

That the Rotorua Acclimatization District comprises some 7,000 square miles of country, and includes the Counties of Rotorua, East Taupo, and parts of the Counties of Whakatane, Wairoa, West Taupo, and Piako. The streams and lakes in the district teem with trout, whilst all native and imported game are also numerous.

That for the past four years the fish in the lakes around Rotorua have steadily deteriorated, all for the want of some definite, practical, scientific policy, and if allowed to go on the splendid fishing will soon be ruined.

That the district has been under the sole control of the Tourist Department for the last six years.

That Government control has proved a failure, as the present deterioration set in despite the fact that when such control was assumed the fisheries were in excellent condition.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Rotorua Acclimatization District be constituted a district under an acclimatization society, with all the powers vested in such bodies by virtue of the Fisheries Act Animal Protection Act, 1908, for the following reasons:—

That the district would be more efficiently served than at present, for the simple reason that persons living on the spot have more knowledge of the local conditions of fish and game than those in authority in Wellington, who have to depend on reports more or less vague.

That the suggested society would be composed of representatives of all parts of the district, acting in conjunction with various Rod and Gun Clubs throughout the district.

That an expert would be appointed to take over the whole management of fisheries and game, and that an efficient system of ranging would be established.

That such competent administration and efficient ranging would be obtained at less expense than the present unsatisfactory control costs, as members of the proposed society would give their time and knowledge gratuitously.

And your petitioners will ever pray.

A. J. ILES and 558 Others.

LETTER.

The GENERAL MANAGER, Tourist and Health Resorts, to the CHAIRMAN, A to L Public Petitions Committee.

SIR,— Department of Tourist and Health Resorts, Wellington, 24th July, 1913.

Referring to the petition of Mr. A. J. Iles and others regarding the placing of the Rotorua Acclimatization District under the control of a local acclimatization society as opposed to the present control by the Government, I have the honour to submit the following:—

It is admitted that during the past few years the fish in the lakes have diminished in size, but the statement that this is on account of "some definite, practical, scientific policy not being pursued" is not in accordance with fact. The Government took over the control of the lake fisheries in 1907, and since that date has annually expended large sums in endeavouring to maintain and improve the condition of the fish. When it was discovered that the fish were diminishing in size steps were taken by the Government to ascertain the cause, and, if possible, to check it. In 1911 it was considered by expert officers of the Government that the worm disease affecting trout was a cause of their deterioration, and experiments were made with a view to ascertaining the cause of the disease, and, if possible, combating it. The experiments carried on by the veterinary officers of the Agriculture Department gave reason to believe that the disease was caused by parasite transmitted from the shag to the fish. Since that date the Tourist Department alone has expended some £500 in endeavouring to extirpate the shags, a reward of 2s. 6d. per head being paid for every shag brought to the office of the Conservator of fish and game at Rotorua. Within the last two months the Government has also employed men on Lakes Rotorua and Taupo to work around the shores of the lakes and destroy all shags. In addition to this, the Agriculture Department has had a special officer (Mr. Kerrigan) stationed for a long period at Rotorua continuing experiments, and Mr. Reakes, the Government Veterinarian, has also spent a considerable amount of time going into this matter at Rotorua. It is the intention of the Government to see that these investigations into the life-history of the parasite are vigorously continued.

Since the close of the last season the thinning out of fish on Lake Rotorua has been pushed on by the Department on the lines suggested by the Chief Inspector of Fisheries. Mr. L. F. Ayson, and the work in this direction was also commenced on the 1st of the present month on Lake Taupo. Altogether to date 1,795 "slabs" (ill-conditioned fish) have been destroyed by these means, and this work will be continued right up to the beginning of next season.

One contention is that the diminution in the size of the fish is caused by a lack of natural food-supply, and with the object of meeting this difficulty the Government has arranged to purchase a large supply of shrimps and to place them in Lakes Rotorua and Taupo during the coming season.

The Government is so fully alive to the importance of preserving this fishing as a national asset that it has recently made arrangements for Professor Prince, of Ottawa, who is acknowledged to be one of the world's authorities on the question of fresh-water fisheries, to visit the Dominion and report fully on the best methods for improving the trout-fishing. Professor Prince will arrive in New Zealand in September next.