

(No. 7183.)

“ OTTAWA ” (S.S.)

AND

“ TROLD ” (S.S.).

In the matter of a formal investigation into the causes which led to a collision between the Dominion Line steamship “ OTTAWA ” and the Norwegian steamship “ TROLD ” on Sunday the 10th of May, 1908, whereby a loss of life occurred, and also serious injury to members of the crew of the “ OTTAWA,” held pursuant to the requirements of Part 10, Chapter 113, Revised Statutes of Canada, in the Admiralty Court Room, Quebec, P.Q., before Commander O. G. V. SPAIN, Wreck Commissioner for Canada, assisted by Captains CHARLES KOENIG and JAMES BAINE, Master Mariners, Assessors.

The Court having very carefully enquired into all the circumstances attending the above-mentioned shipping casualty, and after reviewing the evidence of the officers and crews of both steamships, finds as follows :—

The steamship “ Ottawa ” appears to have taken her departure from Fame Point and steered her course so as to pass through Cabot Straits, as was customary, this course was maintained and at no time altered, bright look-outs being kept; the weather was clear till 8.55 p.m. when it became hazy; the master of the “ Ottawa ” was at once promptly called, the engine-room telegraph being put to standby; shortly after this, about 9.10 p.m. approximately, the weather became thick and foggy, the engines were slowed, the look-outs were doubled, and every possible precaution taken to avoid danger of collision, thus complying with Article 16 of the International Rules of the Road.

Hearing a sound signal, “ one long blast,” one or two points on the port bow, the engines of the “ Ottawa ” were stopped and reversed to stop the way of the vessel; at no time was the control of the “ Ottawa ” lost, she was kept directly on her course, blowing one long blast at intervals. Approximately at 9.30 p.m. the first sound signal from the s.s. “ Troid ” was heard, “ one long blast ”; shortly after this the collision took place.

The Court viewed the damage done to both vessels after the disaster, and found that the stem and bow plating of the “ Ottawa ” were intact and without a mark, abaft this the plating and frames are torn away and curled inboard. Therefore, the Court deduces that the angle at the point of contact was small, the vessels clearing each other by backing.

Had the “ Ottawa ” ported without seeing and knowing the position of the other vessel, she would inevitably have been struck amidships in the most vulnerable point, and as she was carrying passengers, probably with very large loss of life.

The Court considers that the master and officers of the “ Ottawa ” acted judiciously and did all they could for the safe navigation of the vessel.

The steamship “ Troid ” was bound from Sydney to Montreal with a cargo of coal. It appears from the evidence that this vessel had been navigating in foggy and thick weather at full speed for some considerable time before the disaster occurred; it also appears that the “ Troid ” was not under control for some seven minutes, this the Court views with dismay, as no seaworthy vessel should be uncontrollable for this period of time unless her engines or

steering gear are broken down; she was not kept on her course as proper seamanship would dictate, until the position of the other vessel was ascertained, but from the evidence, was allowed to fall off her course. The “ Troid,” in the opinion of the Court, was not properly manned, the chief engineer, who was on watch at the time of the collision, was alone in the engine room, and it is impossible for one man, without assistance, to attend to the many and various duties in the engine room of a large vessel when she is under way.

There is no doubt that when those on board the “ Ottawa ” heard the first long blast from the “ Troid,” she was on the “ Ottawa’s ” port side, and had the officers of the “ Troid ” maintained control of their vessel and kept her on her course at a reasonable speed, the collision in all probability would not have occurred. The Court therefore considers the master and officers of the s.s. “ Troid ” to blame for the collision.

(Signed) O. G. V. SPAIN,
Wreck Commissioner.

I concur.

(Signed) JAMES BAINE,
Assessor.

Ottawa, July 31st, 1908.

CAPTAIN KOENIG’S OPINION.

Memo. for Commander O. G. V. Spain, Commissioner of Wrecks.

INVESTIGATION into the collision between the Norwegian steamer “ TROLD ” and the British steamer “ OTTAWA,” in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, at about 9.23 p.m. on the evening of the 10th of May, 1908.

The “ Troid ” was on her way from Sydney to Montreal. It was proved that she was steering badly, and when her engines were stopped she did not steer unless she went through the water from 5 to 6 knots an hour. I find that the officer in charge of the “ Troid ” before and at the time of the collision, did not comply with the Article No. 16 of the International Rules of the Road, which reads as follows :—

“ Speed of ships to be moderated in fog.”

“ Speed restricted in fog.—Art. 16. Every vessel shall, in a fog, mist, falling snow, or heavy rain storms, go at a moderate speed, having careful regard to the existing circumstances and condition.

“ A steam vessel to stop if another vessel signalling forward of her beam.—A steam vessel hearing apparently forward of her beam, the fog signal of a vessel the position of which is not ascertained, shall so far as the circumstances of the case admit, stop her engines, and then navigate with caution until danger of collision is over.”

Under such circumstances, when a ship steers badly, it is the duty of the officer in charge to go slowly, so as to keep his own vessel under control, so she can steer. Some time before the collision, it was proven that the “ Troid ” was uncontrollable because she would not steer; her helm was hard apart and she was canting to port. The officer in charge should have kept headway on his vessel, so as to throw her head to starboard, instead of letting her cant to port and losing control of her; according to the evidence given, therefore, the officer in charge failed to comply with the Art. 16 above-mentioned, in not having navigated his ship with caution until danger of collision was over. It was also proved that the whistle of one long blast of the “ Ottawa ” was heard right ahead two or three times and once on the starboard bow; the latter

sound was heard on the starboard bow because she had canted to port. According to the long blasts with intervals, the officer in charge should have complied with Article 18, to avoid collision, which Article reads as follows :—

"Steam vessels meeting.—Art. 18. When two steam vessels are meeting end on or nearly end on, so as to involve risk of collision, each shall alter her course to starboard, so that each may pass on the port side of the other."

The hearing of the whistle of the "Ottawa" on the starboard bow of the "Troid" has proved that the "Troid" had canted and was canting to west or port, as none of the witnesses from the "Ottawa" said that the whistle of the "Troid" was heard from the starboard bow of the "Ottawa"; if the officer in charge of the "Troid" had complied with Article 16, above-mentioned, keeping control of his ship, so as to navigate with caution, and also with Article 18, as to the whistle which was heard from right ahead, he would have kept the helm hard aport and the engine slow ahead, and he would thus have passed clear of the "Ottawa." In my opinion the "Troid" was not properly manned. It was proved by the chief engineer of the "Troid," who was on watch at the time of the collision, that he was alone in the engine room, to attend to the engine telegraph bell, greasing of the engine, looking after the pumps and the firemen, writing the movements of the engine on the black-board; in my opinion it is impossible for one man, without assistance, under such circumstances, to properly obey the orders given to him from the bridge through the telegraph bells, especially in narrow water.

The s.s. "Ottawa" on the way from Montreal to Liverpool loaded with general cargo. I am glad to say that she was well equipped and well manned, with good discipline on board. According to the evidence given by the captain, the officer in charge of the bridge and two look-out men, they heard a prolonged blast three times, with an interval of 30 seconds to one minute between each blast, on the port bow of their own ship. It was also proved that those long blasts were answered by the "Ottawa" by long blasts. The captain knowing that the blasts came from a steamer which was on the port bow, and also having answered the same by long blasts from the "Ottawa," he did not comply with Article 18 to avoid collision as above-mentioned. His ship was steering well, had a good steering-way on her; to avoid collision he should have altered his course to starboard, where

she had ample room to do so, so that each ship would have passed on the port side of the other.

My opinion of the collision, after all the evidence given by the witnesses is taken into consideration, is that both ships are to blame, according to the Articles of the International Rules of the Road as above-mentioned.

(Signed) CHS. KOENIG,
Master C.G.S. "Druid,"
Nautical Assessor.

Quebec, June 2nd, 1908.

The judgment of the Court in this case is not agreed with by one of the Assessors, Captain Charles Koenig; the other Assessor, Captain James Baine, agrees with the Court. I shall therefore read the opinion of the Court and also the opinion of the dissenting Assessor.

Articles 18 and 28 of the International Rules of the Road, quoted by Captain Charles Koenig, in the opinion of the Court have nothing to do with this particular case, as they only apply when vessels are in sight of each other. This was practically proven in a collision which occurred some years ago between the steamships "Vancouver" and "Lake Ontario," and the Court judged the "Vancouver" to blame for having ported her helm in response to a supposed steering signal when approaching vessel or lights could not be seen.

In the opinion of the Court the steamship "Ottawa" would not have been justified in changing her course until she had ascertained the position of the other vessel.

The Court is of the opinion that the "Ottawa" complied with Article 16, which is the only Article pertinent to the case in question.

(Signed) O. G. V. SPAIN,
Wreck Commissioner.

Quebec, August 4th, 1908.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the 11th day of September, 1908.)