

*Captain Williams.* vessels to take some boys as part of their crews?—I cannot say I would use compulsion. I think masters and owners would take a certain proportion of boys without any compulsion. I have always done so. 27th July, 1882. Within the last four months I have apprenticed four their parents have brought to me. I have one on every vessel.

194. Your own case is perhaps nearly exceptional. Would it not be desirable to compel those who do not take boys to do so?—I should think they would do it without any compulsion. I know I have always been glad to take a couple of boys.

195. You have heard of the training vessel at Auckland?—Yes. I have had three boys from it. One of them turned out to be a rather smart lad when he had served his time with me.

196. You know we have a large number of children who, from causes not within their own control, are sent to the industrial schools, and we want to know whether it would not be desirable, in the case of shipowners and masters who do not voluntarily help the State and themselves by taking some of these boys, to make them do so?—Well, I think it would be desirable that every vessel should be compelled to carry a certain proportion of boys, but not too large a proportion. You might first begin with a small proportion and see how it went—say, two lads for a vessel of 200 tons, and more in proportion. I should like the Committee to distinctly understand that I am entirely in favor of training ships. I do not think, though, that if we had training ships we should confine boys only to learning seamanship on them. My own experience in this matter is perhaps larger than that of anyone in Wellington. I was a fisherman in my young days. I know that we used to get 150 boys from the London workhouses every year, and on each fishing smack the crew consisted of ten hands, of whom five were apprentices. But they had always been previously taught some trade in the workhouses, and really smart lads some of them were. I think even if we had training ships it would be very hard to compel all the boys who were sent to them to go to sea afterwards. It is very hard to make a sailor of a lad if he makes up his mind that he does not like it. I know it worked very well at Home, because some of the boys we had from the workhouses, when their time with us was up, went back to the trades they had been formerly partly taught. If lads on the training vessels were each taught some land trade as well, people on shore would take them as apprentices much more readily from the year or two's learning they had already had.

197. I understand you have been recently in England?—Yes; last summer. I do not think when I was a youngster that there was more than one training vessel, because all the fishing smacks and colliers and other coasters used to carry several apprentices. But now, I think, there are seven or eight moored training vessels on the Thames, and there is a small vessel rigged light, as a barque, which the lads, with the guidance of a man on board to tell them what to do, take up and down the river. They are exercised in this way two or three days a week, and when I was in London I watched it. They handle the vessel, and go through everything as smartly as possible. I asked a friend for all particulars about it, and I was told that the boys were trained in this way, and were afterwards drafted both into the merchant service and the navy. I may say this, that twenty-four years ago a large number of seamen were brought up in the fishing smacks, and the colliers were nearly all sailing vessels, and all of them carried boys. Now, however, there is hardly any of this training for boys. There is not half the number of fishing smacks, and the coal carrying is almost all done by steam. Half the fishing, too, is done by steam screws. In the Bristol Channel I found that even the towing boats, when not engaged in towing, let down their trawls and fished; so now there is not half the number of boys required that there were formerly, and I believe myself that it is through so few boys being now wanted for the smacks and coasters that they have been obliged to have so many training vessels to send the lads to, to keep them out of mischief.

198. You account for the disappearance of the coasters and smacks by steam?—Yes.

199. And so the demand for apprentices has decreased?—Yes, very largely on that account.

200. Then would you favor having large vessels moored as training vessels?—Yes, I would, if they are to be had. You might get one of the old frigates from Home and divide it into two or three compartments for the different classes of boys. I would not put the decent boys with the criminal lads. Those boys who, after a year or two in the training vessel, did not wish to go to sea, might be apprenticed on shore to whatever trade they had been partly taught on the vessel, while for those who wished to be seamen, you should have a light vessel rigged with yards attached to the training ship, in which they could occasionally be exercised; and in this way they could learn every detail of the practical work of a sailor. Those who had been practised like this for a year or two would very readily find billets on other vessels. I am sure I should be very glad to take any of them whenever I had an opening.

201. Taking the present position of affairs, we have Industrial Schools in different places. How would it do to draft off a number of lads from them from time to time to training vessels?—Yes, I think that would answer. The great thing is to get the boys wholly away from their parents and associates, and you would be better able to keep them like that on board a vessel.

202. I believe parents now have only access to their children in the Industrial Schools under certain restrictions?—I should think in a large harbour like this, where you have every convenience, it would be less expensive to maintain a training vessel—a large ship—than an Industrial School ashore.

203. You would not be in favor of associating criminal boys with those sent to a training ship for such causes as the neglect or drunkenness of their parents?—No, certainly not. I have had experience in my own vessels of the evils of that. I had two very decent boys from Auckland, and another who was a free immigrant. He was about the biggest scamp that ever was. We had to thrash him for stealing a sovereign from the captain's cabin. A boy that is a regular little scoundrel will soon teach other boys with whom he is put. I have known several instances too at Home in my young days of the evil of putting good lads along with young rascals. Some of the boys we used to get from the workhouses were as good lads as you could wish to have, while others were such young radicals that you could do nothing with them. It is most important to keep them separate.

204. *Mr. Turnbull.* Considering the very large seaboard of New Zealand, do you not think that a very large number of boys will always be wanted for sailing coasters?—I am convinced that in a few years time all the coasting trade will be done by steam. My experience teaches me that it is coming