

rather be to shorten the close time. In fact, so long as fishing on the banks is permitted it does not matter to the canneries how long the rivers are closed. [See letter 18th June, 1895.] Do not approve of closing the whole harbour, because other fishing must be permitted; and the catching of mullet could not be avoided, and if they were thrown away this would only lead to the increase of dog-fish and other enemies.

*Charles Simich*: Have fished in Kaipara for thirteen years, and learnt fishing on the Dalmatian coast. Do not think the fish are scarcer now than they were formerly. Two years ago the most plentiful year I remember. They move about. They generally come into the harbour from outside sea in August. When a big school comes rushing into every river, the fish are then very plentiful. They stay in for a month or two, and then go out again; but there is no regular time for this. The schools are all clean fish, but they change to muddy fish in a week or two, especially when they go into the rivers. Most fish in roe are got after Christmas, and in January, but a few are got at any time of the year. In February hardly ever see any fish in roe. In December, with the floating nets on the banks, we get large hauls of fish; clean, and mostly males. The roe-fish are no good for us. We always try to get the male fish in summer. Think they spawn on the mud-flats up the creeks, because of the millions of young fish found there in January and February. A 2 lb. fish, which is the most common size, will be about three or four years old. About 1 lb. is the smallest that ever have roe. It would probably be about two years old. The biggest seen was about 7 lb. It was caught in a haul of 200 dozen, of which a dozen were from 4 lb. upwards, and all had roes. This was after a southerly gale about six years ago. They were caught off Okaru, and were part of a big school. In the river the fish are good and clean, even in the winter time, but not in the summer. At this season there are still good fish inside Komiti, and will be till the end of November. [Exhibited a splendid lot of fish, mostly female, 3 lb. weight.] It is very rarely we get spent fish, for as soon as they spawn they are off to the sea. I only remember once since to have struck one in the net when fishing on the banks. It is a mystery what becomes of the fish sometimes. At the end of February, 1889, the river from Komiti to Point Curtis was perfectly full, and we all joined nets, prepared to get a great haul. They rushed up, and made a great show, so that we expected a good season, and made great preparations. They all disappeared suddenly, however, and must have taken most of the local fish with them, as fishing with four boats only 200 dozen were taken in the following month (March), and it was four months afterwards before the fish were again plentiful that year. The natural enemies of the mullet are shags and kahawai, which destroy them in great numbers. We do not need a close season, we close the season ourselves each year. It is no use catching fish when we cannot sell them. There are as many fish as ever, only they have always made more show at some times than at others. They come and go with the change of weather. The steamer scatters the fish, but they are like sheep, and gather again in mobs. If a close season must be, we can get good fish up to the 20th December. By the 20th February the fish are quite a good age on the banks outside Komiti. We can take them in good order from there to the canneries even in the hottest weather. We can catch them outside the old boundary at night, and pull up the punt with the fish covered with wet bags, and deliver them in the early morning. It is only an hour's pull. These are the fish I mentioned as being all in good condition, and chiefly male fish. If the whole harbour is to be closed up for four months it may as well be closed altogether. There would also be four months of bad weather in the winter; that is eight; and I do not see how we can earn a living in the four months that are left. If there must be closing all over the harbour two months would be sufficient, and could be worked. Still, it would be better to close for three months inside Komiti, and open all the year round over the rest of the harbour, as has been the way up to now. There are twenty-three families in the Kaipara—viz., four at Kaiarau, three at Aratapu, one at Tokataho, one at Sail Point, four at Helensville, one at Port Albert, two at Pahi, and seven at Otamatea. There are ten wives and fifty-nine children dependent on these fishermen. There are three factories—Rangiora, with six white men, having five wives and four children; Batley (Ewing and Co.), eight men, having two wives and four children; Masefield, eight men, having three wives and four children. This makes a grand total of 136 souls dependent on the mullet fishery at Kaipara.

*William McLeod*, Helensville: Has fished in the Kaipara for thirty-three years. The fish are not scarcer than they have been before. It has always been that they are more plentiful some years than others. Have seen many fish killed with sawdust in the rivers, and think that is often the cause of the loss of a season's spawning in some of the rivers. Think that from the 1st December to the 1st March should be the close season for the sale of fish over the whole harbour. Knows the fish in the sandhill freshwater lakes near to North Head; they are true mullet, and grow to enormous size, but are not well formed. There are lots of mullet in the sea, and they are very fine fish, and can be caught all the year round when the weather is favourable. They spawn on the outside beach later in the season than the fish in the harbour. They enter the harbour in schools, especially in winter, and often run up the Wairoa Channel with the flood to Sail Point, and return with the ebb. Have always thought them a different fish from the harbour mullet. They are also got in the salt-water lagoons at the Heads.

*George Bennet*, Batley: Have fished eighteen years. The fish are not scarcer, and only vary with the weather. Do not think they come much from the sea, except in great schools. They spawn on the banks. Get a very few spent fish on the banks in January. Clean-run fish are often caught in the same haul with muddy fish. With south-west wind the fish are in great quantity. With easterly weather the fish keep to the deep channels, and none can be caught. The wind has more to do with them than anything else. The day before yesterday there were plenty of fish, and yesterday and to-day, with fine weather and easterly wind, we could not get any fish. Would like the close season to be as formerly. Has ten children depending on him, and if the whole harbour is shut up he could not maintain them.