

9. *Mr. Ayson.*] Well, then, with Mr. Stirling's suggestion it means 1 in. difference in the length, if 10 in. means 8 in. cleaned?—Yes, that would be about 1 in. difference.

10. Would the fishermen agree to that—to a 10 in. measurement?—Yes, they would agree to that, and I think would be quite satisfied.

11. Ten inches in the natural state and 8 in. when headed?

*Mr. Stirling:* I think that would be very fair for Stewart Island and Riverton; that would suit us just as well as the  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. cleaned.

#### EVIDENCE OF THE FISH-MERCHANTS.

ANGELO PASCO, Fish-merchant, Invercargill.

For years past it has been known that the fish were to be 8 oz., and some time last year, towards the end of last year, the Collector of Customs was passing my shop—I suppose it is just as well for all the fishermen to know how this regulation came about—and in the window there were some blue-cod exposed for sale, and Mr. Spence came along and he said he thought I was overstretching the mark by selling these fish, and I said I could not help it as the fish were caught and I bought them and was trying to sell them. He said, "The best thing you can do is to put a few of them on the scale and see what they go." They went just over the 4 oz. Mr. Spence sent them away, and the next thing after a little while we find that new regulations were made. Had the fishermen stuck properly to 8 oz., and looked after their own interests and the interests of those who sold them, there would not have been a word about it, but they abused the regulations. People would not buy these wee sprats of fish. I know many of the fish-merchants here, and many of the fishermen have been up in my shop when we have been cleaning fish and half of them have been thrown into the waste-tubs practically useless.

1. *Mr. McClure.*] But, Mr. Pascoe, an 8 oz. fish is a marketable fish?—Yes, an 8 oz. fish is a fair thing.

2. In buying your fish do you simply buy them blind? Were you buying them directly from the fishermen?—We do not see the fish that are bought. They are bought from the freezing-works. We do not see the fish.

3. That would not prevent the fish-merchant from inspecting them?—No one was sticking to the regulations.

4. If these small fish came in they were absolutely valueless for sale purposes; if you refused to pay for them the man who caught these fish or froze them would be at a loss. You can say, "I will not take these fish." The remedy is in the hands of the seller?—It was not so.

*Mr. McClure:* I should say it is very bad business on your part to accept those fish.

#### C. T. SULLIVAN.

I have been buying here for a small time just in my brother's interests in Dunedin, and the way we have to pay for and accept fish independent of your laws and regulations in this: The fish are caught in Stewart Island, cleaned and cased in our respect by the fishermen. They are sent over to us with the weight marked on by the fishermen—the net weight of those fish contained in that case. We have to accept that weight as the weight to pay by, and if we sell that fish to a fishmonger or shopkeeper he has to pay us according to that weight if we can get it from him. We have to take the fishermen's weight. It goes into the freezer, the weight is marked on them—they are not weighed there; they have no responsibility. The only responsibility we have is this: we have to pay the fishermen their weight, and when it comes to Melbourne we get the actual weight, and the difference I have found by weighing the cases. In one instance I sent seventy-five cases to Melbourne, and the exact weight I could give you was a difference of 6 lb. per case that was lost from the time they were weighed by the fishermen to the time we got our returns from Melbourne.

1. *Mr. McClure.*] But that has nothing to do with this inquiry. You are speaking of the gross weights of fish, not the size of the fish at all, simply the gross weight of cases; and I should imagine, as I said to Mr. Pascoe, the remedy lies in your own hands. If the business is worth carrying on I should imagine that you would refuse to take the fishermen's weights. You would appoint a man in Stewart Island to see that the fish were proper fish and that the weights were correct?—You have to accept them, because you cannot get a place to weigh it.

2. By the loss entailed in your business or the fish-merchants' business collectively in twelve months in the amount of fish that you pay for which you say are valueless, would it not almost pay to buy a weighing-machine at the Bluff or wherever you were?—The trade is so erratic that you cannot tell any moment—one moment you get a lot of fish and the next moment none. To keep a man there to do nothing else but weigh fish, you can imagine that if he was there for seven days in the week to weigh fish, and the fish came in one day in the week, there would be six days he would not know what to do with himself.

3. Your complaint is not about the size of the fish—it is the amount in each case: is that not so?—Yes. The size of the fish does not appear to us until we have sold it to the retailer.

4. Do you wish regulations providing that the Government will guarantee the fishermen's weights?—No, we have to accept that. But it was your statement just now to us that we should look to it.

5. That was merely a suggestion. I do not wish to run your business. It seemed such an impossible statement from a business man to say that he receives fish and has to accept the weights as sent out?—Unless he has a packing-shed. If he has a packing-shed he can weigh them himself; if not, he has to accept the fishermen's weights.