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Portland, Maine

Mr. A.M. Smith, Dealer

November 23, 1893

Has been in the fish business about 15 years.

In regard to mackerel fishery, does not think there is practically any legislation that can be enacted in regard to catching mackerel but what would be entirely useless. He used to be a strong believer in legislation. Never engaged personally in the fisheries.

In regard to the five years close season, I was the investigator of that. I was the first

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one that moved in that direction. I had an idea that there might possibly be something in it, with relation to the movements of the mackerel on our own coast; but my principal reason for going into it was a selfish one. The position I took at that time, and which I can prove by facts, was this; that so far as vessel owners were concerned, there was

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no money in catching mackerel before that time which we designated the close season had expired, for the reason that our vessels would go south at a heavy expense; they would run their mackerel into New York, where they would over stock the market, the price would run right down from a reasonable price to an unprofitable one, and it took us almost all the rest of

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the season to bring the price back again where it should be. That was the principal reason I had in inaugurating that movement in favor of a close season. But the effect it had on mackereling, as we all can see from the result, was non effective. It did not make any difference. As far as trade is concerned, we can hardly judge, because there has been so

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few mackerel lately in the market. Does not think there is any difference in the trade.

If I remember, the inauguration of that law developed a tremendous industry in pound fishing all along the shore from New Jersey to the uttermost end of Nova Scotia. That stimulated the

pounds around Yarmouth. Where there was one pound in the States and along the Nova Scotia shore before that time, when that law was passed I think it

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doubled it up immediately that year. My theory in regard to that is, that those pounds during the spawning season so more damage to mackerel fishing than all the seines that ever were used, because those fish generally go into the shallow water to spawn. But so far as that close law being a benefit, it was a misfortune.

Thinks other State or National legislation is entirely useless so far as the mackerel

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fishery is concerned. If they want to exclude the seine, I would hold up both hands to do it. I would be perfectly willing that they should exclude the seines, but I should want to do it on economical grounds rather than on the ground of preservation of the fisheries. It costs us a great deal more to fit out vessels for seining than by the old fashioned way of hooking, and

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by the old fashioned way more persons were given employment. Not that one vessel would take any more men, but it required a great many more vessels to carry on the industry. Does not think it would be advisable, however, to give up the purse seine fishing.

There may be some inland fish that need protection, like salmon and lobsters, and something like that.

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Most all the legislation that has ever been made in the State of Maine in regard to catching fish has been in the interest of one particular person or interest that is especially working in that line. I will say that without fear of contradiction from any intelligent man.

There has been no decrease in the quantity of mackerel. They

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have been as plenty on our shores this year as I have ever know them to be, all the way from Block Island to the Bay of Fundy. This legislation is not asked for the general good at all. It is all for some selfish interest.

I think the existing regulation ought to be changed. I think it is exceedingly unjust for the Nova Scotia government, or for own Government, to confiscate

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a vessel or her gear for the wrong-doing of men who are absolutely of the control of the owner of the vessel. Then captain, not the owner, should be held responsible.

On the coast of Maine purse seining is not allowed within the head lines that are 3 miles apart or less. The last legislature helped us out a little in drawing the line up the Bay, but that only goes as far as St. Johns Bay. That law was passed last winter.