

**The Dominion.**

Thursday, February 14, 1924.

**PORT ELLIOT WRECK****MASTER AND OFFICERS  
EXONERATED****MISLED BY BUSH FIRE**

The Nautical Court set up to inquire into the stranding of the C. and D. Company's liner Port Elliot, near East Cape, on January 12, delivered its finding yesterday. The master, officers, and crew were exonerated.

Having considered the evidence tendered, the Court was of the opinion that the wreck was mainly caused by a set in-shore, which affected the course of the vessel as she approached East Cape; that the master was unaware of this influence, and was therefore not in a position to provide against it. The Court was further of opinion that the course set at 10.5 p.m. would have resulted in the vessel clearing East Cape, and the alteration of that course by the master at 10.25 p.m. was due to the third officer and look-out reporting a light in the direction of, and corresponding to that at East Cape; that the master was, under the circumstances, justified in assuming that the light seen by his officer was the East Cape light, though in fact it was not that light, but one of a bush fire showing at intervals through the fog and smoke which obscured the land; that the alteration of the course, combined with the effect of the set, resulted in the stranding of the vessel, but, under the circumstances and existing weather conditions, the Court was not prepared to say that the casualty was due or was contributed to by the wrongful act or default of the master, or any of his officers or crew. The certificates of the master and of the third officer would be returned.

The Court comprised Mr. W. G. Riddell, S.M. (president), and Captain J. J. Smith, late Superintendent of Mercantile Marine, and Captain W. J. Rogers, late of the Blackball Coal Company, assessors. Mr. J. Prendeville appeared on behalf of the Marine Department; Mr. G. G. Watson for the owners of the steamer; Sir John Findlay, K.C., for the master, Captain A. T. Fishwick; and Mr. E. K. Kirkcaldie for the first and third officers.



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