

JOSEPH HARE, examined.

128. *The Chairman* :] Are you a mechanic?—No.
129. Where is your residence?—At Whangaroa.
130. Are you a farmer?—A storekeeper.
131. Have you any vessels?—Yes, several. We own the “Hercules,” at Hokitika now.
132. Trading there?—Yes.
133. Are you interested in any other vessel?—I have a share in the “Aotea,” and I have also a launch with oil-engine.
134. How long have you been an owner of vessels?—With Captain Skinner I was interested in the first oil-engine in the colony.
135. How long is that ago?—Four or five years.
136. What is the registered tonnage of the “Aotea”?—Ninety tons.
137. And her horse-power?—Fifteen.
138. Have you had any difficulty with the drivers of the “Aotea”?—Only since the driver left who was originally employed before we were forced to take an engineer.
139. How long is that ago?—Between six and nine months.
140. Then for two or three years you employed the first man and had no difficulty in the driving of the engine?—No, he and the captain drove her successfully.
141. You had no reports as to the engine being stuck up at any time?—No. It is a peculiar engine of English make, and the only difficulty is that in starting her she required about twenty minutes to get up steam, but when once started it worked quite successfully.
142. That man left the “Aotea” about nine months ago?—He was forced off her.
143. The department’s regulations required you to carry a certificated engineer?—Yes.
144. Did you employ a certificated engineer?—Yes.
145. How long did he remain with you?—I think the captain has tried two or three since then, and he has had to drive the engine himself.
146. Then, the engineer you first employed could not drive the engine?—The marine engineer could not drive her.
147. You are certain of that?—Positive. The captain wrote to me, giving all the particulars. He said he had to drive her night and day.
148. How long did he remain as engineer of the vessel?—He might have been two months—probably a trip.
149. And from the information supplied to you the captain did the work, and not the engineer?—I know that is so. I spoke to the captain, and received a letter from him telling me that he had to drive her.
150. You obtained that information from the captain?—Yes.
151. Did you get another certificated engineer after he left?—Yes.
152. How long did the second one remain?—I have not got the dates.
153. Did he remain any time?—I could not say. I know the captain has had two or three altogether.
154. After the second one left did you get a third, and is that third one on board?—I cannot tell. I know he is an old man now. Mr. Subritzky had him on board.
155. Is the present one a certificated engineer?—I believe so. Captain Skinner told me he got his knowledge from Mr. Subritzky.
156. Can you give us any further information about that boat or any other boat?—With regard to the “Hercules,” we had a young man driving her until we were forced to take a marine engineer.
157. How long was he driving her?—A year and a half.
158. Did any difficulties arise during the time he was driving her?—I had letters from the charter party saying the engine was working beautifully and she was doing her work well.
159. And nine months ago he had to retire through the departmental order?—Yes.
160. Whom did you put in his place?—A marine engineer. The charter party then wrote to say that, as they had to pay £15 a month, the vessel would not pay to run, and that I would have to devise some plan by which the price could be reduced.
161. Was that charter party annulled through this?—No.
162. Did any further difficulty arise?—During the time this man had charge the vessel went ashore at Waikura, Jackson’s Bay, West Coast; but I do not know that it was through his fault. The department informed me that it was the captain who made a mistake in taking the signals.
163. Have you any further information to give us about that vessel or any other?—I have been repeatedly cautioned to carry an engineer on my own launch by the department in Wellington.
164. What size is the launch?—25 ft. long.
165. Do you carry passengers?—I have taken friends of mine out, but have never charged.
166. What distance would you go with the launch?—All round the harbour, down to the heads, and up rivers.
167. From twenty to forty miles?—Yes.
168. What is the power of the engine?—Four-horse power.
169. Beyond the reminder to carry an engineer you have not carried one?—No.
170. Who were in charge?—My sons.
171. Are they engineers?—No. My son Oliver has got a permit to drive an oil-engine since.
172. Have your sons a knowledge of tools, or any experience of a workshop?—Only what they have picked up. They are smart boys.
173. Is your home situated far from the sea up the river?—It opens into the harbour about six miles up the river.