

295. Would the ordinary fisherman, who is not a mechanic, be able to grasp the thing?—A great many would. I think the whole thing is so very simple that there is no great difficulty about it. Many of the fishermen are smart people.

296. As an engineer do you think there is any danger of explosion in an oil-engine?—No. The danger lies in the connection between the engine and the oil-tanks. People knocking about the boat might cause a leak in the tank, and, as it is an explosive oil, if lights were carelessly knocking about a fire might be caused. But that could be remedied by the tank being kept well away from the engine, up in the bow, and the oil led to the engine by pipes. Then, another dangerous thing is the way that oil-waste is allowed to lie about. It should either be put away or thrown into the water.

297. Have you seen any accident through what you have mentioned?—I have seen fires take place—not to do any damage—through this waste.

298. Where?—On shore.

299. How many fishing-boats are there in the Bay of Islands?—Between fifty and sixty,

300. Do they go out every night?—When the weather is suitable. They go even as far as Mangonui to Awanui—sixty-odd miles.

301. What fish do they catch?—Mullet; they only do that in the winter time when the fish will keep. They cannot do it in the summer time, because it will not keep, but they are talking of getting ice now.

302. *Mr. Crowther.*] If they had oil-engines they would be able to land the fish very much quicker than if they were dependent on sails?—Yes. In the islands they get a load of fish, and by the time they get it to the factory it is not fit to be used.

303. What is the average quantity of fish brought in?—It varies very much.

304. *The Chairman.*] Are they set nets?—Yes.

305. *Mr. Duncan.*] Fishing-vessels are exempt by the Act. The Minister can exempt them, if application is made.—Just as I left, the owner of one of the factories asked me to see what could be done. These boats do other work besides, such as carrying a bit of cargo. They frequently come up to my mill and take a bit of timber, or they carry a bag of flour for the settlers.

JOHN ST. CLAIR, examined.

306. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—A solicitor, and also a farmer.

307. Where do you reside?—Chiefly in Auckland. I have also a home in the Waikato, on my farm.

308. What information can you give the Committee?—We have suffered very severely through the restrictions on oil-engines. We have a man who runs a little boat with an oil-engine, and we are all likely to suffer through these restrictions. I own a three-horse power engine in a launch called the "Monitor." I also have a 25 ft. boat, with 6 ft. beam, but the engine is out of her now.

309. In what way do the regulations interfere with you?—Owing to Mr. Wade, who runs the "Awaroa," and carries our freight, having to get a certificated engineer: his boat was stopped, I believe. He had to get an engineer until he could come down to get examined, and it disorganized the whole trade for some time because he could not run his oil-engine. He trades in the interests of the settlers in the Whangape district, and takes up wool and other produce. Last spring the settlers were unable to get their wool out on account of the boat being stopped. We had to bring it down in canoes.

310. Had that man been driving the oil-engine long before he was stopped?—Yes, a couple of years, I think.

311. Was he ordered not to drive the engine any more?—I heard so, but I know personally that he took fright and took the engine out of his boat. It was on account of no fault in the engine. He laid the boat up because he was afraid of being fined. That was the reason given to the settlers. As regards the running of the engine in Auckland in my own steam-launch, I may say that I, myself, drive the engine. I could put the engine in the boat, with the aid of a mechanic to bend a few pipes, if I had the tools.

312. Is it possible for the engineer to say that he did the work and you looked on?—No. I can work a lathe. The engine is so simple that it does not require a skilled man to work her.

313. What is the maker?—The Monitor Vapour and Power Company, who make the Monitor and Mogul engines. The man we employ simply follows out the instructions, and the engine has gone ever since. She has stuck us up occasionally, but that is because we did not understand her. Once we got to understand the engine it gave us no trouble. We have blown up a teaspoonful of benzine by way of experiment to see what would be the effect. The little launch, with the one-and-a-half-horse power engine, has been driven by a little girl, who is nine years old. She has started the engine and driven it in Auckland Harbour. I am prepared to let her do it with the larger boat of three-horse power. I would not trust her with a horse and buggy, unless the horse was quiet.

314. *Mr. Lawry.*] I think you were an old settler in the Waikato before you became a solicitor?—Yes; I was farming eight or nine years.

315. And you are thoroughly acquainted with the settlers on the Waikato River?—Yes.

316. Would the general use of the oil-engine in the Waikato River be a benefit to the settlers?—I took a launch up there last season, and I was promised several orders provided there was no restriction about carrying a certificated engineer.

317. Then, the regulations make it obligatory for these boats to carry a certificated engineer?—Yes, if the boat is to carry passengers, and they are frightened to take an oil-engine for fear of being interfered with.