

1904.

NEW ZEALAND.

RIVER LIMITS AND EXTENDED RIVER LIMITS

(REPORT OF COMMISSIONERS ON).

Laid on the Table by Leave.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS appointed to inquire into the Limits which should be defined as Limits within which Restricted-limit Steamships and Ships propelled by Gas, Oil, Fluid, Electricity, or any Mechanical Power other than Steam may ply, and as to how such Limits should be divided into "River," "Extended River," and "Extreme" Limits.

To His Excellency the Earl of Ranfurly, Governor of the Colony of New Zealand.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY.

In accordance with the requirements of Your Excellency's commission, we have the honour to submit our report upon the matters referred to us.

Your Excellency's commission, dated the 15th March, 1904, was received by us on the 21st of the same month. We opened our sittings at Auckland on the 25th following, and closed them at the same port on the 5th April, 1904, having exhausted the evidence. We did not find it necessary to visit any other ports, nor did we visit the limits, as we are thoroughly acquainted with them. The evidence of witnesses was taken in public, and the Press was admitted. Due notice of the sittings of the Commission was given by advertisement in the leading local papers, and local paragraphs were inserted drawing attention to the sittings. The amount of evidence taken necessitated some delay in the transcription of the shorthand notes; time was also occupied in getting the evidence signed by the witnesses, the majority of whom were at sea; consequently in preparing our report we have had to rely in a great measure upon our own notes.

Having concluded our inquiries, we have the honour to report as follows:—

After reviewing the evidence we have come to the conclusion that no good or sufficient reason has been shown why the present limits should be altered; therefore, in our opinion and from our experience, we consider the limits—both river, extended river, and extreme river—should remain unchanged.

From the evidence, and from personal inspection, we find the class of vessels employed in the extended river limits are suitable for the trade, and fully fit to contend with the weather experienced therein. The masters are capable and experienced men, a number of them possessing foreign and home trade certificates. In no case have we found a master in charge of a vessel in the extended-river-limit trade who has had only river experience. This points to the fact that owners of vessels consider river-limit training not sufficient to fit a man to take charge of a vessel in the extended river limits.

There are numerous harbours of shelter or refuge in the extended river limits, consequently there is no necessity for a vessel to remain at sea during bad weather. The Auckland extended river limits are peculiar in this respect, and it is the practice of the vessels engaged in the trade to remain in harbour when the weather is bad, and to seek shelter when overtaken by bad weather outside.

In coming to the decision that no alteration of the limits is necessary or advisable, we have taken into consideration the class of men employed as masters in the trade. We would point out that the standard of qualifications required for a river-limit master are not of a sufficiently high grade for a man who has to take charge of a vessel in the extended river limits. We therefore recommend,—

- (a.) That the examination which a man is required to pass in order to qualify for a home-trade mate's certificate be the minimum standard of qualifications which a man should possess before being allowed to command a vessel in the extended river limits.
- (b.) He should have at least four years' service in the trade, one year of which should be served in sailing-vessels, and one year as second hand or mate.