

Mr. J. L. Coster.
20th July, 1882.

38. I understand this, and am pleased to hear it. I gather from you that the class of people you take are the people you wish to make officers and trusted servants of. I refer to a much larger class. Take the case of a lad whose parents have left the colony and left him behind, or one whose parents have perhaps taken to drink and neglected him. The police take him in charge, and he is sent to the Training School, to be kept there until he is a man?—When your boys have arrived at that age they will be able to go before the mast as sailors.

39. Under the Act we cannot get these boys sent out from the training ships, except as apprentices?—When the boys are eighteen, they are too old to take as apprentices.

40. If you get lads of that age for two or three years at a lower rate than that at which you could get others, it would be in your favour?—We never do.

41. Suppose the law made it compulsory that every vessel over a certain tonnage leaving the colony should carry a certain number of apprentices from the naval schools?—I think there would be a difficulty. If we were carrying the other class of lads such as those we are carrying now, I think it would be undesirable to have as apprentices the boys you refer to.

42. I am not talking of aristocratic apprentices, but of the *oi polloi*?—I know that. I do not look upon the question as one of aristocratic apprentices, but I think it would be a difficult matter to carry apprentices of two classes in the same ship. We cannot carry more than four in any of our ships, and we have generally more applications on our books than we can take.

43. You refer to boys of the class you are now taking for the purpose of making them officers of vessels afterwards?—Yes; all these lads learn the work of sailors. The officers of the ships keep a sharp look out on them, and at a certain hour of the day the master of the vessel teaches them navigation. They also go to school during certain hours. They have to go up the rigging, help to furl the sails, keep the ship clean and other things.

44. Suppose lads of eighteen possessing skill in navigation and practical experience in working on board a vessel were ready to be discharged from a school and apprenticed. Would it not be a saving to your Company to have four or five of this class on board?—I think if such a thing were required, the Company might be glad to ship several of these young men as sailors. If the Company is to be asked to take the responsibility of these young men when absent from the colony, it becomes a different question. You ship these young men and let their articles terminate in New Zealand instead of London. Of course there is no difficulty in this, but the responsibility of these young men while the vessel is in London is a different thing.

45. I understand that a lad would be taken on board a vessel under the Act, and that so long as he received fair treatment, the rest would be his look-out. I mean that you can have no responsibility if he likes to come to grief when he reaches London. I suppose that to be the case if the law to which I have referred was passed. A matter has been before the Committee upon which I should like to have your opinion, Mr Coster. It is a moot point whether we should have one large training vessel moored in some port of the colony, and teach the boys seamanship there, or have one or two smaller vessels, say of 100 tons, of the schooner and brigantine class, in which the boys could have actual experience of navigation by making short trips and carrying Government stores?—My opinion is, distinctly, that you should have both. You should have a training vessel moored somewhere down a central harbour, and small vessels to cruise about in connection with this ship. I was on board a training ship on the River Clyde the other day in company with Mr Galbraith, the Managing Director of the Albion Shipping Company. He takes a great interest in this Institution and is one of the Governors. This vessel has a schooner, in which the boys go sailing about. You should have both, decidedly.

46. You carry on an average four apprentices?—Yes.

47. *Mr Peacock.*] Would it be regarded as a hardship if vessels were asked to carry more than four of these lads with the view of training them as able-bodied seamen?—We cannot accommodate more than four ordinary apprentices on each of our vessels. We should also have to make special arrangements for housing them.

48. In what way do able-bodied seamen generally get their training?—That is a rather difficult question to answer. I should say all about. The crew of these vessels are of a most motley description. The masters frequently have to pick up a crew where they can. The shipping of a crew is left entirely to the masters.

49. What age does a man require to be before he can ship?—I think eighteen or twenty, but I really cannot say.

50. Do you consider the training given to boys on board naval training vessels will be of great advantage to them, and that this advantage will be proportionate to the cost of the undertaking?—That would be very difficult to arrive at. I think when the boys have had their training they should be fit to become sailors on board vessels.

51. When they have arrived at a proper age?—I should say so. This will rest a great deal with the arrangements of the training ship. If you have a ship and schooner you ought to be able to fit boys to go before the mast.

52. If boys were kept in such naval training vessels and taught the actual duties of seamen up to such age as they could ship, do you think there would be a demand for their services?—I should think so. I think you would find a profession for a lot of your surplus population in the shape of these boys.

53. *Mr Macandrew.*] What are the wages paid to able-bodied seamen now?—Home £5 or £6 per month, out about £3. Say from £3 to £6.

54. Is it not possible that if lads are bred to the sea in the colony, and arrive at a proper age, you will be able to get them at the same price?—We should be glad to get a better class of seamen who would stick to their ships all round.

55. Would it not be to the interests of the Company to draw its supply of raw material from the cheapest market instead of the dearest?—No doubt, if a crew could be shipped in London for the round voyage at £3 per month. Men will not ship from the colony for less than £5 to £6.

56. Am I to understand that the young men you carry now are in the cabin?—No.