

Investigation of the Fire on the s.s. Matatua.

An enquiry was held at St. John, N.B., concluding Apr. 4, into the origin of a fire aboard the s.s. Matatua, Mar. 12 and 13, while lying at her dock there, where by the master, Capt. Gilman, lost his life. Capt. L. A. Demers, Dominion Wreck Commissioner, presided, assisted by Capt. A. J. Mulcahy and D. Kenny, as nautical assessors. The vessel is owned by Shaw, Savill & Albion Co., London, Eng., and was loading miscellaneous cargo for Australia and New Zealand, including 3,000 to 4,000 drums of calcium carbide, which was stowed in every hold.

The first officer stated that an alarm of fire was conveyed to him at 12.10 a.m. on Mar. 12, and immediate instructions were given to combat it. The ship's hose was not used, as the water service pipe on deck was under repair, but the crew helped the crew of the Sin Mac, the tug and fireboat, which was fast alongside the Matatua, and hose was playing on the fire by the time the local brigade arrived. He caused the hatches to be battened down and directed the use of carbon dioxide into hold 3. Notices prohibiting smoking were exhibited at various points and were visible to all, and there were two watchmen, one at the gangway and the other the ship's watchman, who were instructed to perform the usual duties and also to see that no one smoked in the hold. He stated that though he was not familiar with local climatic conditions, precautions were taken to prevent the service pipe from freezing, but without avail, and it was being repaired for the second time. Regarding the explosions, he stated that a few minutes after the first one he spoke to the captain as to the dangers, and had hardly left the bridge when the second one took place, causing a general outburst of flame and eventually causing the captain's death.

D. Gallagher, an employe of the Marine Department, gave evidence on the effects and dangers of calcium carbide, and on precautions in handling it, and termed the gas generated as very penetrating and that it would explode of its own heat. A representative of the Canadian Carbide Co. also spoke as to the method of packing and handling carbide, and stated that he considered carbide was not an explosive.

After considering the evidence, and after having visited the vessel, the court criticized the second officer for not being on deck at 12 midnight, when his watch commenced, instead of being in his room, and also on the manner and matter of his evidence, but it was informed later that at the time he was not in his ordinary senses, but was in an abnormal condition, and had this been known at the outset, the taking of any evidence from him would have been deferred. The court failed to find that anyone had been smoking in hold 2, specially mentioned. Regarding the origin of the fire, the court found that there were several possibilities, but no certainty, and therefore declared that the origin was unknown and remains a mystery. In referring to the second explosion, the evidence showed that apparently the fire had been put out late on the first day, and the second explosion occurred early on the second day, enveloping the vessel in flame and cutting off the captain's quarters with remarkable suddenness. The opinion of the court as to the second outbreak is that the explosion was caused through the accumulation of acetylene in a restricted space, generated by the immersion of the carbide in

water, and that the igniting of the gas took the merest fraction of a second, as it cannot conceive that any fire remained from the first outbreak after the immersion of the hold. The court criticizes the lack of foresight in the stowing of such a cargo, quoted a British Board of Trade regulation respecting the carriage of carbide, and stated that in face of such a regulation it cannot for a moment condone the method adopted on the Matatua. The court was however unanimous in exonerating the officers of the vessel from any blame for the casualty, but advised a stricter supervision at all times, while cargoes are being taken in, and more especially during war times. It also recommended that if the service pipe be out of repair, means be immediately adopted to replace temporarily the defective service, as at no time should a vessel be left without proper fire equipment. In reiterating that the origin of the fire is unknown, the court stated that it may have been caused by spontaneous combustion, the dropping of a cigarette stub or the hot ashes of a pipe, either accidentally, carelessly or maliciously, but there are no signs visible, nor is there any evidence even to suspect the employment of chemicals or bombs. The death of the master was accidental and no blame was attached to anyone for the loss of life.

The Longshoremen's Agreement at Montreal.

The longshoremen attached to the port of Montreal have entered into an agreement with the shipowners trading to the port, for two years from Mar. 15, providing for an increase of 5c an hour day and night on general cargo, and 5c an hour increase to coal shovellers on general cargo vessels. The rates heretofore in force were 35c an hour for day and 40c an hour for night work on general cargo, and 40c an hour for coal shovellers day and night. All other conditions remain as heretofore. This is the first time the longshoremen at Montreal have had increases since 1908.

During the negotiations, the most friendly spirit existed between all parties, and it was through this good will that a speedy and satisfactory arrangement was concluded. The steamship lines which are parties to the agreement are:—Allan Line, Black Diamond Line, Cairn Line, Canadian Northern Steamships, Ltd., Canadian Pacific Ocean Services, Ltd., Crown Line, Cunard Line, Direct Line, Donaldson Line, Furness Line, Head Line, Leyland Line, Manchester Liners, Ltd., New Zealand Shipping Co., Ltd., South African Line, Thompson Line and White Star-Dominion Line.

Vessel Losses during the War.—Merchant vessel losses from the commencement of the war to Mar. 23, are reported as totalling 726 with an aggregate tonnage of 1,987,375. Of these, 627 vessels of 1,914,375 tons are steamships, and 99 vessels of 73,000 tons are sailing ships. The losses of the allied powers were 481 steamships of 1,621,000 tons, and 57 sailing vessels of 47,000 tons; while neutral nations lost 146 steamships of 293,375 tons, and 42 sailing vessels of 26,000 tons. The chief losses were naturally British, these comprising 379 steamships of 1,320,000 tons, and 31 sailing vessels of 19,000 tons. In addition to the foregoing, the allies lost 776 trawlers, and neutral powers 196. The British loss is under 4% in numbers and slightly over 6% in tonnage, of the total register.

Coast, Lake and River Steamship Officers for 1916.

The following appointments made by navigation companies engaged in Canadian navigation for their various steamships and tugs, have been reported to Canadian Railway and Marine World, in addition to those published in our last issue. The names in the first column are those of the vessels; those in the second column, of the captains, and those in the third column, of the chief engineers.

CANADIAN GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS, MONCTON, N. B.
Leonard O. Dubois O. T. Williams
Prince Edward Island J. J. Merchison R. L. Main
Scotia No. 1 R. L. Maguire W. J. Johnson
Scotia No. 2 R. Keating W. Anderson
CHARLOTTETOWN STEAM NAVIGATION CO. LTD.
CHARLOTTETOWN, P.E.I.

Empress A. Cameron J. A. Rowe
Northumberland A. W. McLeod C. Cumming
This company is discontinuing business, and has sold the s.s. Northumberland to the Dominion Government.

CHATHAM NAVIGATION CO. LTD., CHATHAM, ONT.
Ossifrage T. J. Stockwell G. Peel

DETROIT AND WALLACEBURG STEAMSHIP LINE,
DETROIT, MICH.

Olcott T. Moore L. Miller
DOMINION TRANSPORTATION CO., CHICAGO, ILL.
Caribou A. A. Batten Jas. Nicoll
Manitou N. J. McCoy C. Kenny

MIRAMICHI STEAM NAVIGATION CO. LTD.,
CHATHAM, N. B.

Alexandra Jas. Nowlan W. S. Stewart
Miramichi J. P. Bullick N. Smith
Sybella H. Copp A. McIntyre

MONTREAL TRANSPORTATION CO. LTD., MONTREAL

Advance J. V. Norris M. J. Sherman
Bartlett A. Lepine Jr. J. P. Lappin
D. G. Thomson G. Henderson
Emerson W. J. Murphy J. G. Lamoureux
Glenmont W. H. Norcott D. Cameron
H. F. Bronson L. Mallan

India J. Reoch F. H. Brian
Kinmount W. F. Young R. G. Gibson
M. P. Hall T. Lesprie H. Paus
Mary H. Desgroseillier

Rosemount L. G. Dixon M. Dickson
Simla C. E. Coons D. S. Symons
Stormount W. H. Blackler R. Downie
Windsor J. Doyle A. Dunn

MERCHANTS TRANSPORTATION CO. LTD., SYDNEY,
N. S.

Weymouth W. E. Leblanc P. Schrupp
NORTH SHORE STEAMSHIP CO. LTD., SYDNEY N.S.
Aspy D. McDonald S. O. White
PEACE RIVER NAVIGATION CO. LTD., EDMONTON,
ALTA.

Northland Call J. Willisroft A. Grant
PROGRESSIVE STEAMBOAT CO. LTD. VANCOUVER, B.C.
Harry S. J. R. Grauer G. Dennis
Maagen A. O. Clampitte O. Sherbruge
Progressive T. T. Edwards G. Dixon
Pronative A. Lewis O. Mathieson
Senator H. Grauer A. Toren

REID NEWFOUNDLAND CO.-ST. JOHN'S Nfld.

Argyle G. O'Reilly T. Moysk
Clyde J. Kne J. Pollock
Dundee D. Blandford H. Crawford
Ethie N. Day P. Burton
Glencoe A. Blandford F. C. Barnes
Home S. Harbin J. Cunningham
Kyle L. Stevenson J. MacFarlane
Meigle J. Goobie John MacFarlane
Sagona B. Taverner J. Buckingham

RICHMOND STEAMSHIP CO. LTD., SYDNEY, N.S.
Richmond W. H. Micheau R. G. Morrison

ROSS NAVIGATION CO. LTD., PAS. MAN.
Brisbin H. L. Weber B. M. Olde
Minasin H. H. Ross T. Paquette

JOHN WALTER, EDMONTON, ALTA.
City of Edmonton P. Christianson

WEST VANCOUVER FERRY CO. VANCOUVER, B.C.
Doncella J. Watson R. W. Pyne
Sonrisa D. Smith H. L. Thompson

Quebec Pilots and Apprentices.—A bill

has been introduced in the House of Commons, amending the Canada Shipping Act as regards pilots and pilot apprentices in the Quebec Pilotage District, and providing that the number of pilots for that district shall not exceed 125, and that when the apprenticeship period of a pilot has been interrupted by sickness or other legitimate cause, he may be allowed to serve an additional period equal to the time lost, and if found otherwise qualified and entitled to a license, he may be granted such license after he has completed a full service period of seven years including the additional period.