1934 and 1944. It is not suggested that it supplies a completely satisfactory answer to the question. Why should 363,448 cwt. of fish be valued at £313,106 ten years ago, while in the last year before the war (1938-39) 356,114 cwt. was valued at £424,643 and last year (1944) 308,237 cwt. had a value of £522,954 ? It is certainly not due to an improvement in quality or to the landing of more of the kinds of fish that are in most demand. For instance, here is a comparison between the year 1936-37 (the first year for which the statistical details were available) and the year 1944 in respect of the quantities of the five most important classes of market fish landed in the twelve-month period :—

	1936-37.		1944.	
	Total Landings.	Percentage of all Fish Landings.	Total Landings.	Percentage of all Fish Landings.
	Cwt.		Cwt.	
Snapper	142,425	39·22	109,013	35·37
Tarakihi	53,114	14·63	44,980	14·59
Hapuku (groper) ..	31,673	8·72	21,901	7·11
Blue cod	27,403	7·55	19,069	6·19
All flat-fish	32,237	8·41	31,565	10·24

If there is one comprehensive explanation that will entirely or almost entirely account for the general rise in wholesale and retail prices, it is this : that the *costs of production* (expenditures on fishing operations) have steadily increased over the last ten years, quite apart from any special wartime factors. The contrast is more marked still if one goes back twenty years. (I have taken only ten years, because our earlier figures are not so reliable as later ones.) Why should this be so ? A detailed answer would be much too lengthy and involved, but it can be said without hesitation that in general it costs more to land fish because fish are now harder to catch. Bigger boats, more highly powered engines, greater fuel consumption, longer voyages, modernized fishing-gear of increased catching power—these are the factors that have been increasingly involved in the reaping of our fish harvests, especially over the past twelve years. Now, although that statement is made with some confidence as a general explanation of the rise in fish prices, there is another aspect which, at least from this Department's point of view, has a more serious significance. The expenditure of more money in capital investment and in working-costs for modernized vessels and fishing-gear is not incurred by people in the fishing industry just in order to beat their rivals in a competitive business. If it were only that, we should have had the effects shown in a crescendo of quantities of fish landed, but, instead, the tendency is in the other direction. The explanation that holds good in general is that as time went on it became necessary to use more power, more time, and more efficient (from the point of view of the fish, more "deadly") fishing-gear to keep up supplies to about the same level as was formerly maintained with appreciably less trouble and expenditure. The serious aspect about this is that such a remedy is likely to aggravate the disease. Fishing must inevitably kill fish and so diminish the fish population on the grounds that are worked. If after a period of fishery exploitation the stock has reached a certain degree of depletion, there are two courses open to the fishermen to enable them to maintain their supplies for the market and to keep up their earnings. One is to go "farther afield." This is what has been happening with the Auckland fleet of Danish-seiners. Their "home grounds," exploited in the earlier years of Danish-seining after this new and highly efficient method of fishing had been introduced in 1923, were the comparatively near and very productive areas of the Hauraki Gulf. It was mainly the prohibition of Danish-seining, by successive regulations, on practically all the grounds except those in the outer and offshore waters of the Gulf which induced a steadily increasing number of Auckland Danish-seiners to extend their operations to the Bay of Plenty and, to a less extent—because of the patchy nature of the available fishing-grounds—to the more northerly coastal waters. Occasionally Cape Maria van Diemen has been rounded by these vessels for fishing the grounds that lie off the Ninety-mile Beach. In this extension of their field of operations the Danish-seiners have followed the same lines that were taken by the Auckland steam-trawlers before them. Only by the acquisition of larger, more seaworthy, and more powerfully engined vessels could these longer voyages be made. The waters of Rangaunu Bay, Doubtless Bay, Whangaroa Harbour, Bay of Islands, Whangaruru Harbour, Tutukaka Harbour, and Whangarei Harbour have, by regulation, been closed to Danish-seining, as to trawling, for many years. The inshore waters off the open coasts are, as mentioned, patchy and of small extent, but unfortunately there would appear to be no very productive grounds offshore in the open sea, the depth of which increases very considerably at no great distance from the land. The continued exploitation of the stocks of fish inhabiting these limited grounds has manifestly led to their deterioration. The destruction of spawning-grounds and feeding-grounds, which has been so frequently alleged by people who urge further restrictions and closures of inshore areas to this method of fishing, is, in my opinion, an entirely imaginary objection. Taking fish in large quantities out of the sea, like drawing large sums out of a banking account, leaves so much less for future use and also so much less to reproduce more, in the case of the money by way of interest and in the case of fish by natural propagation. The problem of the conservation of fisheries is mainly that of ensuring that no more fish are taken out than can be replaced by the surviving brood-stock by natural reproduction and growth. Natural enemies and naturally adverse factors there are, of course, and these are not constant, but variable in effect from year to year. That fishery exploitation