

LOSS OF THE "RADYR"

Board of Trade Inquiry Findings

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING HATCH COVERS

The findings of the Board of Trade Inquiry into the loss of the Cardiff steamer *Radyr*, which foundered off Hartland Point with the loss of all hands in December last, were delivered by the President, Mr. Hugh Jones, K.C., at the Law Courts, Cardiff, yesterday. The Court found that the cause of the loss of the vessel was the large influx of water into two or more holds through heavy seas breaking in the hatches during weather of exceptional violence, and considered that it was probable that the cargo in Nos. 1 and 4 holds shifted during the heavy weather, causing a list; that the breaking of the hatches was caused by the inferior quality and defective condition of some of the hatch covers, and that the comparatively large area of the hatchways exposed the whole of the hatches to exceptional strain.

The Court was of the opinion that the cargo in Nos. 1 and 4 holds was not properly and efficiently trimmed, although such loading was not sufficient to make her unseaworthy. They recommended that some provision should be made to secure that the coal in incompletely filled holds of self-trimmers should be properly levelled. They were of the opinion that provisions should be made in the specifications for timber used in the construction of hatch covers fitted in large and exposed hatchways. It was strongly urged that the question of the use of steel in the construction of such covers should be considered. The desirability of hatch covers, after being coated and painted, being subject to the approval of the Board of Trade Surveyor was also emphasised. Finally, more frequent periodical surveys of the hatch covers of self-trimmers were recommended.

The previous proceedings were reported in *Lloyd's List* of July 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, and Aug. 1 and 2.

The Court, after tracing the history of the vessel, said it was satisfied that for the last fatal voyage the cargo was stowed and trimmed in accordance with the existing customary practice at Cardiff, but there was a diversity of opinion as to what practice prevailed in the trimming of an incompletely filled hold. According to the evidence of Mr. J. T. Clatworthy, president of the National Coal Trimmers' Union, the tariff prescribed for self-trimmers required that the coal in the hatches only should be levelled, and that there was no obligation to level the coal in an incompletely filled hold. Mr. E. Street, the chief supervisor of the Employers' Clearing House at Cardiff, stated that it had always been the custom to take off the top of the cone in an incompletely filled hold, although no provision was made by the tariff. The Court thought that coal left in the form of a cone or coal not properly levelled in an incompletely filled hold might, through its tendency to shift in heavy weather, imperil the safety of the vessel. They therefore recommended that some provision should be made to secure that the coal in all incompletely filled holds of vessels of the self-trimmer type should be properly levelled.

SUPERVISION OF TRIMMING

Adequate provision was made for the supervision of the loading and trimming of the *Radyr* at Cardiff docks, but it appeared that the trimming of the cargo was not adequately supervised. The inspection of holds upon the completion of loading was most essential. The cargo shipped in Nos. 2 and 3 holds was properly trimmed, but there was a conflict of evidence as to the trimming of No. 4 hold. The Court did not consider that the whole of the coal in the hold was loaded in the centre in the shape of a cone, but it was of the opinion that about 264 tons was first loaded in the forward end of the hold against the bulkhead with the coal sloping towards the after end. In loading the hold the coal was so tipped as to cause a list to port, and the error was improperly corrected by the trimming of coal to the starboard side of No. 1 hold. The Court was of the opinion that the cargo in Nos. 1 and 4 holds was not properly and efficiently trimmed, while the loading of Nos. 1 and 4 holds would tend to cause a list in the event of the vessel meeting heavy weather. Yet the Court considered that such loading was not of itself sufficient to regard her as being in an unsafe or unseaworthy condition. It was, however, a source of danger, in that it was calculated to cause her hatches in heavy weather to be more exposed to the impact of the seas.

On the question of the hatch covers that had been recovered, 61 were undamaged, 21 damaged, and 9 broken. In the opinion of Mr. Steel, of the Board of Trade, 15 formed part of No. 1 hatch, 45 of No. 2 hatch, 23 of Nos. 3 and 4 hatches, and 8 were bunker hatches. Some of the covers were fractured, and the Court was satisfied that they had been stove in while they were in position on the hatches, and that the immediate cause of their being stove in was

the force of the heavy seas breaking in on the hatches. Lack of strength of the timber contributed to the fractures, and the Court considered that the parts of broken hatch covers recovered were from old hatch covers of inferior quality.

The loss of the vessel and all hands on board was due to the large influx of water into two or more of the holds owing to the force of heavy seas breaking in the hatches during weather of exceptional violence. In the absence of direct evidence, the Court could not express a definite opinion, but it was probable that the cargo in Nos. 1 and 4 holds shifted during the heavy weather and thus caused a list which rendered the vessel more vulnerable to the impact of the seas; further, that the breaking in of the hatches was caused by the inferior quality and defective condition of some of the hatch covers, and that in the heavy weather experienced the large area of hatchways in proportion to the area of the deck constituted a serious danger and exposed the whole of the hatches to exceptional strain. All the circumstances tended to show that the disaster to the *Radyr*, with the most regrettable loss of the lives of all those on board, was sudden and overwhelming.

The Court was of the opinion that definite provisions and stipulations should be made in the specifications for timber ordered for and used in the construction of hatch covers fitted in large and exposed hatchways in sea-going vessels, and recommended that where covers were made of wood they should be of high grade straight-grained timber, free from knots, shakes and sap. It was, however, strongly urged that the question of the use of steel in the construction of such covers should be considered. If such recommendations were adopted it did not appear to be necessary to take precautions in the selection of such timber used for the purpose of hatch covers, but it was necessary and desirable that all hatch covers should, after being made and after being coated and painted, be subject to the approval of a Board of Trade Surveyor. It was further recommended that there should be more frequent periodical surveys of the hatch covers of such vessels.