

## **MOTION FOR A ROYAL COMMISSION.**

*HC Deb 17 July 1866 vol 184 cc943-71*

*MR. HENLEY*

said, he thought that his hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool had no need to apologize for bringing the question before the House. He (Mr. Henley) had to apologize to the right hon. Gentleman (Sir Stafford Northcote) for taking precedence of him in the debate; but as he differed in some things from the hon. Member for Liverpool, it might be as well that the right hon. Gentleman should hear what he had to say before addressing the House on the subject. In his opinion the importance of the subject was not diminished, but ten thousand times increased by the remedy which the hon. Member for Liverpool had suggested, because it was clear that the hon. Member in his own mind relied on Government action instead of on that individual action on which they had hitherto relied. That course involved, in his opinion, a consequence of greater importance than the subject itself. Being old, he perhaps looked on Government interference with a greater jealousy than others did. He doubted very much whether Government interference would bring about the end which the hon. Member had in view. In the strongest manner the hon. Gentleman said that he did not want any bonus, yet the training of these youths would be a continual bonus. It was said that the cost of training a youth would be £20 a year, so that if only half the number of 10,000 were trained in these ships that would be £100,000 a year. He had to go a little farther back than the hon. Gentleman had done in his remarks. It was in 1833 or 1834 that Government interference first took place between masters and men in the merchant service. He asked any man who heard him how long they supposed they could have good carpenters, good shoemakers, good ploughmen, good jockeys, or good anything else which they used if they could not hire them without going to a Government office? He put that question boldly. Men had lived through the ten or twelve years of dissatisfaction and discontent and grumbling which this state of things had brought about, just as they had lived through a Liberal Administration. They could not tell how. They lived through because they could not help it. The system was a great convenience to ship owners, but what happened? The ship owner knew nothing of the men whom he got. He went to an office, and there he found them. It relieved him of a good deal of trouble. It had also got rid to a considerable extent, though not entirely, of that abominable set of men called "crimps." It had put a spoke in their wheel; but it was in evidence that some of the Liverpool people employed crimps to bring men out of the shipping office, because that was the only

way they could ascertain whether the persons whom they wished to hire were seamen or not. Whether that evidence was true he did not know. The main cause of the deterioration of their seamen, in his opinion, was the commencement of the system of short apprenticeships begun in 1823 and re-enacted in 1835. Two of the strongest motives in human nature were duty and interest. Each of those springs of human action worked in a different way; but if you got them to combine you were much more certain of the result than when you took them singly. How did that bear on the system of short apprenticeship? Any man who knew much of these matters would tell you that of the masters of ships some were not seamen, while some who were seamen had no sympathy with boys, and were unable to teach them. All of us had had experience of schoolmasters who had a good deal of teaching power but who taught nothing. Well, supposing that under the system of short apprenticeship the master of a ship got a boy of about the age of fourteen, what interest had he in teaching such a boy, when he knew that the lad would be out of his apprenticeship by the time he was sixteen or seventeen years of age? But if he was to have the lad till he was twenty-one, he would get three years of his time after he had become a useful seaman; and if he did not teach him of his own accord, the owners would not be worth their salt if they did not see that he did so. What had been the working of the short apprenticeship system? In 1836, the first year of the operation of the renewal of the Act, 7,223 boys were bound, of which number 3,648 were bound for a period not exceeding four years, and 3,575 for a period of over four years, or until they were of age; so that the number bound for the long period amounted to about 49 per cent of the whole. If they took the first five years, from 1836 to 1840, they would find that 43 per cent were bound for the longer period; but when they came to the last five years included in the Returns—the period ending in 1860—they would find that the number bound for the longer period had dwindled down to 32 per cent, and of 5,616 boys apprenticed in 1860, only 1,827 were bound for any longer period than four years. This showed how the system, like a social cancer, effected a deterioration in the supply of good men for the service. Seamen were skilled workmen of the highest character, and they could not become such without special training. He might be wrong, but he did not believe that seamen could be made in training ships any more than a person learning to swim could be taught upon dining tables. If the country was to have good seamen, they must be trained upon the sea. He would not trouble the House with a multitude of figures, for he believed it would not be disputed that our seamen had greatly deteriorated. Every inquiry during the last seven or eight years — not made for this purpose—had drawn out incidentally, and, therefore, more credibly, that the men were deteriorating. Both Admiral Denman and Admiral Elliot, who gave evidence before a Committee of which he was a Member, stated that the seamen were not what they used to be, and had become greatly deteriorated. But there was another test. Nothing could better prove the quality of masters and men than their success in sailing their ships. But on going into the Returns which had been laid before the House—it was not a pleasant matter—he found that in the year 1852 in every 209 voyages one vessel came to grief either by collision, wreck, or stranding. The last

Return appeared in the year 1862. He had many times sought later Returns from his right hon. Friend opposite (Mr. Milner Gibson), but had never been able to get them. In 1862, one vessel in every 138 voyages came to grief which showed a gradual and steady scale of increasing disaster. He held that the opinions of gentlemen who had examined these matters were of great value; but when they were corroborated by such facts as these he could have no doubt on the subject. Great improvements had been made in shipbuilding, in cables, and other matters connected with vessels, all tending to diminish danger rather than increase it, and yet there was the discouraging result he had stated. It was the same with coaches as with ships. If you had a coachman who turned you over you would say he was not up to his work. And though he might say it was a bad shy, you would be inclined to think he was a bad driver; but if in addition to the driver being bad the men under him were bad, it would be much worse. Then the opportunities of teaching seamen were much less. The system of employing gangs of riggers was detrimental to the interests of the boys; and the employment of steam tugs prevented their being taught an important part of the work of a sailor. When getting in and out of port an opportunity for teaching the boys many things connected with their profession was formerly afforded which could not now be obtained in a voyage to India and back. But this was the natural course of trade, and they must take it for better for worse. There was another thing to which he wished to advert. When he was at the Board of Trade some years back, he heard expressions fall from hon. Gentlemen similar to those spoken by the hon. Member for Liverpool to-night. One Gentleman told him that ship owners did not like the trouble of teaching boys; but if the masters would not undertake the trouble of teaching there would be no good servants. No Government school could, in his opinion, supply the place of the masters in teaching the boys. The whole thing seemed to be arranged to enable persons to place capital in shipping without any knowledge of its management. The Government found the masters and mates, and the masters provided the men, and so there was a most distinct line drawn between the employers and the employed. This was not the case twenty-five years ago, and tended to produce the deterioration of the men. It was quite clear from what his hon. Friend had stated that ship owners did not now care to take boys into their service, though there was nothing to hinder them from taking boys as aforetime, and binding them for seven years. Too much trouble was involved in this training, and much of the work they formerly did was now executed by gangs of riggers. But what was the inducement to the friends of boys to send them to sea. Having given some consideration to the subject, he was compelled to say that no honest man aware of the whole circumstances of the case would send a boy to sea. He was sorry to make this statement, but he did so with the firm belief that it was true. What was a boy's life at sea? Why, compared with the ordinary life of a boy on land from fourteen to nineteen years of age, it was a thousand times as hard. Then, when he became a man, as a seaman his earnings were low in comparison with those of the skilled artisan on land. The seaman must undergo great hardship, acquire a certain amount of knowledge and skill, and pass his life amid such danger and toil as was

unknown to the bricklayer, carpenter, or blacksmith, for wages much lower than theirs. Then, again, owing to the increasing size of the ships, and the higher scale of education required from masters and mates, the difficulty of seamen being able to attain the position of a master or mate was becoming greater every day. Everybody would admit this statement to be true. He did not say that the masters and mates should not possess this scientific knowledge; but this circumstance put seamanship at a discount. He did not wish to disparage the examinations, but he believed that a man could pass a good examination and be no better a seaman than himself. In fact, they could not test, in this way, the backbone of seamanship. During inquiries into the wrecks which occurred from time to time it was found, not that scientific knowledge was at fault, but that a large portion of them were owing to the neglect of ordinary duties. And what was the condition of a seaman at the age of forty or fifty? Thirty years ago the mastership was not shut against the man who entered before the mast, but this is now generally the case owing to the increased size of merchant ships. Thus the poor sailor had not half the chances of advancement which were formerly open to him. And after fifty years of age a seaman could not work. In fact, he was worked out; formerly he went on shore and turned rigger, but now the rigger's son succeeded to his father's business, and there was no room in the trade for the old sailor. One plan for his employment formerly was that at every port except London the shore boats were manned by old seamen, but the steamers had closed that trade against them. Again, the wages of seamen, as compared with mechanics, were very low. The wages for the foreign trade were £3 10s. per month, and it might be taken that he would be eleven months at sea and one on shore. And in this he was at a disadvantage, for the skilled mechanic had fifty-two Sundays to himself, and poor Jack when at sea must work Sunday and week day. In his eleven months he would earn £38 10s., and if to this was added the price of his food—£17 or £18—he would draw as wages less than the mechanic. It followed that the condition of the men must be improved, and that it was not by training ships that men were to be got, but by giving these men such wages and prospects for their old age as would induce them to learn their business. In his opinion, the desired result could be secured better without connection with the Government than with it. The remedy was to be found in improving the relationship between master and man. Unless the throat of the present system was cut, the French system would grow up among us, and we should have as bad seamen as that system now produced. This country had already had some experience in that matter. Towards the close of the last and the commencement of the present century our seamen fought and conquered, and swept the seas under Rodney, and Howe, and Parker and Duncan, and Jervis, and Nelson, with odds as great against them as any to which their successors of the present day would be exposed. And how were those men trained? They were not raised in school-ships, nor made perfect by a few summers' trainings, and then as a gallant admiral had said before the Committee he had spoken of, became disgusted when taken out for a winter's cruise. Those brave men had been from early childhood put face to face with difficulty, danger, and death, so that all the soft ones among them—and there

were soft and hard ones in every class — got squeezed out. They found the life of a seaman a hard one; they did not like it, and they returned ashore; and those who remained were as hard as nails. Those latter men learnt that great lesson which nothing but stern experience teaches—that the only way to escape death was boldly to face every danger, and with God's help, to grapple with and overcome every difficulty. That was the way those men were trained. History had recorded what they had done; he would be very glad if those who were raised in a different school would equal them; he felt perfectly sure they would not surpass them. Before he sat down he wished to ask his hon. Friend one question. He wished to know whether his hon. Friend believed that the general class of ship owners, when they wanted a crew, would take them from those training ships, where they never learned what a day's work was, and had never met with danger or difficulty? He doubted it; masters who wanted boys to do their work well would, he believed, go to some other place for them than training schools. He might be wrong in his conclusions, but he believed that legislation upon the subject would only aggravate the mischief by separating master and man. He hoped his right hon. Friend would assent to the proposition for the inquiry. The subject was one of the utmost importance, because the safety of this country depended upon its navy. They had heard the other night from the late Chancellor of the Exchequer a sad prophecy, and one which he (Mr. Henley) should never forget. The right hon. Gentleman told them that, in his opinion, this country could not hope to maintain the mastery of the sea as she had done during the great French war. He (Mr. Henley) thought that a faint-hearted declaration, and was quite sure that if England strove for her old mastery with the foregone conclusion that she would not maintain it, the battle would be half lost before it was begun. He believed that whether in steamers or in sailing ships, when the day of trial came, victory would accompany those men who were the best trained, and who afforded the best materials for training. He hoped they should be enabled to discover by means of the proposed inquiry the most effective mode of securing that training and those materials; and perhaps one of its results would be to lead the employers of labour in that case to put their shoulders to the wheel, to bring up for themselves the best class of seamen, and to hold out, by means of good wages, an inducement to that class to enter their service.

*SIR STAFFORD NORTHCOTE*

Sir, I have listened, in common, I am sure, with every Member of the House, with great interest to the speech of my right hon. Friend who has just resumed his seat, as well as to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, who called our attention to the subject in a manner well worthy of its importance, and of the great constituency which he represents. My right hon. Friend and my hon. Friends who brought forward and seconded the Motion, agreed on this point, that there is evidence before us to show that there has been of late years a falling off to some extent in the numbers and in the efficiency of our seamen. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool moved for a Commission to inquire into the subject; and his

Motion naturally divides itself into two distinct parts. In the first place, he wishes for an inquiry into the facts of the case; and secondly, if those facts should be found to be such as he believes them to be, he wishes for an inquiry into the causes of the alleged deficiency, and of the best mode of remedying the evil. Now, if there was any doubt about the facts, and if our attention were at present for the first time called to their existence, it is impossible to deny that it would be the duty of Her Majesty's Government to appoint a Commission, or to take such other steps as they might think desirable for the purpose of inquiring into allegations of so serious a character. But those Members who have already addressed the House appealed not to facts within their personal knowledge but to information which is public property, to documents which have for some time been lying upon the table of the House; and I, for one, am not at all prepared, on the part of the Government, to dispute the accuracy of the statements which they have made with regard to the present condition of the mercantile marine of this country. I do not, therefore, think, it is at all necessary to appoint a Royal Commission for the purpose of inquiring into the facts of this case. My hon. Friend says that in the mercantile marine our seamen are falling off in numbers and in efficiency. Now, it is perfectly clear that the supply of British seamen has, in point of numbers—I will not say fallen off absolutely, but fallen off relatively to the amount of tonnage employed, within the last twenty years, and still more within the last seven or eight years; and, as a matter of course, as there has been a falling off in the number of men there must also be to some extent a falling off in their quality, because, as seamen must be had to meet the great increase of trade and tonnage, employers are of necessity compelled to draw upon an inferior stratum for their supply. But, at the same time, I am bound to say from all the information we have received, that although that may be the case to a certain extent, the mercantile marine of this country does not deserve the sweeping condemnation which is sometimes passed upon it. There is among our merchant seamen a large body of thoroughly efficient men, and I believe you would find among them many who are fully equal to those engaged in our merchant service at any former period. In proof of this I would appeal to my hon. and gallant Friend near me (Sir John Hay) and to those who have administered the naval affairs of this country. What is the quality of the merchant seamen who form that valuable force, the Naval Reserve. We know upon the highest authority, that we have now in our Naval Reserve 17,000 men of the best possible character, and of the most complete efficiency, and the records of the Board of Trade also show those men displaying a prudence and a self-control such as the members of their class never before exhibited. Sailors used to be proverbially reckless and improvident, but they now avail themselves largely of the facilities which our new system of savings banks and of Post Office Orders affords them for saving money for themselves in their old age or sickness, or for transmitting it to their families. I see that the number of money orders issued to our seamen has increased from 12,000 in the year 1856 to upwards of 45,000 in the year 1865, while during the same period the amount remitted by them has increased from less than £140,000 to more than £260,000. The returns relating to

their savings banks are equally satisfactory. So much for their prudence. As regards their intelligence I may refer to what we have just heard. The paper brought before the House by the hon. Member for Liverpool, and the temperate, intelligent manner in which the sailors there urge their grievances, and explain what they believe to be the causes of their distress, and the remedies they suggest, show that they are a body of men to whose opinions very considerable weight should be attached. I mention these facts in order that it may be understood that, while we admit the existence to a certain extent of a deterioration in our seamen, we are also persuaded that we have a number of men who have given proofs that they possess every quality which it is possible to desire. I believe, too, with my right hon. Friend (Mr. Henley) that a large portion of our present difficulty in this case is owing to causes entirely beyond the control of legislation. It must be remembered that this country has, of late years, increased in wealth and in general commercial activity in a far greater ratio than in mere population; and the result is, that in every branch of business efficient men have become more and more in demand. This has been felt in our supply of clergymen and in every other profession, and the same cause has naturally produced the same effect in our mercantile marine. There are greater attractions than there used to be for those who might otherwise have thrown themselves into a particular branch of industry. The same result affects various occupations and professions. For instance, the competition of other employments draws away those who would otherwise become clergymen. It is precisely the same with regard to seamen. So many lucrative employments are now open to men who formerly were in the habit of going to sea, that the merchant service is no longer so attractive as it formerly was. That service, as my right hon. Friend said, requires men to pass a life not only of hardship but of danger, and at present affords a very moderate amount of remuneration. The true remedy, my right hon. Friend seems to say, is in the hands of the ship owners themselves, who might get better men by paying better wages. No doubt that is the true and simple remedy. But the shipowner is bound to look after his own interest; and if he can get men who would answer his purpose at a low rate, we have no right to require him to employ a better class at an increased cost to himself. It so happens that among foreigners and in other directions he is able to find men who, though not of the highest class, are efficient enough to serve his turn. That being so, it is idle to expect that the ship owner will give higher wages than those for which he can get the services of such men. Therefore, although I agree with my right hon. Friend that the true remedy is to be found in the exertions of the ship owners, yet I think we must pay attention, if we consider it an important object to supply our merchant navy with a proportion of good British seamen, to any measures which can be devised to render it easier for the ship owners to get seamen of this character. My right hon. Friend seems to have one or two remedies of his own to which he points. In the first place, he would get rid of some of those provisions which have been introduced for the protection of the sailor. and which he says are in the nature of an interference between master and man. If I understand him rightly he objects to, or at all events does not like, the system of

shipping offices and the whole of the machinery provided for securing to the seaman the power of making proper bargains with his employers. Upon that point I feel very little inclined to agree with him, because I do not understand, if I rightly conceive the spirit of those provisions to which he refers, that there is anything in them in the nature of such an interference between master and man as would be equivalent to saying to the master, "You are not to get your men in the open market where you please, but you must come to us to procure them for you." I understand the spirit of those provisions to be rather of this nature, that, inasmuch as the contract to be made between master and man is one in which it is often found that the seaman is overreached and defrauded, it was therefore desirable to institute tribunals—for these shipping offices are in the nature of tribunals—which should see that the seaman had fair play. Of course, if this were not the case, and these offices were likely in any way to interfere with a fair bargain in the open market, and to affect the power of the master to get his seamen where he might find them best, I should say by all means let us eradicate the faults of that system. With regard, however, to giving the seaman protection, and not allowing him to be overreached and ill-treated through the agency of men commonly known as "crimps," I think there is no part of mercantile marine legislation to which we can look back with greater satisfaction than to the institution of these shipping offices, and I, for one, should be sorry to see anything done to destroy that humane and perfectly legitimate and reasonable provision. Then my right hon. Friend points to another matter in which I think he will find himself in some difficulty. He complains of the present apprenticeship system, but if you are to make laws to compel men to take apprentices, and to make a restriction as to the length of time during which they are to be bound, you will certainly interfere very materially with the principles of open supply and demand. The difficulties in the way are very considerable. The immense number of steam ships which we have now is very unfavourable to the apprenticeship system, because as a rule they train no apprentices, while on the other hand they require the services of trained sailors. There is always a demand for sailors at good wages, but there is not a corresponding supply, and you can hardly expect the master of a sailing vessel to undertake all the labour of training apprentices, when, as soon as he has trained them properly, the steamship owners go to them and, by the offer of a higher rate of wages, induce them to leave the service in which they have been trained and carry them off to a service which trains no apprentices. As a matter of fact, the system of compulsory apprenticeships to which allusion has been made was even under the old Navigation Laws open to great fraud, and was continually breaking down. The evidence of Mr. Lamport, of Liverpool, given before a Select Committee of this House in 1860, describes the way in which the apprenticeship system was entirely evaded under the old Navigation Laws, and now, with our enormous increase of seamen, and with the facilities which are given for obtaining foreign seamen, looking also to the demand for sailors in foreign services, it would be almost impossible to prevent the desertion of apprentices as soon as they became valuable, and almost impossible to prevent those frauds by which the

apprenticeship system was made to look well, even while it was not accomplishing the objects which it had in view. The position which we are in is this—we are asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool to issue a Royal Commission to inquire into the condition of the mercantile marine, with regard to which we say that we are able to ascertain by inquiries, which the Government will feel it their duty to institute, all that a Royal Commission could learn. We are also asked to inquire into the causes of the existing state of affairs, and to suggest the remedies for them. I think the House will agree with me that the appointment of a Royal Commission for this purpose is a step that is by no means free from objection, because, in the first place, though a Royal Commission might be excellent for the purpose of collecting information, it by no means follows that it is the best body for suggesting remedies, because it is not responsible for the legislation which would be required to give effect to its own recommendations. A Royal Commission consists of a certain number of gentlemen cognizant of the subject-matter to be inquired into, but with no knowledge usually of the feelings and temper of Parliament, and fettered by no consideration of expense. They make inquiries, which are very valuable no doubt, occupying a considerable length of time, and they then present a Report, which in all probability contains recommendations which are more or less at variance with the feelings of Parliament. The Government of the day looks at the Report, and finds the measures proposed are measures which Parliament would probably object to pass, and they may say, "We have done enough in getting the matter investigated. There is the Report, and no doubt something must be done at some future time." But there is no legislation upon it, and in that way the matter may be allowed to go to sleep. It would be more satisfactory if inquiries of this kind into the causes of certain evils and the remedies for them were to be conducted by the responsible Government of the country, because the Government would then not only inquire into the remedies which might be necessary, but would also at the same time propose their adoption. It is easy to propose remedies in the Report of a Royal Commission, in a form looking very well, but when you come to put those recommendations into the form of a Bill to be brought before Parliament, it is found that there are immense difficulties in the way of their adoption. On the other hand, general Reports do comparatively little good. The inquiries of a Government, however, must necessarily lead to the suggestion of remedies in a form proposed to be submitted in a measure. The Government will examine them with care and minuteness, and will then put them before Parliament in such a form as they think best calculated to secure attention and a favourable reception at the hands of the House. I think that is by far the best course of proceeding, and that it is much more likely to lead to beneficial results than the mere Report of a Royal Commission. I say this not merely from a consideration of general principles, but in consequence of what we have known of a Royal Commission on this subject before. There was a Royal Commission appointed by the last Government of Lord Derby, at the instigation of my right hon. Friend the First Lord of the Admiralty, and upon which my right hon. Friend the Member for the city of Oxford, the late Secretary for the Colonies

(Mr. Cardwell), served and took a very active part. That Commission was appointed to inquire into the whole subject of the manning of the navy, and it made some most valuable suggestions, some of which, relating to the Naval Reserve, have been adopted. But one of the recommendations of the Commission, which appeared to be extremely good, has not yet been carried into effect, and that was the suggestion to which my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool has referred with regard to the establishment of training ships. It appears to me, without pledging the Government to the adoption of any particular course, that it is our first duty to take up that recommendation of the Commission of 1859 and to see whether anything can be done in order to give effect to it. It may appear, should we come to put that recommendation into the form of a Bill, that there are difficulties in the way which we do not now perceive, but I think it will be far better to attempt to deal with that first, rather than to send the whole subject to be considered by a Royal Commission, the possible result of which might be suggestions made without being carried into effect, as has been the case with the recommendation of the Commission of 1859. I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend that if you undertake out of the Exchequer of the country to provide trained sailors for the mercantile service you are in effect giving them a bonus; and it is a very doubtful question whether you ought to give a bonus of that kind, and if so, what amount of bonus you ought to give out of the public funds to any particular trade. As a general principle, my right hon. Friend is right when he says you do not train carpenters and cotton spinners; but, with regard to seamen, I think other considerations may apply, and it may be right that the National Treasury should be asked to bear some portion of the expense. Certainly, however, the National Treasury could not be called upon to bear the whole of the expense, because the ship owners will benefit most by the undertaking; and it would be only reasonable and fair to call upon them for some contribution towards the expense incurred. I merely throw out these suggestions, however, as considerations which the Government might have to weigh. I cannot assent to the very severe strictures which my right hon. Friend passed upon training ships, for I believe that if you adopt them they will be the means of effecting considerable benefit. Of course, if you could get a sufficient number of men who had served under Rodney and Nelson, they, having gone through the rough and effectual training of actual service, would, no doubt, be superior to an equal number of those trained on board the training ships; but, as you have no compulsory apprenticeship, and as boys must be trained to the service, I believe the training ships are very valuable, and that so far as experience goes they have answered very well. They provide a set of men, at all events, equal if not superior to the set provided in the open market. The subject, therefore, is one not to be set aside slightly [sic], by references to learning to swim on a dining-room table; and I feel sure the training ships may be made to render most valuable assistance in providing us with sailors. All that I can promise on the subject is, that Her Majesty's Government will give it their most careful consideration; and I think I should be wrong if I gave a more definite promise, considering the short time I have had in which to take the matter into

consideration. It may be necessary that we should enter upon the consideration of some other points. Nothing can be more important than that the comfort and the proper treatment of the seamen should in every possible way be provided for, but it would be undesirable to take out of the hands of the men the duty of looking out for themselves. All we ought to do is to give them the means of making their own bargain completely and fairly for themselves—to put them on a fair and equal footing with the ship owners, and then let them make their own bargains, and to adopt means to remove unfair and inconvenient restrictions. We thank the hon Member for Liverpool for bringing this matter forward. I have no doubt this discussion will do a great deal of good, and that the tone and temper which have been exhibited will show that there is every disposition on the part of Government to do what they can on the subject. I hope the hon. Member for Liverpool will be content with having brought the matter forward, and with the pledge I am willing to give him that we will take it into our most careful consideration. If we find it necessary in the course of our inquiries to issue a Royal Commission, of course we shall do so, and with that assurance I hope the hon. Member will not press his Motion, because I feel it would be inconvenient to tie the hands of the Government with any address to the Crown.

MR. GRAVES

said, he wished to explain that he had no desire to impose the whole of the expense with reference to the establishment of training ships upon the country. The ship owners ought to bear their share, and they were perfectly willing to do so. He did not expect to receive such a satisfactory assurance as had been given by the right hon. Baronet that the matter would be taken up. He considered that the mode of inquiry which the right hon. Gentleman had suggested was better and more valuable than his own, and he therefore asked permission to withdraw the Motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.