

THE LOSS OF THE CALDER

Board of Trade Inquiry
Concluded

JUDGMENT ON FRIDAY

From Our Own Correspondent

HULL, Monday

The Board of Trade Inquiry into the loss of the steamer *Calder* in April last was concluded at Hull to-day, and the President of the Court, Mr. J. R. Macdonald, announced that judgment would be delivered on Friday. Mr. Macdonald was assisted by Captain R. W. B. Blacklin and Captain E. H. Mitchell as Nautical Assessors.

Mr. H. L. Saxelbye represented the Board of Trade; Mr. T. C. Jackson appeared for the owners, the London Midland & Scottish Railway Company, and several of their officers who were parties to the inquiry; Mr. G. Bilham (instructed by the Navigators & General Insurance Company, Ltd.) represented the relatives of the late Captain Sutherby, and Mr. Gordon Harman, second officer; Mr. J. Hearfield appeared for a witness who is not a party to the inquiry; and Mr. Tarbitten represented the National Union of Seamen.

ARTHUR THOMAS WALL, of London, a consulting naval architect, said he had examined the plans of the *Calder* and the diagrams of the stowage of the cargo on the last voyage, and he considered the stability quite safe. There was nothing in the weather on the last voyage to have affected a ship of her stability, which, according to his calculations when she left Hamburg, was even greater than had been agreed by the Board of Trade and the builders. On the data submitted to the Court he would have regarded her as safe so far as stability was concerned in much worse weather than she encountered.

Questioned as to finding certain parts of wreckage, Witness said they indicated to him that the ship was damaged by some external force, and that she went down by the bows quickly. The total weight of the ship when she left Hamburg was 2400 tons, and at the time of the casualty 2367 tons.

Replying to Mr. SAXELBYE, WITNESS said that he did not think that the storm deck was washed away, and that the *Calder* shipped sufficient water to cause the casualty. He thought it most unlikely that the ship would not recover from any list caused by the shipping of water.

This concluded the evidence.

AN UNIQUE INQUIRY

Mr. T. C. JACKSON, in addressing the Court, said the loss was a mystery of the sea which, he feared, must remain unsolved, the secret of the cause had been lost. There were no survivors, and answer could only come from mouths that were mute. Financially the loss was great, but it was as nothing compared with the loss of gallant men. With delicate and commendable propriety, the Board of Trade had refrained from asking any question that might have reflected on the memories of the captain, officers and crew. It would be difficult to conceive a better ship or one that was better manned. It was an unique inquiry—there was no hostility among parties, but a common desire to arrive at some conclusion as to the cause of the casualty.

The vessel had almost completed her voyage at the time the casualty occurred. Was it possible on evidence, he asked, for the Court to come to any other conclusion than that the casualty occurred through some external force? It was a curious fact that some of the wreckage which had been washed up and one lifeboat that was sighted could not have belonged to the *Calder*. It was true that no other British ship was reported missing, but it might be that some other ship was missing. It would seem from the evidence that the dredger *Cyclops* had drifted farther south than might appear from the finding of wreckage of her superstructure off Withernsea.

As to a possibility of striking a mine which exploded, Mr. Jackson suggested that that could not be ruled out of consideration. It seemed to him that the desire of the Admiralty expert had been to minimise the danger of the explosion of floating mines. He would not say more than if there were a danger it could not be more than infinitesimal.

Throughout the experts' evidence there was an undercurrent of reserve which the Court must have noticed. Board of Trade regulations were clear on the question of danger from mines, and he believed they were honestly intended as a warning. Whatever it was that happened came with a rapidity that allowed of little time for the men to get to the boats. There was evidence of some attempt made by men to save their lives. Unfortunately it was not successful. Several of the men would be awakened from their sleep and hurled into eternity before they had any chance of escape. He believed that was a correct conclusion to draw from the finding of an empty lifeboat, and he suggested that it was consistent with some sudden disruptive force.

THE "OVERLADEN" SUGGESTION

Mr. BILHAM said he thought it was suggested that the ship was overladen or that weight of cargo was not properly distributed. He suggested that evidence proved that if any such allegation had been made it could not have been sustained. Mr. Morgan, Board of Trade Surveyor, Commander Clementson and Captain Sherwood had said that, in their opinion, the cargo was properly stowed. There must have been a sudden dramatic catastrophe such as could not possibly have occurred through the ship losing her trim and becoming waterlogged. It might have been caused by striking submerged wreckage.

Mr. SAXELBYE said the Board of Trade did not suggest that the ship was overladen. As to theories of external force either by explosion or by collision, the Admiralty had not sent down an expert to treat the question of the possibility of a mine explosion with levity, and to say that there was no danger from mines unless he believed that to be true. Commander Jeffreys had said that during his ten years' experience of collecting and

dealing with mines not one mine had exploded. The warning issued by the Board of Trade was to fishermen and the possible danger to their nets. Mr. Saxelbye suggested that the dredger *Cyclops* was not in the track of the *Calder*. With those theories eliminated, it seemed to him that the most reasonable possibility was that the ship met extremely bad seas, that hatch covers and perhaps storm deck were washed away, and that water that got in gave her a list from which she did not recover and she was overwhelmed.

The PRESIDENT announced that judgment would be given on Friday.



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