

If these same men who are proud to be known as seamen are to go backward instead of forward, to be known and looked upon as day labourers on a grain barge, or, a package freight boat, then the supervision of the Government, the signing on of crews on articles of agreement and an honourable discharge at the end of the voyage or season is not wanted. But who wants these conditions. No right-thinking man who has the welfare of this great Dominion at heart wants it, I am sure.

We don't want to go backward—we want to go forward.

We don't want to go back to the days of pimps, of wharf rats, boarding houses, blood money. But I am unafraid to say that once the jurisdiction of the Government is lifted or denied, the shipowners of a particular breed will be found who will rejoice in this backward movement.

Honourable gentlemen, I have no fish to fry other than the pride in my profession—the welfare of my staff and the welfare of every shipping master in the Dominion whom at this moment I represent.

I may say that I have had this last few days the opportunity of talking with a number of gentlemen representing the shipping owners and shipping interests of Montreal, and I can truthfully say there has not been raised a voice against this particular measure until this moment.

To sign an agreement before a shipping master under the Shipping Act compiled by this Government is beneficial to the seaman from a standpoint of protection, to the master from a point of discipline, to the owner from practically every standpoint. The majority of the men want it, the majority of the masters want it, and the majority of owners want it.

(1) If this duty is not carried out before an official what record have we for tracing a seaman.

(2) What is to prevent anyone from falsifying his records of service.

(3) What is to prevent a man with false records appearing before an examiner and obtaining a certificate of competency: He may be a butcher, baker, candlestick maker. If he is clever enough to pass an examination, but with no practical knowledge, he is a menace to navigation.

(4) The examination of masters and mates require that any man's service must be verified by the articles of agreement.—What if there are none, or if these are made up on the ship. Who has a record? Who knows who is on that ship?

(5) Case in point—A ship leaves Sault for Fort William—two or three join ship at Sault—ship is never heard of again.—Who knows who was on the ship?

(6) The shipowner will tell you he can verify the man's service by the pay roll. In the above case there is no pay roll. And if there is a pay roll and a man who, say, deserted his ship, who was insubordinate, drunken, can in a year or two years' time go to the owner of the ship and ask for a discharge because he wants to pass an examination. Has this shipowner a record of his character and ability? But he gets a good discharge all the same.

In my capacity of shipping master I have seen fine, clean looking young men being unable to get a ship because he could show no discharges, and his excuse was—the master was not compelled to give him one.

In my capacity of examiner I have seen numberless men turned down, because their service, character and ability could not be verified and the excuse—because they were neither signed on or discharged officially.