

SESS. II.—1891.
NEW ZEALAND.

PROPOSED LIMIT OF SIZE OF FLOUNDERS TO
BE TAKEN

((CORRESPONDENCE RELATIVE TO).)

Return to an Order of the House of Representatives dated the 2nd day of September, 1891.

Ordered, "That copies of all correspondence in the possession of the Marine Department on the subject of a proposed alteration in the limit of the size below which flounders may not be taken in the colony be laid before this House."—(Hon. Sir JOHN HALL.)

MEMORANDUM to the COLLECTOR, H.M. Customs, Christchurch.

HEREWITH I forward copy of a petition praying for alteration of the regulations to allow netting with a mesh of 2in. for certain fish in Lake Ellesmere, and I shall feel obliged if you will be good enough to make inquiry into the allegations contained therein and let me know whether you think that it would be desirable to accede to the request made or not.

25th October, 1887.

LEWIS H. B. WILSON,
Assistant Secretary.

To His Excellency Sir WILLIAM FRANCIS DRUMMOND JERVOIS, Governor of New Zealand.

SIR,—

Southbridge, 25th January, 1887.

The humble petition of us, the undersigned, respectfully sheweth,—

That Regulation No. 13 (to which we respectfully refer your Excellency) of the regulations made by your Excellency under "The Fisheries Conservation Act, 1884," on the 7th day of March, 1885, is practically prohibitive of fishing with nets in Lake Ellesmere.

A large number of the fishermen at Lake Ellesmere are, with their wives and children, entirely dependent on their labour for a living; they cannot make a living under the existing regulations. Nor have many of the fishermen the means to go elsewhere and set up anew for the purpose of making such living. Furthermore, work other than fishing is scarce, and your petitioners fear that many of the fishermen, or their families, will be thrown on the country for assistance unless the existing regulation is modified.

Fish of every description at present abound in Lake Ellesmere, particularly herrings, rock-cod, garfish, trevally, mullet, soles, and eels; but under the present regulations the fishermen cannot catch such fish for the purpose of a livelihood, inasmuch as none of the fish particularly named can be caught with a net the mesh of which is not less than 4½in.

Under these circumstances, your petitioners respectfully pray your Excellency to alter or modify the present regulation so that the fishermen may use a net having a mesh of, say, 2in. for the purpose of catching (amongst others) the fish particularly above named.

We believe that some regulation can be devised at once protecting the flounder, and at the same time enabling the fishermen to catch fish smaller than the flounder. Such object could, we believe, be obtained if the fishermen were at liberty to use a net of such mesh as they might think fit, but were punishable if they took flounders or other fish below the regulation size.

Your petitioners do humbly pray your Excellency's early attention.

G. SCHNELB and others.

The COLLECTOR, H.M. Customs, Christchurch, to the SECRETARY, Marine Department.

SIR,—

H.M. Customs, Christchurch, 14th November, 1887.

In reply to your memorandum M. 87/803, No. 800/53, of the 25th October, 1887, *re* reduction to 2in. of size of mesh of nets to be permitted to be used in Lake Ellesmere, I have the honour to report adversely to such application, as, if such were allowed, the acclimatised fish

imported with so much trouble and expense would sadly suffer, and the native flounders would be utterly destroyed.

However, some really decent fishermen inform me that it would be a concession which would be of much benefit to them if the mesh was reduced from the present regulation size of 4½ in. to 4 in., and they have supplied me with the sample of the 4 in. mesh enclosed. I also forward two letters received by me in reply to queries furnished from me.

If the mesh is reduced to 4 in. it would be desirable to supply printed leaflets to distribute to the fishermen at Lake Ellesmere.

The Secretary, Marine Department.

I have, &c.,

ALEX. ROSE, Collector of Customs.

DEAR SIR,—

Leeston, 27th October, 1887.

I have made careful inquiry as to the fish that are to be caught in the lake, and I find that the following are to be caught, some in more abundance than others, especially when the lake is running out to sea: Herrings, in abundance; rock-cod, in abundance; garfish, none; trevally, a few; mullet, have not seen any; soles, a few; eels, in abundance; kawhai, in abundance; hapuka, in abundance; ling, in abundance.

There are three kinds of fish not mentioned in your list that are to be caught in any quantity—hapuka, ling, and kawhai. I saw Mr. Fred Overton the other day and he told me that he has seen shoals of kawhai in the lake below his house.

I send you the names of the fishermen I got the pieces of netting from—John Stritz, John Oberhuber, John France. If there is any further information you require I shall be very glad to collect it for you.

Yours, &c.,

R. A. HALL.

SIR,—

Canterbury Acclimatisation Society, Christchurch, 12th November, 1887.

Adverting to our conversation the other day *re* mesh of nets for use on Lake Ellesmere, I may say at once that a 2 in. mesh would deplete the lake of all its fish in a very short time, for any net that will take garfish or trevally will certainly take out the trout and salmon placed in it by the acclimatisation society at great expense. A 4 in. mesh is small enough to take flat fish of the legal size, and any of the coarse fish that visit the lake when the outlet is open. Therefore, I trust the Government will not sanction anything less.

Yours, &c.,

S. C. FARR,

Honorary Secretary and Treasurer.

A. Rose, Esq., Collector of Customs, Christchurch.

MEMORANDUM to the COLLECTOR, H.M. Customs, Christchurch.

WITH reference to your letter No. 102, of the 14th November last, I have to inform you that it has been provided in the new Fisheries Regulations, which appeared in the *New Zealand Gazette* of the 12th instant, that the mesh of the nets used in Lake Ellesmere shall be not less than 4 in. These regulations are now being made up in pamphlet form, and copies will be sent to you for distribution as soon as ready.

16th July, 1888.

LEWIS H. B. WILSON, Assistant Secretary.

The HONORARY SECRETARY, Canterbury Acclimatisation Society, to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

Canterbury Acclimatisation Society, Christchurch, 6th March, 1888.

I am directed by the council to address you on the question of preserving the salmon that have been introduced into the waters of our district, and I may state for your information that for more than twenty years many attempts have been made to introduce this noble fish, and several thousand pounds of private and public money have been expended in experiments, none of which, so far as we know, proved a success; but from the importation in 1885 about five hundred parr were put in the River Selwyn, one of the tributaries of Lake Ellesmere. The waters of this lake are brackish, and at particular seasons have an opening into the Pacific Ocean; thus the fish have a range of many miles of water favourable in every respect, also grounds for the deposition of their ova, already proved to be good beyond a doubt, as two young fish have been taken by Dr. Anderson when netting for live bait in the Selwyn. They were from 1½ in. to 2 in. long, and the transverse bars on the sides which distinguish this fish were plain to be seen—a sufficient proof, we think, that our efforts so far have been crowned with success, and the possibility of the reproduction of the salmon naturally in these waters an established fact. This fact has caused the society's council much anxiety as to the best means of protecting them until they are fully established.

After making many inquiries, and entering into long discussions on the subject, in which the interests of the fishermen were not overlooked, the council agreed to the following resolution, viz.: "That this Council petition the Governor to close Lake Ellesmere to all net-fishing for the next two years, on account of the flounders and the salmon experiment." I enclose for your perusal a clipping from the *Press* newspaper containing report of proceedings of the meeting at which the resolution was carried.

In conclusion, I would urge upon you the necessity of giving effect to our request at an early date, as next month the parent fish will be seeking their spawning-grounds, and naturally make for the rivers for depositing their ova, which the nets will prevent.

I have, &c.,

S. C. FARR,

Honorary Secretary and Treasurer.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Government Buildings, Wellington.

ACCLIMATISATION SOCIETY. (Extract from the *Press*.)

THE ordinary monthly meeting of the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society was held yesterday afternoon at the Commercial Hotel. There were present: Hon. J. T. Peacock (President), Messrs. J. C. Boys, P. Cunningham, A. Carrick, A. Fergusson, W. B. Perceval, W. F. Warner, and H. R. Webb. An apology was accepted for the absence of Mr. Spackman. A letter was read from Mr. Warner, asking for six months' leave of absence. The council granted his request.

The chairman reported the result of the sub-committee's visit to the fish-house at the ponds, after which it was resolved that the sum of £20 should be expended in additions and improvements.

A letter was read from the Ashburton society, in which they still adhere to their desire that the game season should open on the 29th March. The council decided to recommend Government to gazette the 29th March as the opening and the 31st July as the closing day of the season for shooting game.

Mr. Tibbs, fishmonger, interviewed the council. Having noticed that the council were about to consider the question of closing Lake Ellesmere, he attended the meeting to protest against such action. He stated that the small fish which were caught in the lake came from the sea; and he suggested that a law should be strictly enforced forbidding the use of nets having meshes of less than 4½ in.

After Mr. Tibbs had finished and had retired, Mr. J. C. Boys moved the following motion, of which he had given notice: "That this council petition the Governor to close Lake Ellesmere to all net-fishing for the next two years, on account of the flounders and the salmon experiment." He adduced a number of reasons in support of his motion. For many years the members of the society had doubtless noticed that the flounders, which were almost the only fish sent to market by the fishermen engaged at the lake, had been getting smaller and smaller, until now the fishermen could only get their living by transgressing the law—that was, that the largest flounders that they now caught were scarcely worth sending to the market, and the number of smaller ones which were inevitably caught died before the men could possibly return them to the water. The consequence of this would be that in a year or two the fishermen would find their means of livelihood at Lake Ellesmere gone. Mr. Boys pointed out particularly that the council of the acclimatisation society would have made a move several years ago in the present direction had it not had some consideration for the fishermen engaged at the lake. The council did not wish to injure them or their means of livelihood; but the matter now had reached such a serious point that it was in the interest of the fishermen, as well as in that of the general public, that the lake should be closed. There was another very strong reason why this should be done immediately. The council had liberated a great many healthy salmon into the Selwyn, and there were better prospects of the experiment in this river being more successful than in any other. At the mouths of the larger rivers the salmon's enemies were so numerous and so ravenous that not one fish in a thousand could escape. In Lake Ellesmere there were very few enemies, and in all probability the salmon would get sufficient salt water along the eastern side of the lake to enable it to grow and become vigorous. The only way, then, to protect the fish would be to have a stop put to all net-fishing. The late trial at the Resident Magistrate's Court clearly showed the danger fish were in from this kind of fishing. It was also shown that there was a line of two miles of netting set opposite the mouths of the Selwyn River, and it was impossible under such circumstances for the salmon to escape. He repeated, in conclusion, that it was evident that to close the lake to all net-fishing for two years would ultimately result in a benefit to both the fishermen and the public.

Mr. Carrick seconded the motion, to which Mr. Cunningham moved, as an amendment, "That the words 'one year' be substituted for 'two years.'" Mr. Fergusson seconded the amendment, which, as well as the motion, elicited some discussion. The amendment, upon being put, was lost, and the motion carried.

Mr. Fitzroy, secretary to the Hawke's Bay society, wrote asking for a nest of humble-bees. The letter was received, and the secretary was instructed to reply that a nest had already been sent to Mr. Williams, of Hastings, which it was hoped would be sufficient to supply the district.

The council then adjourned, to meet again on the 28th March.

The ASSISTANT SECRETARY, Marine Department, to the HONORARY SECRETARY, Canterbury Acclimatisation Society.

SIR,—

Marine Department, Wellington 7th April, 1888.

I am directed by the Minister having charge of this department to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 6th ultimo, addressed to the Colonial Secretary, forwarding copy of a resolution of the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society petitioning the Governor to close Lake Ellesmere to all net-fishing for the next two years, on account of the flounders and the salmon experiment; and, in reply, I am to inform you that the Minister has carefully considered this application, and, having regard to the magnitude of the other interests involved, he regrets that he cannot comply with the society's request, and recommend His Excellency to make the necessary regulations to give effect to such request.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. Secretary,
Canterbury Acclimatisation Society, Christchurch.

LEWIS H. B. WILSON,
Assistant Secretary.

The Hon. Sir J. HALL to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

Hororata, Canterbury, 7th March, 1888.

I have the honour to forward for the consideration of the Government a letter from Mr. Durant, of Leeston, on a subject which is of serious importance to a considerable number of my constituents.

They understand that the Government has been requested by the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society to put a stop, for two years, to the fishing in Lake Ellesmere, which has been carried on

ever since the settlement of the country, which furnishes employment to a large number of industrious men, and by which Christchurch and its neighbourhood is largely supplied with fish. The reasons for which so strong a measure is recommended to the Government I understand to be (1) That continued fishing in Lake Ellesmere may interfere with the acclimatisation of salmon. (2) that it interferes with the breeding of the trout which has been introduced into rivers discharging into the lake; (3) that, owing to improper fishing, the supply of flounders is diminishing in the lake itself.

I cannot suppose that, in the opinion of the Government, the two first reasons would justify the suppression of an industry of the character and importance described in Mr. Durant's letter. The possibility of acclimatising salmon has been shown to be very remote. With regard to trout, I can, from personal knowledge of two of the rivers in question, state that the supply of this fish, in spite of two dry seasons, has been in no wise diminished.

With respect to improper fishing. I submit that if this really exists, it may be met by more stringent regulations, strictly enforced, and to this the fishermen raise no objection.

In any case I earnestly trust the Government will take no such extreme measure as has been suggested without much more complete information than is at present forthcoming. It should be remembered that the acclimatisation society is a perfectly irresponsible body, in no way authorised to represent public opinion, or entitled to speak with authority on so important a question as depriving a large number of industrious men of their livelihood. If the Government should at all entertain the proposal of the society I would respectfully suggest that a very full inquiry should be made into the facts of the case, either by one of the local governing bodies, or by some person specially appointed for the purpose. The result of such inquiry would, I believe, show that much less radical measures than have been proposed would be sufficient for all practical purposes.

I have, &c.,

JOHN HALL.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

Mr. T. W. DURANT to the Hon. Sir J. HALL.

DEAR SIR JOHN,—

Leeston, 2nd March, 1888.

I take the liberty of writing to you, to enlist your assistance on behalf of the fishermen on Lake Ellesmere. According to a resolution passed by the acclimatisation society on Wednesday (see report in Thursday's *Press*) it was decided to petition the Governor to close this lake against all net-fishing for two years. The fishermen down here are afraid the society will get the petition carried with the Governor. If this is carried into effect or made law it will throw fully two hundred able-bodied men out of employment, as well as be a large loss to the revenue of the country, and would also render a large number of families destitute. The fishermen for whom I am acting, and who asked me to write to you for them, are willing for the Government to enact heavy penalties for taking and selling trout, salmon, or any imported fish, and for selling undersized fish. The majority of the fishermen are a most law-abiding people, and have no wish to break any enactment made by the acclimatisation society as regards the size of fish. Mr. Boys, in proposing his resolution, states that the lake must be closed up, to allow the flounders to increase and grow larger. This theory and reason is only a side-wind to protect the salmon and trout, for it is well known that the largest flounders are caught coming in from the sea, as soon as the lake is let out into the sea. The fishermen's opinion is that the flounders go on to the Ninety-mile Beach to spawn, and the current from the lake into the sea, which is very strong, washes the young fry out into salt water, and they return in the shape of young flounders. This idea is proved by the fact that flounders are caught round the bays, and even at New Brighton. Also, I was assured to-day by several fishermen that nine and twelve years ago, before the lake was opened into the sea, it was impossible to catch any large flounders, and very few small ones either. I interviewed to-day (accompanied by three of the fishermen), the Hon. E. C. J. Stevens, who promised us to at once write to the Colonial Secretary on the matter. I think we showed Mr. Stevens what an injustice it would be to this large number of men. Messrs. Harper and Co. are drawing up a counter-petition to present to the Governor, which will be signed by all the people interested, and these men will feel deeply grateful if you will lend your valuable aid to frustrate the purpose of the acclimatisation society in this case. The following are a few facts connected with the above: The fishing industry on Lake Ellesmere employs two hundred men, twenty of these being on the lake, the remainder buying and hawking the fish in town. These twenty men own twenty boats, valued at £20 each; gear, including twenty nets to each boat, £50; and twenty carts and forty horses, valued at £30 each. A large number of the men on the lake are married, with families, and own respectable cottages. The railway derives a revenue averaging £1 a day for carriage of fish, and 10s. a day for passenger-traffic. Again, at the fish-market in Christchurch, at which an auction is held on arrival of the train every morning, a very busy scene is presented. On Friday morning there were twenty-five traps and horses waiting to buy fish, and the train this morning brought in from the lake sixteen boxes of flounders, two boxes of rock-cod, and three boxes of herrings, the cases of fish averaging 15s. each when sold by auction. So it will be apparent what an injustice would be done to a large section of the community if the lake was closed up.

Yours faithfully,

T. W. DURANT.

The ASSISTANT SECRETARY, Marine Department, to the Hon. Sir J. HALL.

SIR,—

Marine Department, Wellington, 7th April, 1888.

I am directed by the Minister having charge of this department to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 7th ultimo, with reference to the request made by the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society to close Lake Ellesmere to all net-fishing for a period of two years; and, in reply, I am

to state that the society has been informed that, having regard to the magnitude of the other interests involved, the Minister is unable to comply with their request.

I have, &c.,

LEWIS H. B. WILSON,
Assistant Secretary.

Sir John Hall, K.C.M.G., M.H.R., &c., Hororata, Canterbury.

Mr. A. M. JOHNSON to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

Troutdale Farm, Opawa, Christchurch, 20th March, 1888.

Having been engaged in the introduction and acclimatisation of both salmon and trout in the colony for the last twenty years, perhaps the following remarks may prove acceptable with reference to the two reasons put forward by the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society why the lake should be closed for fishing purposes, namely:—

1. "That continued fishing in the lake may interfere with the acclimatisation of salmon." Even if the temperature of the water in the lake is such as to afford a fair prospect of the acclimatisation of English salmon they would still have many natural enemies to contend against. On this point the late Dr. F. Buckland wrote: "With respect to the numerous salt-water predaceous fish infesting the mouths of rivers, you will no doubt find it desirable to employ some means to frighten away, by use of nets or other appliances, the enemies of the salmon from the river set apart as a nursery." It will thus be seen that the local fishermen are in a position to render most important service by keeping in check the salmon enemies, and it would be to their present interest and future benefit to do so, unless, by injudicious restrictions, the fishermen are brought to regard the salmon as a source of trouble and vexation, and the indirect means of preventing them earning an honest livelihood.

2. "That it interferes with the breeding of the trout which has been introduced into rivers discharging into the lake." It is only under exceptional circumstances that trout would deposit their eggs in the lake, and still more unlikely that the eggs would ever hatch. The instinct of both trout and salmon leads them to select the clear gravelly upper shallows of rivers in which to deposit their spawn. The trout that would find their way into the lake would be chiefly the large overgrown ones—the worst enemies to their own offspring—and the salmon; and, as the larger trout are difficult to capture by angling, their removal by netting, especially of large male fish, would conduce to more successful breeding, and be an advantage to both lake and rivers.

I have, &c.,

A. M. JOHNSON.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

The ASSISTANT SECRETARY, Marine Department, to Mr. A. M. JOHNSON.

SIR,—

Marine Department, Wellington, 27th March, 1888.

I have been directed to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 20th instant, addressed to the Colonial Secretary, stating the reasons why you think net-fishing should be allowed in Lake Ellesmere.

I have, &c.,

LEWIS H. B. WILSON,
Assistant Secretary.

A. M. Johnson, Esq., Troutdale Farm, Opawa, Christchurch.

The Hon. Mr. STEVENS to the Hon. Major ATKINSON.

MY DEAR ATKINSON,—

Christchurch, 2nd March, 1888.

Please forward the enclosed to the Minister who deals with such matters; I do not know if it is Hislop:—

A deputation of fishermen came to me to-day saying—(1) That the step proposed by the acclimatisation society would destroy their living by fishing at the lake; (2) that 250 men were engaged and twenty boats worth £15 to £30 each, besides contingent carts and horses; (3) that Government would lose from £1 to £1 10s. per day for carriage of fish. They asked if they had better send a counter-petition setting out their case, and I said Yes.

Yours, &c.,

E. C. J. STEVENS.

Messrs. HARPER and Co. to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

Hereford Street, Christchurch, 3rd March, 1888.

We have the honour to inform you that a petition is about to be presented to His Excellency the Governor by the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society for the closing of Lake Ellesmere to all net-fishing for a period of two years.

The petition, if granted, will have the effect of depriving a large number of fishermen in the Ellesmere district of their present means of subsistence, and we have received instructions to present a counter-petition on their behalf. We trust, therefore, that no steps will be taken in the matter of the acclimatisation society's petition until the fishermen have had an opportunity of laying before His Excellency their views upon the question.

We have, &c.,

HARPER AND Co.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

Messrs. HARPER and Co. to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

Hereford Street, Christchurch, 28th March, 1888.

Referring to our letter of the 3rd instant, we now have the honour to forward herewith a petition from the fishermen of the Lake Ellesmere district, praying that His Excellency the Governor may not see fit to close Lake Ellesmere to net-fishing, in terms of the petition of the

Canterbury Acclimatisation Society. We should be obliged if you would lay the petition before His Excellency.

We have, &c.,

HARPER AND Co.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

To His Excellency the GOVERNOR of the Colony of NEW ZEALAND in Council. The humble petition of the undersigned sheweth,—

1. THAT your petitioners are fishermen residing at or near Lake Ellesmere, in the Provincial District of Canterbury, or in or near the City of Christchurch, in the said provincial district.

2. That a large number of your petitioners are at the present time engaged in pursuing, and have for many years past pursued, their several callings as such fishermen by fishing with nets or otherwise in the Lake Ellesmere, in the said Provincial District of Canterbury.

3. That thirty at least in number of your petitioners reside permanently on the said Lake Ellesmere, and own stock-in-trade to the value of some £2,140 or thereabouts, such stock-in-trade consisting of twenty boats, worth from £15 to £30 each; gear and fishing-tackle of each boat, comprising twenty nets valued at £50, eighteen traps with two horses apiece, valued at £30 each.

4. That such of your petitioners as are resident on the said lake are in the occupation of well-built cottages purchased from their own earnings, and in many cases have wives and families who are dependent upon them.

5. That a large number of your petitioners are employed in the fish industry in the City of Christchurch, in the said provincial district, in connection with fish obtained from the said Lake Ellesmere.

6. That the total number of men to whom the Lake Ellesmere fishing industry affords a means of livelihood exceeds two hundred.

7. That the output of fish obtained from Lake Ellesmere averages from fifteen to twenty cases of fish per diem, the same being carried into Christchurch by train every morning, bringing in a source of revenue to the country from the railway of £1 per day gross carriage of the fish and 10s. per day for passenger-traffic by the fishermen.

8. That your petitioners are informed, and verily believe, that a petition is being or about to be presented to your Excellency by the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society praying that the said Lake Ellesmere may be closed to all net-fishing for a period of two years.

9. That such petition, if granted, would deprive over two hundred fishermen, including your petitioners, of their present means of subsistence and employment, and inflict great hardship upon them.

10. That a large number of Maoris residing at the Tamutu Pa, near Lake Ellesmere, depend almost entirely upon the fish caught by nets in Lake Ellesmere for their daily food, and would be reduced almost to a state of starvation in the event of their being deprived of this means of sustenance by the closing of the lake to all net-fishing, as prayed for in the said petition of the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society.

11. That your petitioners are informed that the principal reasons urged in support of the said petition of the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society are that the flounders inhabiting the said Lake Ellesmere are rapidly decreasing in size by reason of your petitioners using nets of small meshes, and, further, that your petitioners frequently catch salmon which have been liberated in the Selwyn River.

12. That your petitioners contend that the closing of the said Lake Ellesmere would in no way affect the size of the said flounders, inasmuch as the large flounders obtained from the lake are, for the most part, washed into the lake from the sea, and do not consist exclusively of flounders which have come to maturity in the waters of the said Lake Ellesmere.

13. That the flounders are as plentiful at the present time as they have been heretofore, and of equal size and quality.

14. That nine years ago flounders were far less plentiful than at the present time.

15. That your petitioners are ready and willing to obey and abide by any regulations or restrictions, and become subject to any penalties which your Excellency may see fit to make or impose upon them, with regard to the netting or catching of small-sized fish, or the size of the meshes of the nets used for fishing, or with regard to catching fish of any species or description other than flounders, as your Excellency may direct.

16. That the making of such regulations, and the imposition of penalties, as in the last-preceding clause mentioned, would effect the result sought to be attained by the said petition of the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society in as effectual a manner as the closing of the said lake would do.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray—(1.) That your Excellency may be pleased to reject the petition of the said Canterbury Acclimatisation Society, praying that the Lake Ellesmere be closed to all net-fishing for a period of two years. (2.) That your Excellency may be pleased to protect the interests of your petitioners in the fish industry attaching to Lake Ellesmere to such extent and in such manner as he may think fit.

And your petitioners will ever pray.

JOHN OBERHUBER and 73 others.

I certify that the facts stated in this petition are correct.—R. B. WILLIS, J.P.

WE, the undersigned, being residents in the vicinity of Lake Ellesmere, do humbly petition your Excellency against closing the Lake Ellesmere for net-fishing, and we consider that by so doing a great hardship and injustice would be inflicted on a large number of fishermen, as well as depriving a large section of the community of a very valuable food in the shape of flounders and numerous other kinds of fish which are caught in the lake, and have been sold in our district for a number of years. We also consider that the proposed closing of Lake Ellesmere would be an in-

justice to owners of property and residents in the Ellesmere district, who for many years have looked on the lake as their fishing-grounds. And we are of opinion that closing the lake against net-fishing, as proposed by the acclimatisation society, for two years will in no way increase the supply of flounders. We also consider the different clauses in this petition to be true and fair.

T. W. DURANT and 133 others.

The ASSISTANT SECRETARY, Marine Department, to Messrs. HARPER AND CO.

GENTLEMEN,—

Marine Department, Wellington, 7th April, 1888.

I am directed by the Minister having charge of this department to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 28th ultimo, addressed to the Colonial Secretary, forwarding a petition from fishermen of the Lake Ellesmere district praying that His Excellency the Governor may not see fit to close Lake Ellesmere to net-fishing, in terms of the petition of the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society, and, in reply, I am to state that the society has been informed that the Minister, having regard to the magnitude of the interests involved, is unable to advise His Excellency to make the regulations necessary to give effect to the request made by the society.

At the same time I am to request that you will point out to your clients that their conduct will have material effect in connection with any future proposal of this kind, as, if the existing regulations are not strictly carried out by them—which, I regret to say, has not been done in the past by all—the question will no doubt have to be dealt with again.

I have, &c.,

LEWIS H. B. WILSON,
Assistant Secretary.

Messrs. Harper and Co., Solicitors, &c., Hereford Street, Christchurch.

Mr. W. H. SPACKMAN to the SECRETARY, Marine Department.

DEAR SIR,—

213, Hereford Street, Christchurch, 17th April, 1888.

I am instructed to inform you that a meeting was held at Christchurch on the 12th instant (copy report sent herewith), consisting of the acclimatisation society, the fish-vendors in Christchurch, and the fishermen on Lake Ellesmere, and that at the said meeting the following resolution was put to the meeting: "That the Government be requested to fix the size of the set-nets to be used for catching flounders in Lake Ellesmere at 5in., drag-nets at 4½in., and the nets to be used for taking mullet or herring at 2½in., measured in the usual way, such regulations to come into force at the expiration of twelve months from the 12th day of April, 1888."

The above resolution was carried unanimously, with the exception of the drag-nets being 4½in., which three fishermen only desired should be 4in. With regard to the mullet- or herring-nets being 2½in., I would point out that twenty nets with a mesh of that description are at present allowed on the lake, and that it will probably be inadvisable to allow two descriptions of nets so widely differing in mesh to be used. That is, however, a matter for consideration by the Government. The rest of resolution is so evidently to the advantage both of the public and the fishermen that the acclimatisation society is desirous that regulations to that effect should be gazetted forthwith.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary, Marine Department, Wellington.

W. H. SPACKMAN.

A CONFERENCE between the acclimatisation society and fishermen employed on Lake Ellesmere, as to the mesh of the nets, was held yesterday at 2 p.m. The members of the acclimatisation society present were the Hon. J. T. Peacock (President), Messrs. Spackman, J. Struthers, Williams, W. B. Perceval, Boys, Farr, and Dr. Frankish. An apology for non-attendance was received from Mr. P. Cunningham. Messrs. Husband, Elliott, and seven others represented the fishermen.

The Hon. J. T. Peacock said that there was no intention on the part of the acclimatisation society to act arbitrarily. Therefore they had asked them to come and meet them that day to discuss what was the best for the fishing interest. The acclimatisation society only wanted to see the fish protected in the future. They therefore met there that day not as the acclimatisation society, but as those who wanted to see fishing prosper.

Mr. Spackman said he desired to ask the fishermen present that day to dismiss from their minds any idea that they wanted to increase the size of the mesh unduly. He wanted to see the acclimatisation society, as representing the public, and the fishermen come together to discuss the matter. They knew that the flounders coming to Christchurch were very small. Now, under the *Gazette* Proclamation of 1884 the size of the net for flounders was fixed at not less than 4½in. He understood that this was the size now used by the fishermen on Lake Ellesmere. In the new regulations of the 10th January, 1888, the mesh of the nets used in Lake Ellesmere was brought down to 4in. He did not know how this had been done, but he could not but come to the conclusion that the flounders which would pass through the 4½in. mesh would be appreciably larger than those passing through 4in. mesh. He thought that they ought to consider this matter together, because by using a wider mesh the fishermen were not only depleting the lake of flounders, but bringing public opinion against them. By using a fair mesh they would bring good sized flounders to market. Now, elsewhere the size of the mesh was larger than here. At Akaroa, for instance, the flounder-net mesh was 5in. This, he thought, was too large, and he hoped that with the conference that day they would be able to arrive at some conclusion as to the mesh, so that the unpleasantness of bringing up the fishermen for selling small flounders would be obviated. He desired to point out that the acclimatisation society did work for the public, and he hoped that they would be met in the same spirit that they had proposed the conference—viz., in a spirit of conciliation. They must remember that they had to consider the conservation of the fish as well as the living of the fishermen. He would now move, "That the Government be requested to fix the size of the nets used for catching flounders in Lake Ellesmere at 5in., measured diagonally, when prepared for use, netted and stretched."

He wished the fishermen to discuss the matter, and if the size he had mentioned was not approved of, then the fishermen could move any smaller size they wished. Mr. Williams seconded the motion.

Mr. Elliott, on behalf of the fishermen, said that they proposed, for dragging-nets, 4in. mesh, and for setting-nets, 5in. He wanted to point out that Mr. Spackman had spoken of the 5in. mesh at Akaroa, and he said that they got more valueless fish from Akaroa than from Lake Ellesmere. As to mullet-nets, the fishermen proposed 2½in. mesh, but they asked that they should be protected from those who used 1½in. mesh at Sumner and New Brighton. The fishermen wanted to unite with the society, and they were greatly obliged to the society for asking them to attend the conference.

A fisherman from the lake said that no matter what the size of the mesh was they were bound to catch small flounders, as they got into the nets and were drowned.

Mr. Spackman said any resolution which provided for the alteration of the size of the nets would be given twelve months' notice of, so that the fishermen would not be called upon to sacrifice their property.

Mr. Ferron would propose, "That the drag-nets be 4in. and set-nets 5in., and the mullet-nets 2½in. All fish caught in these nets to come into the market." He would show them why this was. A breeze of wind came down and a man had all he could do to get in the net. Then he had no time to see whether they were all 9in. long. Besides, they would be dead, and was it any use to put them back into the lake. He did not see the necessity for the size of the fish being fixed, only the size of the mesh of the net. The lake had been opened now for some eleven months, and they had been sweeping the lake out of fish. There was also set-net fishing now, which made the fish scarce. They had more fish this summer from the sea than at any other period.

Mr. Husband said that he thought it was very generous on the part of the society to grant the fishermen twelve months to replace their nets; but he would like to know whether the acclimatisation society could prevent the Collector of Customs or the police coming down on the fishermen.

Mr. Spackman said that any united resolution proposed to the Government that the new regulation should come into force twelve months hence would no doubt be given effect to.

Mr. Husband said the reduction of the mesh spoken of by Mr. Spackman had been carried out on the petition of the fishermen in Lake Ellesmere that they could not earn sufficient. He dissented from Mr. Elliott as to the small size of the Akaroa fish. He that day had given 3s. per case more for fish from Akaroa than from the lake, because they were larger. He had been in the business now some seventeen years, and he might say that they had never had so many small fish as they had had lately, until a stop was put to it. As regarded the size of the mesh, he had measured a flounder that day from the lake which measured 10in. or 11in. long, and 4½in. across. He therefore thought that a 5in. mesh would catch a flounder 11in. long. They as vendors could not shut their eyes to the fact that the larger the fish brought into the market the more the fishermen would get for them. He therefore thought that the fishermen would be going against their own interests by having too small a mesh.

After some further discussion, Mr. Spackman amended his resolution as follows: "That the Government be requested to fix the size of the set-nets to be used for flounders in Lake Ellesmere at 5in., drag-nets at 4in., and the net for mullet or herring at 2½in., measured in the usual way. Such regulation to come into force twelve months after the present date."

Mr. Husband moved, as an amendment, "That the size of the drag-nets be 4½in. mesh."

After some further discussion, Mr. Husband's amendment was put and carried unanimously.

Mr. Perceval said that the conference would be useless unless the fishermen were agreed as to the amendment. As he understood it, the fishermen were opposed to the amendment, but they had not recorded their disapprobation.

Mr. Ferron said the fishermen were of opinion that the 4½in. drag-net was too large. No man could make anything.

Mr. Spackman said he thought the fairest way would be for the chairman to state that the resolution was carried unanimously, all except that portion with regard to the drag-net being 4½in., three of the fishermen present objecting to this, and wishing to have it made 4in. Mr. Spackman then moved, "That the length of the flounder be increased by the regulations from 9in. to 10in." Mr. Elliott seconded the resolution.

Mr. Husband moved, as an amendment, "That the minimum size of the flounders be 11in." Mr. Catchpole seconded the amendment. Mr. Elliott said if this were carried the fishing at Lake Ellesmere would be stopped.

The amendment was then put and lost, and Mr. Spackman's resolution put and carried.

Mr. Elliott asked whether the society would consider the licensing of fish dealers to sell trout. Mr. Spackman said that the matter was under the consideration of the council.

The meeting then terminated.

The ASSISTANT SECRETARY, Marine Department, to Mr. W. H. SPACKMAN.

SIR,—

Marine Department, Wellington, 11th May, 1888.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 17th ultimo, forwarding copy of a resolution passed at a meeting of the acclimatisation society, the fish vendors at Christchurch, and the fishermen on Lake Ellesmere, with regard to the size of the mesh of nets to be used on that lake; and, in reply, I have been directed by the Minister having charge of this department to state that the whole question was carefully considered when nets with 4in. mesh were allowed by the regulations of the 10th January last, and the Government do not see their way to make any further alterations at present.

With regard to raising the minimum size of flounders that may be caught from 9in. to 10in., I am to state that this question will be taken into consideration the next time an alteration is made in the fishing regulations.

I have, &c.,

LEWIS H. B. WILSON,
Assistant Secretary.

W. H. Spackman, Esq., Solicitor, &c., 213, Hereford Street, Christchurch.

The Hon. Sir J. HALL to the Hon. the MINISTER of MARINE.

SIR,—

Wellington, 22nd May, 1888.

I have the honour to forward herewith a memorial to His Excellency the Governor, from the fishermen engaged in the fishery of Lake Ellesmere. This memorial embodies resolutions arrived at at a general meeting of these men held for the purpose of considering the measures which are required to place the fishing on a satisfactory footing.

At an interview with a deputation from the fishermen, I discussed the subject of the resolutions very fully, and trust, therefore, you will allow me to make a few remarks on them.

Resolution No. 1.—It will be seen that men engaged in this industry are themselves desirous that all fishing should be under license, and are willing to pay a license-fee. They even propose that a duty should be paid on all fish caught to defray the necessary expenses of supervision and administration. It is a very general opinion in the neighbourhood that some officer should be specially appointed to control the fishery, and it is very satisfactory to find that the fishermen are willing to provide the requisite funds in the manner above mentioned. With respect to the appointment of an auctioneer and providing a suitable fish-market, I explained to the deputation that these were not matters which should devolve on the Government. The selection of an auctioneer had better be done by agreement amongst themselves. The present fish-market is on a portion of the Christchurch railway-station, adjacent to the spot at which the boxes of fish are delivered from the railway-trucks. The space, however, is extremely limited, and much confusion is the result, and what the men wish for is more room in the station-yard. The traffic manager at Christchurch, to whom I applied, promised to see what could be done, but is afraid it will not be practicable to comply with the request.

Resolution No. 2—Opening of the Lake.—This question is a very important one, and there is great force in what is stated by the memorialists as to the effect on the fish-supply of the opening of Lake Ellesmere at the precise spot at which this is now done. I venture to suggest that early inquiry should be made by the Public Works Department as to the practicability and cost of opening the lake at the spot indicated in the memorial, and that, if the extra cost would not be large, this spot should be chosen the next time the lake has to be let out.

Resolution No. 3—Permission to use a Floating-net of Small Mesh to catch Herring and Mullet.—I understand the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society have no objection to this proposal, as it would not interfere with the flounders, which it would not reach.

Resolution No. 4—Size of the Flounders-net.—There seems no difference of opinion that for the setting-nets a $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. mesh would be a reasonable size; but, with regard to the drag-nets, the difference seems irreconcilable. The fishermen strongly protest against the mesh of this net being larger than 4in., while a large body of public opinion is in favour of a larger mesh. The question does not, however, press for immediate settlement, and, if the Government should decide on the appointment of a person to license the fishermen and control the fishing, it would probably obtain a report from him upon the subject before taking any action.

In conclusion, I beg to recommend this memorial to the earnest consideration of the Government. It gives the views of men who have had a long practical acquaintance with the subject with which it deals, it expresses their opinions with great moderation and fairness, and the proper decision of the questions raised in it is of vital importance to the memorialists, who are, as a rule, steady, industrious, and law-abiding men.

I am, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Marine.

JOHN HALL.

To His Excellency the GOVERNOR of NEW ZEALAND.

WE, the undersigned, being fishermen on Lake Ellesmere, and also owners of property and residences at the lake, engaged in the fishing industry (as set forth and enumerated in our previous petition against closing the lake, which was favourably considered by your Excellency), are of the humble opinion (which has been acquired in a number of cases by twenty years' experience in fishing on the lake) that the following resolutions, which were unanimously carried at a meeting of fishermen held in the Orange Hall, Leeston, on the 15th March, 1888, will regulate and improve the fishing industry in Lake Ellesmere, and will largely increase the revenue to the Government by a much greater quantity of fish being sent daily by railway.

The following are the resolutions:—

(1.) *Fish-market and Fishermen to be licensed.*—“That this meeting is of opinion that the time has come when the fishing industry at Lake Ellesmere should be licensed to bring the same directly under the supervision of the Government, and that the Government be asked to establish a fish-market in Christchurch for the better sale of fish, and also appoint an auctioneer for this purpose; and the fishermen also agree to pay duty on all fish caught to meet this expenditure, if necessary.” Moved by Joseph Grupen, seconded by Charles Johnston.

(2.) *Opening of the Lake.*—“That this meeting petitions the Government to open the lake (next time such is reopened) a mile further east than the present opening, which is at Tamutu. We are of opinion that this would then leave a much larger spawning-ground for the flounders, as this fish spawns in the narrow mouth of the lake at Tamutu and directly alongside where the present opening is made into the sea. When, therefore, the opening is made into the sea, very large quantities of young flounders and spawn are washed out to sea by the strong current running in this

place, and only a small proportion find their way back again. It is our humble opinion that opening the lake at the place proposed by us would only cost the Government a few more pounds than supposing it were opened at the usual place; and that this extra outlay, which will not cost more than £20, would only be for the first outlet, and it would, moreover, likely be a permanent opening, and would also insure a steady and constant supply of fish for the market, in consequence of the current in this place not being so strong as at the present opening, and, therefore, would not wash such large quantities of fish out into the sea, and at the same time would allow a greater quantity of sea-fish to come into the lake—namely, mullet, herring, rock-cod, &c. These fish are now being caught in the lake in considerable numbers.” Moved by Charles Johnston, seconded by John Stretz.

(3.) *Size of Nets.*—“That this meeting is of opinion that it is advisable to petition the Government to allow the fishermen at Lake Ellesmere to use a floating-net, with a 2½ in. mesh, to enable them to catch herrings, which are now very plentiful in the lake. We are also of opinion that this net will enable very large quantities of herrings and mullet to be caught and daily sent into Christchurch; and that at the present time the lake is full of these fish, which come into it from the sea, but the fishermen are unable to catch them in any quantity, owing to the mesh of their present nets being too large—namely, 4 in. mesh—now the only size allowed by the Government. Further, that, owing to this net being a floating-net, and, again, so small in the mesh, it will not be the means of catching any small flounders, which it is well known keep on the bottom of the lake. The floating-net is only some 24 in. deep.” Moved by Thomas Ingram, seconded by John Oberhuber.

(4.) “That this meeting is of the opinion that the 4 in. mesh now allowed by the Government is a most suitable one, and quite large enough to allow the fishermen to obtain a fair livelihood, and that an 11 in. flounder will pass through this mesh. But we are of the opinion that it is desirable to have a net with a 4½ in. mesh for setting-nets; and that the fishermen at the present time have a number of nets with meshes this size for catching the black flounder. That, if the 4 in. mesh is increased, numbers of the fishermen will have to give up their calling on Lake Ellesmere.” Moved by John Stretz, seconded by Matthew George.

The following are *bona fide* signatures of fishermen who own property and are engaged in the fishing industry on Lake Ellesmere.

We, the undersigned, humbly trust that the petition herein will receive your favourable consideration. We would gladly have intrusted our petition to the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society, but feared—from their action in petitioning your Excellency to close the lake against net-fishing, and thereby taking away your petitioners' livelihood—that they would not favourably entertain our wish to improve the fishing industry. We have signed ourselves as your loyal and obedient subjects of Canterbury, New Zealand, in the County of Selwyn.

THOS. INGRAM and 20 others.

T. W. DURANT, Commission Agent, Leeston.

The Hon. Mr. FISHER to the Hon Sir J. HALL.

SIR,—

Marine Department, Wellington, 28th May, 1888.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 22nd instant, forwarding a memorial to His Excellency the Governor from fishermen engaged in fishing in Lake Ellesmere; and to state that the memorial will be considered and a reply sent through you as soon as possible.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. Sir John Hall, M.H.R., &c., Wellington.

GEO. FISHER.

The Hon. Mr. FISHER to the Hon. Sir J. HALL.

SIR,—

Marine Department, Wellington, 29th June, 1888.

Adverting to my letter of the 28th ultimo, I have the honour to state, with regard to the petition of the Lake Ellesmere fishermen, first, that the Fisheries Bill now before the House provides for licensing fishermen, and that when a revenue is derived from the fisheries there will no doubt be no difficulty in the way of appointing proper officers for the purpose of enforcing the regulations; but that, as regards the appointment of a fish auctioneer, I think that is a matter in which the Government should not interfere.

2. I understand that you have communicated with the Public Works Department on the subject of opening the lake as the matter is one with which the Railway Department deals.

3. I scarcely think that it would be advisable to sanction the use of a floating-net of the 2½ in. mesh to catch herring; but I will ask the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society to express its views on the proposal, and when the society's reply is received the matter will be further considered.

4. The net of 4 in. mesh now authorised by the regulations to be used in the lake is a seine; and, before doing anything with regard to authorising the use of set-nets of 4½ in. mesh, I should like to be fully informed as to how these set-nets are used.

I have, &c.,

GEO. FISHER,

(For Minister having charge of Marine Department.)

The Hon. Sir John Hall, M.H.R., Wellington.

The ASSISTANT SECRETARY, Marine Department, to the SECRETARY, Canterbury Acclimatisation Society.

SIR,—

Marine Department, 29th June, 1888.

A petition having been received from fishermen and others, praying that a floating-net with 2½ in. mesh and 24 in. deep may be authorised to be used in Lake Ellesmere for the purpose of

catching herring, I have been directed by the Minister having charge of this department to ask if your society will be good enough to express its views on this proposal.

I have, &c.,

LEWIS H. B. WILSON,
Assistant Secretary.

The Secretary, Canterbury Acclimatisation Society, Christchurch.

The HONORARY SECRETARY, Canterbury Acclimatisation Society, to the ASSISTANT SECRETARY,
Marine Department.

SIR,— Canterbury Acclimatisation Society, Canterbury, 23rd July, 1888.

I have to apologize for not replying ere this to yours of the 29th ultimo, but being away in the country collecting ova has prevented me.

I am directed to state that we are at a loss how to reply directly to your question, as we do not in any way wish to prevent the fishermen obtaining a livelihood, but our one aim and object to preserve the salmon that have been successfully introduced into these waters after so much anxiety and expense we think is paramount at this time. I am further directed to call attention to yours of the 11th May, 1888, in which (in reply to ours of the 17th April, wherein we ask for an alteration in size of meshes to be used on that lake) you inform us "That the Government did not see their way to make any further alterations at present." You probably had overlooked this.

That the introduction of salmon into some waters of the Southern Hemisphere, after so many trials, has proved to be, so far, a success with our society, I may inform the Government, through the Minister of the Marine Department, that on Friday the 21st instant I saw a number of smolt in the River Selwyn, and, although I had been collecting trout-ova on that stream at frequent intervals extending over a month, only one had been seen until the date referred to, when I saw numbers making their way upstream, and so as to place this pleasing fact on record, and beyond doubt, I had one of them caught with a net, which I handed over to Professor Hutton at the Canterbury Museum, who agreed with me that it was a pure salmon. The fish in the river appear to vary from 10in. to 14in. in length, and in the pink of condition, clad in their smolt attire, having come up from the brackish waters of the lake.

Under these circumstances of unprecedented success, knowing also that many thousands of pounds have been expended upon the introduction of this most desirable and valuable fish, I am of opinion that netting on the lake at present is entirely wrong, unless under special and stringent supervision, and will prove destructive to these fish, for the capture of immature salmon without doubt will destroy all our efforts and success, just at the time when a golden harvest appears within our reach, as a reward for our past labours and continued anxiety; and I am persuaded that there is at the present time the greatest necessity for legislation for the protection of the immature fish from capture and destruction, for upon looking carefully over the present Act, with its accompanying regulations, I am led to ask the question, Are these fish (for which so many attempts have been made, and so much private and public money expended) really protected by law? I conclude they are not, when such indiscriminate netting can be allowed in the lake all the year round.

It is now more than twenty-eight years (25th February, 1860) since the first attempt was made to introduce the *Salmo salar* into this hemisphere, but up to the last week no capture of a veritable salmon has been chronicled. Many conjectures have been advanced, but from the River Selwyn proof positive of success has been secured. Therefore, my zeal in the cause urges me to ask for prompt and strict legislation to protect and preserve them until they mature, which would doubtless result in a large revenue from the annual take.

I have another pleasing and encouraging fact to add connected with this species of fish, viz.: From eggs taken and brought out by me from the Tweed in 1885, ex s.s. "Kaikoura," I reared some fish (now three years old) which I call land-locked salmon, in a special pond made in the society's ground for that purpose. From some of them I have taken spawn this season, which have hatched out, and the alevins are looking remarkably well. This is another unprecedented achievement, the future results of which cannot be estimated, but for which I wish the Government and public would show their appreciation of the success of my labours.

I have, &c.,

S. C. FARR,
Honorary Secretary and Treasurer.

L. H. B. Wilson, Esq.,
Assistant Secretary, Marine Department, Wellington.

Mr. G. TIBBS to the Marine Department.

HONOURABLE SIR,—

41, Colombo Street, 28th October, 1889.

I wish to bring under your notice at the head of the Marine Department it is now four years last March I was convicted of having small fish in my possession, which I declared before the Resident Magistrate of Christchurch, when my solicitor, Mr. Spackman, pleaded conspiracy, and producing the two witnesses who denied selling me the fish. Now, Sir, had regulations of the Fish Clause No. 8, which states, all fish to be returned back into the water alive, which up to date, which they are not able to do, as when they draw their nets they are dead, and likewise when they come back into Lyttelton Harbour. Now, Sir, why are they allowed to sell the small fish, and the larger fish come to Christchurch fish-mart, where I am not able to purchase it, on account of their appoiner, who are in league with the fish-ring, that has assisted at the railway for a number of years, where card-sharps, spiliers, gaol-birds are allowed to come and take this small fish, which is a cry and evil shame to catch them. Now, Sir, if No. 13 regulation was carried out at Lake Ellesmere, Lyttelton, Sumner, and New Brighton it would do away with so much of this small fish, which means the total destruction of our fishery, as I am sure all through the winter they have allowed to be catching mullets as herring with a herring-net. Herrings when small, and mullets, which when large is their proper name, according to my experience, we have not an English herring in

our waters. Now, Sir, I would like to draw the attention a grant in the last session of £300 for the protection of oysters and fish. I would ask whether this will apply to Canterbury, where the fish is smuggled into our cases when put up for sale, where we find them, and for protecting myself and others, we are continually being robbed in the way fish is sold at the railway by these men appointed by the fishermen. Now, Sir, I would like to draw your attention to the Fish Auction 1886, which has been violated, which says, newly-caught fish shall be sold by auction, but not shell-fish. Smoke-fish, and other things has been sold at this fish sale, where, Sir, I have been deprived of getting a living for my wife and family through the action I have taken, conjointly with Mr. Farr, secretary to the acclimatisation society, while assisting to bring these men to justice for the greed of their pockets. They would exterminate our fishery if it lied in their power. Now, Sir, through my actions I have had to pay both by my pocket and mind. My sufferings has been black-mailed and robbed, and brutally assaulted by men calling themselves fishmongers, who are a disgrace to the Fishmongers' Company of the City of London, that my parents had the honour to belong. Now, Sir, if I can succeed in making a better state of things to come about with the one object will be completed, which means a living for the poor man, as well as those oyster-saloons, who have got rich on that which belongs to one and all, which has brought out a heavy expense to the country, and who have prospered for a lot of years at the expense of the New Zealand Government, which I think that the last conviction of a fine of £20 for selling trout out of season is evident of what has been carried on for years.

GEO. TIBBS, Fishmonger.

Mr. M. HART to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,— 204, Hereford Street, Christchurch, 14th October, 1890.

I am instructed by Mr. George Tibbs, fishmonger of this city, to bring under the notice of the Government the necessity of some amendments to the regulations under "The Fisheries Conservation Act, 1884," being at once made and gazetted in order to save the wholesale destruction of the flounder that is now being carried on. I understand the regulations now in force are to be found in *New Zealand Gazette* of the 2nd April, 1885. The 10th regulation prescribes the size of the mesh to be not less than 2½in. The consequence is that small flounders are taken, and when the nets are emptied into the water, or drawn, flounders of very much less than the prescribed length are killed and sometimes taken. Mr. Tibbs was himself convicted and fined £5, as were many others, for having these fish in possession; while, to mark the absurdity of the thing, at the last conviction for this in Lyttelton the two defendants were fined 1s. each. What is wanted, it appears, is an increase of the size of the mesh in order to enable the small flounders to escape and thrive.

In *Gazette* No. 51, of the 25th September last, the regulation for netting trout (lake trout) prescribe a 4in. mesh. It is suggested that a 4½in. mesh applicable to flounders will carry out the spirit and meaning of the Act. As it is, there is no doubt a very evident decadence of the flounder, and it behoves the Government to conserve this most valuable fish. May I therefore respectfully inquire if you will at once cause the requisite inquiries to be made with a view to the doing-away of the evil referred to. If I can in any way be useful in bringing about such a desirable state of things I shall be most happy.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

MAURICE HART.

Mr. M. HART to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

DEAR SIR,— 204, Hereford Street, Christchurch, 19th November, 1890.

Some three or four weeks ago I wrote to your department, calling attention to use of such a small mesh as to endanger the increase of flounder, thereby causing the destruction of fish. May I ask if I may be favoured with a reply to my letter, as just now the matter is arousing public attention.

Yours, &c.,

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington,

MAURICE HART.

DESTRUCTION OF FLOUNDERS. (Extract from the *Press*.)

A CORRESPONDENT some few days ago complained that a large number of undersized flounders were being caught in Lake Ellesmere, and asked for information as to what market they were consigned. We now learn that on Monday last a quantity of small fish were exposed for sale in Rangiora, and the inference is that all fish under the regulation size are disposed of in the country districts, where the chance of detection by the authorities is reduced to a minimum. This reckless taking of small fish will in a short time have the effect of reducing the supply to such an extent that flounders will hardly be obtainable except at an exorbitant cost. If this is the aim of those who are following this practice their hopes will be speedily realised. Fortunately for the people, provision is made by law for the conservation of our fish-supply, and if the regulations are set at defiance by those who seek to make a profit by such means, then we say it must be owing to the negligence of those whose duty it is to see the law enforced. We cannot for a moment think those who take undersized fish are ignorant of the law on the matter. On the contrary, they are well versed in its provisions, and they carry on their illegal traffic with their eyes open, and with a full knowledge of the consequence if they are detected. But it appears that there is little fear of that in the country district, and the disposal of small fish is allowed to be carried on undisturbed.

For the information of those who may plead ignorance, we quote the following regulation, issued by His Excellency the Governor, under the provisions of "The Fisheries Conservation Act, 1884:—" "No person shall take, buy, sell, expose for sale, or have in possession any fish of any species enumerated in the schedule hereto of a less weight or size than that set opposite the name of such fish, and if any such fish of a less weight or size than therein mentioned shall be taken by any person within any fishery affected by this regulation the same shall forthwith be returned alive to the water." The minimum size set down for flounders is 9in., and yet we are informed they are frequently exposed for sale at 6½ or 7in. The mesh of the net to be used in Lake Ellesmere is fixed at 4½in., so that all fish under 9in. in length can pass through.

It appears in some cases, however, that nets with 2½in. mesh, such as those adapted for mullet- or herring-fishing, are used, and, as a consequence, fish smaller than the regulation size are caught. How far this practice is carried we are not aware, but if to any great extent there is little doubt but that in course of time the lake will be entirely cleared of fish. If we are to be spared this misfortune a more systematic method of inspection must be devised, and a rigorous enforcement of the regulations insisted upon. If by this means it is found that a check cannot be placed upon this criminal destruction of small flounders, then the only plan is to close the lake against fishermen during certain months in the year. The penalty, by the way, for a breach of the regulations above referred to is not less than £1 and not exceeding £50; but it would appear that there is so little risk of detection that the severity of the punishment is a matter of small heed to those who wilfully set the regulations at defiance.

CONSERVATION OF FISH. (Extract from the *Press*.)

SIR,—

Colombo Street, 13th September, 1890.

I was glad to see that you brought the small flounders question before the public in your issue of yesterday. This system of fraud has now been carried on for a number of years; and, because I have tried to expose it, I have been subject to boycotting, and, consequently, my wife and family have had to suffer through my being unable to earn a living; and I am not young enough and strong enough to undertake lumping on the wharves, or I would have done so. The last case of flounders I purchased I found a number of undersized ones, which, being in my possession, meant a heavy fine. I returned them to the men who sold them to me, and they made a reduction of 2s., and I destroyed them. Where is our duly-appointed Inspector? Has he too many other positions to fill that he cannot find time to see to this business? Have the police or Customs any power? as I am certain that if the nets were looked after they are not according to the Act, which states that 4½in. meshes must be used. The mullet-net, 2½in. mesh, is extensively used for catching flounders.

Hoping that some one in authority will take the matter up at once,

Yours, &c.,

GEORGE TIBBS.

The Editor.

The Hon. Sir J. HALL to the Hon. the MINISTER of MARINE.

SIR,—

Wellington, 30th January, 1891.

Enclosed I have the honour to forward to you, for presentation to His Excellency, a petition from a considerable number of fishermen, residing on the shores of Lake Ellesmere, who have for many years earned a living for themselves and their families by the fishing in the lake.

It is true, as stated by the petitioners, that a cry has recently been raised in Christchurch in favour of either closing the lake fishing for a considerable time, or of largely altering the net used in the lake, so as practically to attain the same result. I beg to express an earnest hope that the Government will not sanction any such proposals until the necessity for them has been established by careful inquiry on the part of impartial and competent authority, and that at any such inquiry the petitioners may have a fair opportunity of being heard. There is good reason to believe that the diminution in the supply of flounders is largely due not only to the late dry seasons, but also to the frequent "letting out" of the waters of the lake, which is now done by the Railway Department to prevent the Little River Railway being flooded. The lake is opened for the purpose at a spot which causes the water, as it rushes to the sea, to carry with it not only a large number of the best fish, but also spawn which has been deposited on shingle-beds in the neighbourhood of the outlet. It has been pointed out that this would be largely obviated by making the outlet in a different locality, but, as the change would involve some additional outlay, the Railway Commissioners have declined to adopt it. The end to be attained is, however, so important that I trust some means may be found for overcoming the difficulty.

On a former occasion it was proposed that the Selwyn County Council should be requested to undertake an investigation into the whole subject, and I beg to suggest that this Council is a body which, from its composition, and the local knowledge of some of its members, would be well qualified for the task.

I have no doubt that the fishermen would willingly acquiesce in any reasonable proposals to which such an investigation might lead; and I would point out that, in the absence of any proper staff for controlling the fishery, it will be very difficult to enforce regulations of the necessity and justice of which the men themselves are not reasonably satisfied.

I trust that this question of so much importance to a large body of industrious and well-conducted men and their families may receive the early and earnest attention of His Excellency's Advisers.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Marine.

JOHN HALL.

To His Excellency the GOVERNOR of NEW ZEALAND.

THE petition of the undersigned fishermen engaged in the fishery of Lake Ellesmere, in the Provincial District of Canterbury, respectfully sheweth,—

That your petitioners have for many years, by hard work and much exposure, earned a livelihood for themselves and their families at the above fishery, which consists chiefly in the catching of flounders. That, owing to the very dry seasons which have prevailed of late in Canterbury, and the consequent shallowness of the lake, the supply of flounders has fallen off. That your petitioners notice that proposals have been made during the late election to stop the catching of flounders for a considerable time, or to increase the size below which they may not be caught to 12in. That these proposals emanate, in your petitioners' opinion, either from persons who are ignorant of the circumstances of the case, or from persons who are interested in suppressing the lake-fishery, with a view of fostering other fishing, in which they have considerable interests. That any such extreme measures as above mentioned are quite unnecessary, and would deprive of their livelihood a large

number of honest and industrious men who have families to support, and who would, by this destruction of their industry, be added to the ranks of the unemployed. That your petitioners do not object to any well-considered measures which may be found necessary to preserve the supply of fish, but they protest against unnecessary and useless regulations recommended by persons ignorant of the conditions of the case.

Your petitioners, therefore, earnestly pray that your Excellency will not agree to any important changes in the existing law or regulations without a full inquiry and report by competent authority as to the necessity for, and probable effect of, such changes.

And your petitioners, &c.

A. MEGALDO and 47 others.

The ASSISTANT SECRETARY, Marine Department, to the Hon. Sir J. HALL.

SIR,—

Marine Department, Wellington, 3rd March, 1891.

I have the honour, by direction of the Minister having charge of this department, to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 30th January last, forwarding a petition as to flounder-fishing in Lake Ellesmere from a number of fishermen residing on the shores of that lake; and, in reply, I am to state that no proposals for closing the lake against fishing for flounders have reached the Government, and any proposals with reference to fishing therein will be most carefully considered before being acted on.

I have, &c.,

LEWIS H. B. WILSON,
Assistant Secretary.

The Hon. Sir John Hall, K.C.M.G., &c., Hororata, Christchurch.

Mr. G. TIBBS to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

41, Colombo Street, Christchurch, 23rd July, 1891.

In common with other fishmongers and fish-purveyors in this city, I have to draw the attention of the Government to the fact that it is very desirable to introduce into the Fisheries Conservation Act Amendment Bill, now before the House, a clause prohibiting the present net which is used for taking flounders. Instead of being of herring-size as now, the mesh should be increased in width, so as to admit of the escape of small flounders. As it is now the small flounders, though not brought into the market, are drowned, and the consequence is that during the past few years it is almost impossible to provide a decent flounder for sale to the public; in fact, the present laws will bring about the extermination of this most excellent fish. If a copy of the present Bill could be supplied to me I would, with others in the trade, suggest the necessary amendments to protect the small fish.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

GEORGE TIBBS, Fishmonger.

The ASSISTANT SECRETARY, Marine Department, to Mr. G. TIBBS.

SIR,—

Marine Department, Wellington, 1st September, 1891.

I have been directed to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 23rd July last, addressed to the Colonial Secretary, in which you urge that provision may be made in the Fisheries Conservation Act Amendment Bill, now before Parliament, as to the size of the mesh of flounder-nets; and, in reply, I am to inform you that the matter is now under the consideration of the Government.

I have, &c.,

LEWIS H. B. WILSON,
Assistant Secretary.

Mr. George Tibbs, Fishmonger, 41, Colombo Street, Christchurch.

To the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY, Wellington. The petition of the undersigned sheweth,—

1. That whereas we, your petitioners, are and have for some time past been engaged in fishing in Lake Ellesmere.

2. And whereas we are by law prohibited from taking from the said lake any flounder of less length than 9in.

3. And whereas we are informed that it is proposed to amend such law so as to prohibit any fishermen from taking from the said lake any flounder of less length than 11in.

4. And whereas if such an amendment become law it will seriously interfere with our livelihood, there being now in the said lake but very few flounders over 11in. in length.

5. And whereas it has been found that the existing law has worked satisfactorily.

We, your petitioners, pray that the said existing law may remain unaltered.

And your petitioners will ever pray.

Frank Thian.

Andrew Nicholas.

Henry Davis.

Peter Nelson.

C. Johnson.

H. Vince.

A. Lindrose.

T. Wilkinson.

Antonio Megaldo.

Mr. G. REDDISH to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER.

(Telegram.)

Thames, 21st August, 1891.

At a meeting of the Thames fishermen it was resolved to appeal to you, as the member for the district, first, to oppose at once any increase in the size of flounders; second, on account of the ignorance of the member for Ashburton, Mr. Wright. Flounders were never more plentiful than during this last summer. Unsaleable in Auckland, owing to the vast quantities sent from the Thames.

The Hon. Mr. Cadman,
Native Minister, M.H.R. for Thames, Wellington.

GEORGE REDDISH,
(For Thames fishermen.)

NATIVE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE.—Report on the petition of Rewi Karuarua and 6 others, praying that the Bill relating to the taking of flounders may not be brought into force.

I AM directed to report that, in the opinion of the Committee, this petition should be referred to the Government.

21st, August 1891.

WM. KELLY, Chairman.

1st August, 1891.

To the Hon. the SPEAKER and the MEMBERS of the HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES of New Zealand in Parliament assembled. Salutations. The humble petition of Rewi Koruarua and others humbly sheweth,—

1. THAT this is a petition from the people of Taumutu respecting a Bill that has been introduced to the Parliament in connection with the fish called the flounder, or what the Natives call the patiki. That Bill provides that no flounder shall be taken unless they be 11in. long.

2. Now, your petitioners pray that that Bill may not be brought into force.

3. That we do not wish that Bill to be passed, because we are constantly taking those fish, and while doing so we take both small and large together. We cannot help doing that, because the mesh of our nets are only 1in. square; therefore, we hope that that Bill will not be brought into force.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

REWI KORUARUA and 6 others.

The Hon. Sir J. HALL to the Hon. the MINISTER of MARINE.

SIR,—

Wellington, 21st August, 1891.

I am given to understand that steps are being taken with a view of inducing the Government to make important alterations in the regulations under which fishing is carried on in Lake Ellesmere, in the Canterbury District.

As I was unable to see you a day or two since, when I called at your office, I think it desirable to put on paper certain considerations which I trust may induce the Government to pause before agreeing to the applications which have been made to them.

It is, I believe, urged that the decrease in the size of the flounder taken in the lake is owing entirely to the fact that fish of 9in. in length may now be caught. It is desired by some persons that this size should be increased to 11in., and by some individuals even to 12in.

I have taken much trouble to acquire local information on this question, my constituents being largely interested in the matter, and your department possesses previous correspondence on the subject extending over a considerable period.

The men who are dependent on this fishery for the maintenance of themselves and their families are, as a rule, steady, law-abiding, and industrious persons, and their occupation is a very laborious one. They are thrifty, and have gradually accumulated sufficient funds to acquire boats and nets, and are settled with their families on the shores of the lake.

To interfere with the fishing to the extent proposed, while it is unnecessary, and would fail to attain the object said to be in view, would practically put a stop to the industry, and throw hard-working colonists and their families on the world without a living. They are mostly persons of foreign origin, accustomed to fishing from their infancy, and would find it now a matter of difficulty—especially in the present state of the labour-market—to maintain themselves by other means. They appeal to me to represent their case to the Government, and earnestly hope that no steps may be taken at the instance of individuals who are said to be in some cases interested, and in others mere theorists ignorant of the circumstances, without a full inquiry being made by practical men and competent judges.

I enclose a letter from one of the fishermen, writing on behalf of his companions, stating facts which are well worthy of consideration.

I believe it would be found that any diminution which may have taken place in the size of the fish now found in the lake is owing largely to other reasons than the size of the meshes of the nets. Among other causes is the fact that Lake Ellesmere is now let out much more frequently than it used to be, with a view chiefly to the protection of the Little River railway-line. The consequence is that the water is generally shallower and warmer; and also that the large-sized fish are in larger numbers than formerly swept by the outflowing current into the sea, from which they never return. A diminution in the quantity of the fish is also due to the fact that the outlet of the lake is made through the shingle-bank at a spot which is a favourite spawning-place. On a former occasion I explained the effect of this proceeding, and endeavoured to prevail on the Government to open the lake at another spot; but this would have involved some increased expense, which the Railway Commissioners did not see their way to incur.

The fishermen are very reasonable; they would agree to the size up to which flounders may be taken being increased to 10in., and they have already expressed their readiness to have the fishing properly looked after by an Inspector, and even to pay a moderate license-fee towards providing a salary for him.

My earnest request to the Government on behalf of these men is that, without a full and fair inquiry being held, at which they may be heard, nothing may be done which would injure them most seriously, and probably throw them on the hands of the Government as unemployed. You will see from the letter which I have enclosed that they are prepared to afford every possible facility for such an inquiry.

This question has now been before the Government for some years without being dealt with. It is of so large importance to a considerable body of men that I trust the present Government will give their early and serious attention to it.

The Hon. the Minister of Marine.

I have, &c.,

JOHN HALL.

Mr. E. DEMETRY to the Hon. Sir J. HALL.

HONOURABLE SIR,—

Taumutu, 11th August, 1891.

In following up the various letters, &c., that have been forwarded to you, we would also like to point out to you that we who have a practical idea of the flounder question in all its details (and not working on the hearsay of others who know nothing whatever of catching fish) that the great cry has arisen from one or two fishmongers in Christchurch, who are anxious to stop hawkers from selling fish, and thus securing a monopoly in this manner. Flounders at 11in. will be very difficult indeed to catch, and, of course, will be dear; and naturally the shops, who have the patronage of most of the rich people, will be the only place where the few can be bought, and of course the poor man, who generally buys through the hawkers, will be unable to have any flounders. In a petition which we forwarded to Mr. J. Joyce we stated that we would not object to the size of the fish being altered to 10in., but what we did object to was persons suggesting alterations (who had not got many hundred pounds' worth of nets and boats, gear, &c., at stake, and who knew nothing whatever about the vicinity or the ways of catching the fish) in the regulations. It is within your knowledge that two or three times during the year the lake has to be run out, and naturally the fish goes too; it therefore only leaves a few intervals during the year to which the fish can be allowed to grow again; and when the larger fish goes out to sea they never come into the lake again. We have lived on the lake for many years and have from time to time added to our gear, nets, &c., until at the present time we have several hundred pounds' worth; and to go and alter the size to 11in. (2in. more than before) means a great loss indeed to us all. Another view is this: We have all made our homes here for many years, and have reared our children, and have never interfered with any other portion of the labouring community of this country; and we therefore think that the Government should look these facts fairly, and not crush us altogether. We are also prepared to (and think it fair to all concerned that a trial should be made) grant the use of any of our boats and nets to any person to come and make a week's labour, or a month amongst us, and see how the work is conducted, and the chances there are in connection with the increased size of fish, and will assist any persons that may be so appointed all in our power.

We sincerely hope, sir, that whatever is done should be done without causing injury to a working community at the instance of one or two.

And your petitioners will ever pray.

E. DEMETRY,

(On behalf of the lake fishermen.)

The Hon. Sir J. HALL to the Hon. the MINISTER of MARINE.

SIR,—

Wellington, 24th August, 1891.

With reference to my letter of the 21st instant, on the subject of the proposed interference with the fishery in Lake Ellesmere, I have now the honour to enclose a communication which has just reached me from the secretary of the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society. This gentleman is an enthusiastic fisherman, and probably better acquainted with the subject now before you than any person in the colony. I feel sure, therefore, that you will give the fullest consideration to what he states as to the unnecessary character of the restrictions which have been proposed, and the ruinous consequences to a large body of men which would result from their being enforced.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Marine.

JOHN HALL.

Mr. W. H. SPACKMAN to the Hon. Sir J. HALL.

MY DEAR SIR,—

213, Hereford Street, Christchurch, 10th August, 1891.

I see by the *Press* yesterday that the Government have some intention of making the limit of the size of flounders 11in.; the present legal size is 9in. The acclimatisation society has no interest whatever in this matter, but it has always tried to deal with scrupulous fairness with the fishermen on the lake; and I cannot help thinking that, if the limit is fixed at 11in., the main livelihood of some twenty of your constituents will be gone. No one without a good deal of practical experience can imagine what difference an inch in length makes in a flounder. And I am certain that not one flounder in fifty reaches 11in., much less 12in.

It is nonsense to talk about the extinction of the flounder. I do not believe Professor Hutton ever could have said this. There is no doubt that it is very desirable to increase the length-limit within reason; but if it is wished to take away the living from the fishermen it could not be done more certainly than fixing that limit at 11in. or 12in. for flounders. A 10in. limit is, in my opinion, ample; and I should think it would be worth your while to hear what the fishermen have to say about it.

I am, &c.,

Sir J. Hall, Wellington.

W. H. SPACKMAN.

MEMORANDUM from the COLLECTOR of CUSTOMS, Christchurch, to the Secretary, Marine Department, Wellington.

I UNDERSTAND there is still a movement being made to preserve the fishing interests at Lake Ellesmere and Sumner Estuary. I would venture to suggest that the minimum size of flounders should be increased to not less than 12in. from snout to end of tail. The present size is too small—9in.—and results in actual depletion of the tidal and brackish waters and lagoons of this valuable fish, and flounders of 9in. or 10in. have not enough flesh to be worth eating; and, owing to the depletion of their haunts, none are left to multiply, being too small, and do not grow to maturity.

1st August, 1891.

ALEX. ROSE, Collector.

The ASSISTANT SECRETARY, Marine Department, to the COLLECTOR, Her Majesty's Customs, Christchurch.

(Memorandum.)

Wellington, 1st September, 1891.

WITH reference to your memorandum of the 1st ultimo, in which you suggest that the minimum size of flounders should be increased to not less than 12in., I have to inform you that this question is now under consideration.

LEWIS H. B. WILSON,

The Collector, Her Majesty's Customs, Christchurch.

Assistant Secretary.

The ASSISTANT SECRETARY, Marine Department, to Mr. H. S. FISH, M.H.R.

SIR,—

Marine Department, Wellington, 27th August, 1891.

With reference to the proposal to increase the minimum size of flounders that may be caught, I have the honour, by direction of the Minister having charge of this department, to state that it would appear that the fishermen generally do not object to the size being increased to 10in., and the Government are considering the question of raising it to that size; but, before finally deciding to so, they would be glad to be furnished with the views of the Dunedin fishermen thereon.

I have, &c.,

LEWIS H. B. WILSON,

Assistant Secretary.

H. S. Fish, Esq., M.H.R., Wellington,

Mr. H. S. FISH, M.H.R., to the Hon. Mr. MCKENZIE.

DEAR SIR,—

Parliament House, 27th August, 1891.

In reply to the letter of the Assistant Secretary to the Marine Department under this day's date, I have the honour herewith to hand you a letter upon the subject from a Mr. Sullivan, a Dunedin fisherman, as also a report of a meeting held by the trade in connection with the matter. Hoping you may be able to see your way to give effect to their wishes,

I have, &c.,

H. S. FISH, Jun.

The Hon. John McKenzie.

THE FLOUNDER QUESTION. (Extract from newspaper.)

A MEETING of fishermen was held at the office of Mr. Sullivan, Stafford Street, this afternoon, when there were about fifteen present; and, although the meeting was small, it was pointed out that it was a representative one, as there were present those from various fishing-grounds in the district.

Mr. Davidson, who occupied the chair, mentioned the object of the meeting, which was to discuss the Bill before Parliament concerning the length at which flounders should be taken, and expressed an opinion that if the Bill became law it would simply mean the closing up altogether of the fishing at Port Chalmers. It was their place to take steps to try and prevent the Bill passing. He pointed out that the 9in. fish were very good and saleable, and equal to a larger fish caught in the vicinity of Lyttelton.

One of those present said he had telegraphed and written to Mr. James Mills, M.H.R., on the matter, and if the Bill became law they might all stop fishing. In answer to Mr. Sullivan, the speaker said he did not, after an experience of twenty years, think the fish were any scarcer, nor did he consider that the passing of the Bill would have any effect in increasing the number of flounders in the vicinity. He was of opinion that it was beginning at the wrong end, and that if from 12in. to 15in. fish were protected, which were the fish which actually spawned, that would be much better. Others present, with experiences of thirty-five years downwards, gave somewhat similar views.

It was suggested that a petition should be forwarded to Wellington; but, on it being pointed out that there might be insufficient time, it was moved by Mr. Holden, seconded by Mr. Kerr, and carried unanimously, "That, as the passing of the Bill would be disastrous to both fishermen and dealers, the members in Wellington be communicated with with the view to their using their most strenuous efforts to prevent the Bill passing into law."

The matter of carrying the resolution into effect was left in the hands of Mr. Sullivan, and it was pointed out that if the Bill passed it would throw about seventy men out of employment, and cause about a thousand pounds' worth of boats and nets to be sacrificed. It was further pointed out by one of those present that unless there was some mode of inspection the passing of the Bill would be a great encouragement to illegal taking.

Mr. F. J. SULLIVAN to Mr. H. S. FISH, M.H.R.

DEAR SIR,—

Dunedin, 24th August, 1891.

I beg to hand you report of the meeting of fishermen held here on Saturday. I ask you to use your utmost exertion in preventing the passing of the proposed Flounder Bill. In the face of the opinions of practical men of twenty and thirty years' fishing experience in this district we cannot believe that Professor Hutton was referring to this port when he expressed his opinion that flounders were being exterminated; but that, if he did so, he knows nothing about our grounds, and we shall be happy to prove it to him. Possibly flounders are scarcer elsewhere than they were formerly, but that should be no reason why seventy men should be thrown out of employment here and a thousand pounds' worth of property rendered useless, and no benefit to be obtained. Should this Bill become law it will be necessary for the Government to employ Inspectors day and night to enforce it at considerable cost. As the law stands at present 9in. is the limit, and works very well, and can be proved by the police reports. No conviction for selling under size has been recorded here for five years or so. As it is a matter of great importance not only to the fishermen and dealers,

but to the general public here, that the law should remain as it is, I ask you to oppose it, and, if possible, prevent a great injustice being done to us. If you require a petition got up I shall have no difficulty in getting one largely signed.

H. S. Fish, Esq., M.H.R., Wellington.

Yours, &c.,

F. J. SULLIVAN.

Mr. F. J. SULLIVAN to Mr. H. S. FISH, M.H.R.

DEAR SIR,—

Dunedin, 1st September, 1891.

Your favour of the 28th instant duly to hand with thanks, and, on behalf of those interested, I beg to thank you for the trouble you have taken so far. I enclose press-copy of delayed wire sent you to-day. A lake and a sea or harbour always open to the sea are very different as far as the fishing industry is concerned—the one is entirely dependent on the increase of size and number upon its own resources, but the other depends upon its supply from the ocean. If the lake were closed altogether for a few years no doubt fish would increase in size and numbers, but if the ocean here were closed for one day or five hundred years it would not make any appreciable difference. In the harbour here we have seventeen miles of frontage to the water, making a total of thirty-four miles; but, on account of snags and other obstructions, it is only possible to haul a net in about forty different places, and hence it is only when flounders are upon these particular spots, and there happens to be a man fishing there, that these flounders are caught. There are more fishermen here than ever, and they are all earning a living, are improving their gear and boats, which proves conclusively that the fish cannot be getting scarcer, otherwise the men would be getting scarcer also, and their living more precarious. If it has not been found necessary to regulate the size of fish at Home, with their large consumption, we cannot believe it will do any good to hamper the men here, unless it is desired to have more unemployed. The fisherman is a capitalist of the right sort; in ninety cases out of a hundred his plant is his own, the result of hard work and frugality. As we have a grand coast-line, and latterly refrigerators that we can find a market the other side with, I consider every facility should be given to develop our naturally great industry. An Order in Council raising the size to 10in. would be as bad for us as a law stopping fishing altogether. The gear that is in use at present here to catch a minimum size of 9in. would be liable to confiscation, and large mesh substituted at considerable cost. Uncertainty of some other change coming in force next year make people with limited means very chary about investing their savings in gear. I trust I have made our case clear, but shall be happy to supply any information omitted.

Trusting you will be successful on our behalf,
H. S. Fish, Esq., M.H.R., Wellington.

I remain, &c.,

F. J. SULLIVAN.

Mr. J. BURT to Mr. H. S. FISH, M.H.R.

DEAR SIR,—

Salmon Pond, Clinton, 1st September, 1891.

Being in charge of the largest fishery in New Zealand, and noticing there is likely to be some alteration in the Fisheries Conservation Act, I thought I would drop you a few lines and point out to you one or two things which have come under my observation. In the first place, I think the size of the flounders should not be less than 10in., but I do not think there is any cause for alarm of them becoming extinct. The very greatest evil of the present Act is the fact that there is no officer to see the Act carried out; all is left to the Commissioners of Customs and the police. Now, it is not likely a fish-dealer will expose undersized fish when they know by doing so they are liable to prosecution. What is wanted is a good man to visit occasionally these fishing-stations and see what is actually caught, and try and prevent fishermen from hauling their nets on to the beaches, for I know many thousands of young fish die every tide by being left high and dry. I took six fish out of a boat at Port Chalmers; the largest fish of the six was only 6½in. long. I found then that if I laid an information that I would have to bear all the costs. I have secured under the present Act eighteen convictions for which fines amounting to close on £90 were imposed, every penny of which the Government put in their pocket, and did not pay one penny towards the prosecution. I am, however, a paid officer of the acclimatisation society, and could on many occasions have interfered, but I am only paid for looking after trout and salmon. If the Government paid only the bare expenses of the prosecution I am confident the present Act would not be a dead letter so far as I am concerned in the Otago District. And it would not cost much. I am confident if some arrangement for payment of the expenses were made that the fines for breaches of the Act would pay it five times over. Young flounders have been known to feed on sawdust and die in thousands, and only last year I got two millers fined for discharging sawdust into the streams. Hoping these hints may be of service to you,

H. S. Fish, Esq., M.H.R., Wellington.

I am, &c.,

JOHN BURT.

Mr. J. W. KELLY to the Hon. Mr. J. McKENZIE.

DEAR SIR,—

House of Representatives, 1st September, 1891.

I wish to draw your attention to a protest which I have received from a few fishermen residing at Invercargill against the altering the present legal size of flounders. I do hope that you will, before taking any steps whatever in this direction, consider those who have to make their living from fishery.

Hoping that you will not sanction any alteration at the present time,

Hon. J. McKenzie.

I have, &c.,

J. W. KELLY.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, nil; printing (1,250 copies), £11 4s.

By Authority: GEORGE DIDSBURY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1891.

Price, 9d.]