. Steadily farther out every year?—Yes. The ground we fish on now men did not know twenty years ago.

34. Is it because of the ground being overfished?—I think that it what it is.

35. Do you think the trawlers are responsible for that?—No, I do not blame the trawlers. They do not catch the class of fish we catch. The trawlers catch soles.

36. Do you know of any arrangement between the owners of the trawlers to regulate the supply or price of fish in any way?—I do not think there is any arrangement. They take as many as they can.

37. The only arrangement you know of to control the market is the arrangement you told us of to limit the amount put on the market?—That is the only arrangement I know of. We do that to protect ourselves, because the fish is simply taken over or sent back. We have had them sent back to Port Chalmers in the summer-time when there has been a glut of fish on the market.

38. How long have you been at the work?—For twenty years.

39. Can you tell us what the price of groper was ten years ago and what it is at the present moment?—It is very hard to say, because in certain seasons when they are very plentiful they are cheap. In the summer-time now they are no dearer than they were twenty years ago. We sell our groper now in the summer for about 1s., and we got that twenty years ago. The price is higher now in the winter-time. I suppose it is three times as much as it was in the winter-time ten years ago.

40. *Mr. Veitch.*] What is the reason for that?—At one time there was no such place as Sweeting's, and fish-supper rooms, and places like that, and it pays these places to pay a big price, which the hawker could not afford to give. When people go into a fish-supper room and get a small bit of fish and a cup of tea for 1s., a groper goes a long way, and so these places could afford to give 6s., 7s., or 10s. for a groper and not be out of pocket.

41. How is it that it pays your union to limit the supply whilst it pays the trawlers to catch all the fish they can and put them on the market?—Mr. Sullivan owns two of the three trawlers, and the fish they catch is principally soles. There is a ready market for soles here and in Christchurch, and also on the Union Company's boats, and in Melbourne and Sydney, and so the trawlers can get rid of any number. Then, again, he has to pay the men on the trawlers the same wages if they get nothing as if they got a trawful, so that it is a case of the bigger the catch the bigger the cheque. It is not so with us. If we catch three dozen a day we get as much as if we caught six dozen: that is in the summer-time. We recognize that three dozen per boat per day is ample for the market at the present time. Twenty boats with three dozen each gives sixty dozen groper on the market every morning. That is ample, and is more than they can use.

42. *Mr. Macdonald.*] Your boats can overstock the market, the trawlers cannot?—When we formed the society and put a limit on the salesmen told us that if we sent up a big haul they would send them back. We had to put a limit on because we did not want to pay railage to Dunedin and back again. We have told the salesmen that when they wanted the limit increased they could get it by writing to the society. They have never done so.

43. *The Chairman.*] Still, with it all your boatmen make £10 a week to each man?—They have done that. I suppose last week some of the fishermen made as much as £8. This week they will make nothing near it. It was a very fine week, and buyers were buying in anticipation of the big trade this week on account of the Winter Show. The weather has been bad for fishing this week.

44. *Mr. Hall.*] During a week like the present when there is likely to be a larger demand do you increase the limit?—No, because the salesmen have never asked us to increase it. We have told them we would increase the number, provided we had not to pay railage back to port.

45. Do you sell all by auction or direct to the consumers?—Through the salesmen. One of the rules of the society is to send all fish we catch through the salesmen.

46. *Mr. Robertson.*] It would not be possible, as it was before you formed the union, for any member of the general public to go to Port Chalmers and buy fish at the landing?—They do that now. You will see dozens of people buying fish at the steps.

47. I understood you to say that you agreed to send all your fish through the salesmen?—What I mean is we do not allow a boat to send direct to Sweeting's, or Stewart's, or the hawkers direct.

48. You confine the Dunedin supply to those two salesmen?—Yes.

49. Is there any kind of agreement in writing that you confine your supplies to these two salesmen?—None with the salesmen.

50. Just an understanding?—It is an understanding between the salesmen and the members of the society. There is nothing in the by-laws about it.

51. It was passed by resolution?—That is so.