

of a halfpenny in the pound sterling, and the latter only a farthing in the pound sterling. The great drawback at present is that the Government in Melbourne have put on a duty of a halfpenny per pound on cured fish; this duty began to be collected about two months ago. The price realised this last two years has barely enabled the curers to pay for fish and expenses alone, leaving the question of profit out of consideration; but now that a duty of a halfpenny per pound is placed on fish in Melbourne, it will kill the trade altogether; and the only thing left for us to do is that we must pull up the boats altogether unless we are assisted by the Government.

3. *Hon. Sir J. Hall.*] Do you now refer to cured fish?—Yes, I refer to cured fish.

4. *The Chairman.*] Is Melbourne your only market? Can you not export to England?—No, we cannot send fish to England; they would not keep. I had an interview with Mr. Ballance, to the effect that the Government agreed to continue this bonus, which is now one-eighth of a penny per pound, for five years. That is very good, but at the same time it will not enable us to send fish into Melbourne market in the face of the fact that the Melbourne Government has imposed a duty of a halfpenny in the pound on fish. I therefore think that the Government should increase the duty to something equivalent, to compensate us for this increase of duty imposed by the Melbourne Government, which would enable us to carry on the business in the meantime. I believe that it is the general opinion of the people in Melbourne that this duty of a halfpenny per pound on fish will not continue for a lengthy period; and an additional Government bonus would enable us to sustain our industries in the meantime. Mr. Ballance told me—Am I right in referring to Mr. Ballance, that is, the conversation I had with Mr. Ballance?

5. Be careful as to what you state.—He gave me to understand, in the presence of Mr. Mills and Mr. Pinkerton, that the Government had done very fair under the circumstances, and that he did not see they could give any further increase of bonus, as the Melbourne Government might increase the amount of duty to double the amount next year. The Government has extended to us the bonus for five years, which is still to be paid to the curers. This bonus does not do us any good. At Port Chalmers we are the heaviest exporters of cured fish—all the curers that I represent being the largest shippers, and they are now only getting one-eighth of a penny per pound bonus. I am now only speaking of Port Chalmers. I may state that for the last twelve months we have not averaged on the whole year round for all fish we have exported, independent of bonus, more than 3s. a dozen.

6. Is that the return you get for it, or is that the price you get for the fish in Melbourne?—That is the price we get for the fish in Melbourne.

7. What expenses have you in connection with the fish?—We have got to pay freight to Melbourne, wharfage, cartage, commission, &c.—that is, all the charges amount to about 1s. 7d. per dozen for barracouta.

8. *Mr. Lawry.*] That leaves about a halfpenny then?—Yes, we pay 1s. for the fish per dozen; it may vary at times.

9. *The Chairman.*] Have you tried any other market—Queensland or Adelaide?—The distance is too great: it would not keep. I may state I am now getting about 8s. a dozen, as nobody else has any to sell in the market. When they are plentiful I run them down in large vats, after which I take them out and make them fit for market.

10. Do you consider that a fair *bona fide* price?—Yes, I do; they are not in season.

11. *Mr. Lawry.*] What is the duty in Sydney?—Very little goes there. Not more than twenty dozen fish goes there in the year. The only chance is that a gentleman who has been in this country may send across for a case.

12. Have you tried Queensland or Adelaide for a market?—No; they would not keep.

13. So that Melbourne is your only market?—Yes.

14. That does not apply to your tinned fish?—No, we have a market here for that; on our side we tin principally barracouta and cod. We smoke the cod just about two hours in the house, and then tin them. In Stewart Island, I believe, the only fish that is tinned is moki and blue cod; in Auckland it is nearly all Auckland mullet. The principal fish that we cure is barracouta and blue cod.

15. *The Chairman.*] What do you say you pay a dozen for fish?—Sometimes we pay 2s. a dozen for them; that is, the latter end of the season—at that time we get a fair price in Melbourne. Two months ago I was only getting 3s. 6d. a dozen.

*Mr. Innes:* I asked Mr. Ballance if he could give us a farthing for the present, which amount would enable us to carry on, instead of one-eighth of a penny per lb. bonus.

16. *The Chairman.*] I suppose that the original farthing on cured fish was the bonus for a time, and one-eighth afterwards?—Yes, I am only speaking of the Port alone. I am confident that a large part of the total amount exported, £2,527 3s. 8d., is chiefly from Port Chalmers.

17. What price does this smoked fish fetch in Melbourne?—When it was started, in 1885, our curers were not sending more than about one ton in the month to Melbourne; but after that we began to introduce our fish in a superior condition, which was in 1886, 1887, and 1888, since then we have sent away from four to five tons a week.

18. I wish to know what price per dozen you were getting?—In 1885 we were getting about 3s. 6d. per dozen, which amount represented 36lb. to 40lb. of fish per dozen.

19. *Hon. Sir J. Hall.*] That leaves you about 1d. in the lb.?

20. *The Chairman.*] We may wish to hear your evidence further in this matter; please give us your address?—Yes.

[Further evidence taken by this Committee was not considered of sufficient importance to be printed.]

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