

FRIDAY, 11TH AUGUST, 1882. (Mr. TURNBULL, in the chair.)

CAPTAIN ROSE, Manager, New Zealand Shipping Co., examined.

*Captain Rose.*

11th August, 1882.

221. *The Chairman.*] The Committee wish to have your opinion, Captain Rose, as to whether it is desirable that sea-going vessels to carry a certain number of apprentices and boys who had to be trained to act as officers and sailors. Will you give it?—I may say that in my young days it was compulsory that each ship should carry a certain number of boys according to her tonnage. That is not the case now, but I think it was a great mistake to do away with the custom. There are a large number of ports in New Zealand, and doubtless in future years there will be a demand for seamen. Consequently I think it would be well to make ships carry a limited number of boys. Ordinary size vessels, say, of 1000 tons, or thereabouts, used to be compelled to carry one boy to each 100 tons, but they used voluntarily to carry four boys to each ship.

222. Do you think that if the boys were fairly educated and cared for, there would be any objection to placing them on board ship?—No; not so long as they were not tainted with crime. The New Zealand Shipping Company carry four boys in each of their ships.

223. And what chances have these boys of rising?—We take them purposely to make officers of them. We partly educate them, and they have to go through the whole life of a sailor, and do all his duties, in order that they may become efficient seamen.

224. Would there be any objection to taking another class of boys whom you would not have to take so much trouble with?—No, they would do for ordinary seamen.

225. Would there be any objection to take a boy who had been unfortunate enough to behave criminally, and to have been taken before a magistrate?—Yes; I think so.

226. Have you any experience with regard to training ships?—I know something of those training ships where a boy goes to learn navigation, and where he has to pay for being taught at the rate of £50 a year, but I do not know anything of the training ships for boys of bad character.

227. For how long are boys apprenticed in your ships?—Five years is the usual term.

228. Do you not think that the smaller coasting vessels might carry a few boys?—A good deal would depend on the size of the vessel.

229. How long do you think it would take to train a boy to be a sailor?—About four years, I should say. We have got many men now who are not better sailors than some boys who have been to sea for four years only. I may mention also that one fourth of our seamen are foreigners, and that we have a great difficulty in getting English sailors.

230. What wages do you pay a boy?—About ten shillings a month the first voyage, and the pay gradually increases afterwards. An ordinary seaman gets 30s a month.

231. Would these boys be put in the fore-castle with the sailors?—Yes.

232. And they would be likely to be influenced by the conduct of the sailors with whom they were associated?—Yes.

233. What is the number of vessels owned by your Company?—Eighteen, and we carry four boys on each ship. In addition to these boys we usually carry two ordinary seamen, who are young men.

234. Do you think the increase of sailors would be likely to diminish the demand for boys?—I think not.

235. Do you think it would be better to have a stationary training vessel, or one that would travel about?—I think it would be better to have two vessels—one to be used as a school, and another on which they could be taken out to sea and exercised there. In the navy at Home they have small brigs, in which the boys go out into the Channel and cruise about.

236. Do you think there is any disadvantage in having boys on board the ships?—No; they are kept under strict discipline.

237. *Hon. T. Dick.*] When you speak of the four boys that you carry on each ship, do you mean the apprentices?—Yes.

238. Do you always take your boys from New Zealand, or do you get some of them in London?—We always take them from New Zealand. Our rule is that when anybody wishes to send a respectable boy to sea, an application is made to the local manager, and the boy awaits his turn to be taken on if he is found to be suited for the work. We have always plenty of applications from young men who wish to become officers.

239. Do you have many applications from the other class of boys—those who wish merely to become sailors?—We have only had about a dozen since I become connected with the Company.

240. Have you taken any boys from the school at Kohimarama?—I think not.

241. Would boys who had had two or three years training be more acceptable to masters of vessels than others who had had no experience?—Yes, I should think so.

242. Are your ships frequently in need of such lads?—No; because we always have our own apprentices. We always have from thirty to fifty applications on our books for appointments.

243. Then you do not open your doors to boys of the lower class?—No. I should say that vessels which go short voyages might take boys from the training ship, because if they were found to be objectionable, it would not be difficult to get rid of them. I know that if I were the owner of a number of vessels trading between here and the other colonies, as Captain Williams is, I should be glad to take a limited number of boys.

244. *Mr Daniel.*] You would have no objection to take a boy from the training ship if he had a good character from the master of the school?—Not at all, provided the boys were not too young. Of course they would have to go to the fore-castle.

245. *Hon. T. Dick.*] Those boys of inferior rank would have to do the dirtiest part of the work and would not get off so easily as your apprentices?—Yes, that is the case.

246. *The Chairman.*] What sized vessel would be handiest for these boys to be trained in?—A brigantine of about 100 tons would be all that was required.

247. *Hon. T. Dick.*] Could boys of twelve or fifteen years handle a boat of that size?—At Home they generally have a boatswain's mate or somebody of that sort with them.