

34. Was it the drivers of any of these oil-engines that the Northern Steamship Company got to report? Was it not others, and you call that expert evidence?—I am quite unbiassed in this matter, and I wish to answer as squarely and fairly as I can. The Northern Steamship Company got the information from the experts of the oil-engine agents as well as from the best steam men they could get in Auckland. I gave no detrimental evidence against them. A light-draught vessel is wanted for the Whakatane trade—a vessel that will carry cattle and other cargo, and be of considerable beam. An oil-engine of low draught might stick them up, because the oil might not gravitate down to the engine when wanted.

35. Do you know what a scow is?—I do.

36. Is she of light draught?—Sometimes.

37. Could an ordinary scow go into the Whakatane?—I do not say they could or could not; but I am giving you the information the Northern Steamship Company got, and they decided to get steam. Mr. McDonald, the managing man of the Union Company here, who takes charge of the company's repairs, and who is a naval architect and shipwright, tells me they imported an oil-engine launch recently with the "Mokoia." I asked him for information about it, because the "Hinemoa" was thinking about getting one, and he said, "You put your foot down and do not have an oil-engine for the "Hinemoa." He said, "The oil-launch brought out by the 'Mokoia' sticks us up at all times, and is a regular humbug—she is not at all reliable."

38. You said it was expert knowledge obtained by the Northern Steamship Company that caused them to alter their opinion about putting an oil-engine in this vessel?—Yes.

39. Was the principal expert knowledge they obtained got from their own engineers?—No; they are too far advanced for that. They want as good knowledge as any company.

40. Do you know the chief inspector of the Northern Steamship Company?—Yes; I know the two of them—both Mr. Coutts and Mr. Gow.

41. Was that the principal evidence they obtained?—No; they went all round. They did not ask me. I had nothing to do with it.

42. Are you not aware that the engineers employed on board steamers and driving steam-engines are entirely opposed to the use of these oil-engines?—Not at all. It would not be to their interest.

43. Do you think that certificated engineers employed on steamers are capable of driving an oil-engine?—I do.

44. Have they ever tried it?—That is no objection.

45. Are you not aware that these oil-engine vessels are obliged to carry a certificated engineer?—Yes; that was the law on the 5th January.

46. Are you aware that some of these engineers have been placed on board these vessels?—Yes.

47. Are you aware that some of them were not capable of working them?—I believe that some of them did not get a fair trial.

48. Do you know a schooner called the "Medora"?—Yes.

49. Are you aware that she has an oil-engine on board?—Yes.

50. Was she obliged to carry a certificated engineer?—I expect she did. The regulations require it.

51. Are you aware whether that certificated engineer employed on the "Medora" was capable of driving the engine or not?—I do not know any engineer of any standing who would have gone on board the "Medora."

52. Why?—Because the owners of the vessel advertised that they would give so many pounds to any certificated engineer who could drive the engine, and it was said that they would do something to the machinery that would prevent him starting the engine. That is what I heard.

53. I ask you whether they were obliged and did get a certificated engineer?—I believe he was, but he was an indifferent man, and he never got a show.

54. *Mr. Crowther.*] How was it he got a certificate, then, if he was an indifferent man?—A certificate does not make an engineer any more than a certificate makes a doctor.

55. *Mr. Houston.*] Are you aware whether that certificated engineer ever drove that engine or not?—I could not tell you: I have no personal knowledge nor official knowledge. I may say that I wrote up to my surveyors at Auckland and asked them how they were getting on with these oil-engines, and they said there was no trouble, and they were getting on all right.

56. Are you not aware that in point of fact this man never drove this engine; could not start it, and could not stop it?—I am not aware of it.

57. Are you not aware that the owners of the same schooner, the "Medora," put an advertisement in the newspaper asking for a certificated engineer?—I believe so.

58. Are you aware that any applied for the position?—I could not say. I got a copy of the paper sent down to me.

59. Are you aware that seven certificated engineers applied for the position?—I am not aware.

60. And that seven went on board?—I am not aware.

61. And you are not aware that not one of the seven could start the engine?—I do not know that. I might say that they have the same trouble on steam-vessels sometimes. The "Anglian," some two years ago, could not be kept going more than half speed one trip between Sydney and Auckland. There was some crack found in her machinery between steam- and exhaust-port of low-pressure engine, and they could only get half speed out of her. That baffled all the experts in Auckland and the three certificated engineers on board, and took three days to rectify. It does not show that because a man cannot start an engine he is not qualified as an engineer. Troubles arise in all camps, even among the best men.

62. According to that, the fact of a certificated engineer being on board one of these vessels