

The Waldorf-Astoria Hotel that now stands in Midtown Manhattan, a towering art deco masterpiece finished in 1931, is not the original Waldorf-Astoria. The original Waldorf-Astoria was an even grander, Gilded Age masterpiece that was, unfortunately, destroyed to make way for the construction of the Empire State Building in 1929. It was also, in part, a product of spite.

The Astor family were, from the 18th century until the 20th, one of the wealthiest and most prominent families in American society. The first John Jacob Astor, who emigrated to America in the 18th century, is frequently cited as one of the wealthiest people in history and the American Fur Company he founded has the rather unbecoming distinction of being the first American business monopoly. With all of that money (and the prestige and celebrity that go along with it), it's little wonder that there was no shortage of petty rivalries amid the Astor clan. Pettiest of all was the feud between Caroline Webster Schermerhorn Astor and her nephew, William Waldorf Astor.

After the death of her father-in-law, William Backhouse Astor, Sr., in 1875, Caroline began styling herself as simply "Mrs. Astor". William Waldorf Astor felt that *his* wife should get to be The Mrs. Astor, as his father was Caroline's husband's older brother and therefore W.W. was the head of a more senior branch of the Astor family. I told you – this feud was petty.

The Mrs. Astor Debate got so heated that in 1893, W.W. Astor demolished a set of brownstones that he owned next door to Caroline Astor's residence and built a hotel in their place, just to piss her off. The presence of Fifth Avenue's Waldorf Hotel, as it was called, was too much for Caroline, who described it as "a glorified tavern next door", and she eventually moved uptown. In 1897, her son, John Jacob Astor IV, opened a hotel on the site of Caroline's former residence, called The Astoria Hotel.

By the turn of the 20th century, these two sibling hotels would merge to become the Waldorf-Astoria (known colloquially as "The Hyphen") an icon of New York society. It became known for its extravagant charity balls, and its restaurant (the birthplace of the Waldorf salad) regularly drew business magnates and philanthropists like J.P. Morgan and Andrew Carnegie.

But, beginning on April 19th, 1912, the Waldorf-Astoria's elegantly designed Myrtle Room would host a much more somber affair: the United States Senate Inquiry into the sinking of the *RMS Titanic*, a disaster which claimed the lives of more than 1500 souls, including that of the Waldorf-Astoria's own J. J. Astor.

My name is Amanda Hootman and this is "After *Titanic*".

There were two official inquiries into the sinking of the *RMS Titanic*. The United States Inquiry conducted by a subcommittee of the Commerce Committee of the United States Senate from April 19th to May 25th, 1912, and the British Wreck Commissioners Inquiry conducted on behalf of the British Board of Trade from May 2nd to July 3rd, 1912. The two inquiries resulted in around 3000 pages of combined testimony given by nearly two hundred people. And, yet, very few pieces of actual legislation were passed as a result of their findings. Why?

Allow me, a podcaster with no meaningful legal, academic, or naval experience, to explain it to you.

The United States Inquiry was headed by Senator William Alden Smith. Senator Smith was a native Michigander, hailing from Dowagiac, but his family moved to Grand Rapids when little William was around 12. It was also around the age of 12 or 13 that his father, George Smith, would develop lung disease, requiring that William and his brother, George Jr., go to work to support their family. The young Smith brothers worked as newsboys, shoe shiners, and worked a number of small menial positions around Grand Rapids. Eventually, William would start a popcorn business, "Will's Popcorn" that apparently did gangbusters, earning him \$75 a week – about double the average American salary at the time.

William Smith began his political career around the age of 16 or 17, when he began working as a page in the Michigan House of Representatives. Like many hopeful politicians, Smith studied law and he was admitted to the bar in the earlier half of 1880s. By 1887, he was serving as general counsel for the Chicago and West Michigan Railway and the Detroit, Lansing, and Northern Railroad. As legal counsel for Michigan's railroads, he became an expert on railway law and finance, and when he was eventually elected to the United States House of Representatives, he'd use his knowledge to serve as Chairman of the Committee on Pacific Railroads. As Chairman, he'd advocate for universal safety reforms in the railroad industry, which led to him, incidentally, making many enemies in the railroad industry.

When he received the news that the *Titanic* struck an iceberg and sank in the North Atlantic, then Senator Smith got to work establishing a subcommittee to investigate the causes of the accident. In his experience, lack of regulation and corporate greed and corner cutting had imperiled lives on America's railroads, and Smith suspected that similar lapses in steamship regulation and maritime law led to this new tragedy in the North Atlantic.

Senator Smith first tried to contact President William Howard Taft, but was rebuffed by Taft's secretary. President Taft had just been informed that his close personal friend and military aide, Major Archibald Butt, had perished in the sinking. At first, the office of the grieving President had no intention of making any formal moves toward an investigation of the disaster. So, on April 17th, Smith took his case before the Senate, successfully passing a resolution to form a subcommittee of the Committee of Commerce to investigate the causes of the sinking and, among other things, to establish if the great loss of life were the result of any negligence on the part of the White Star Line or in the responses of any of the nearby ships in communication with *Titanic* the night of the disaster.

The subcommittee for the *Titanic* disaster hearings was bipartisan by design. Smith, a Republican, chaired it, and he was joined by six other members: Republican Senators Jonathan Bourne, Theodore E. Burton, and George Clement Perkins and Democrats Duncan U. Fletcher, Francis G. Newlands, and Fernifold McLendel Simmons. Yes, that was someone's real name.

The subcommittee members were all carefully chosen to run the gamut of American politics: Senator Smith, our woke king who fought for things like universal safety regulations for railroads and civil rights for Black Americans; Senator Bourne, who served for a time as president of the National Republican Progressive League, which sounds like a fun oxymoron today; Senator Burton, a pacifist who fought to preserve Niagara Falls and American waterways; Senator Perkins, who pardoned several prisoners serving time in his state, California; Senator Fletcher who would go on to form a commission to examine the causes of the 1929 Wall Street Crash and reform the American banking system; and Senators Newland and Simmons – both avowed white supremacists. Like I said: the gamut of American politics.

Upon establishment of the subcommittee, Senator Smith and President Taft moved to provide a naval escort for the incoming *Carpathia* in order to ensure that no one managed to leave the ship (by tug or tender) before she made port in New York. Smith feared that the White Star Line and her American parent company the International Mercantile Marine might seek to intervene, influence, or intimidate witnesses.

The *Carpathia* had not even made it to New York, yet, and already rumors were beginning to circulate about the circumstances surrounding the sinking of *Titanic*. Most notably for Senator Smith and the subcommittee of the disaster hearings were the rumors surrounding J. Bruce Ismay, the Chairman and Managing Director of White Star Line, whose name had been confirmed among the list of survivors. Limitation of Liability acts present in both the US and Great Britain protected shipowners from liability for loss of life due to acts of nature or negligence on the part of a ship's crew, but if the owners were at all involved in the loss of a vessel, they could be found liable. A wireless message sent from J. Bruce Ismay to the White Star Line, while he was aboard *Carpathia*, triggered Senator Smith's suspicion. Ismay urged the White Star Officials back home to send the crew of *Titanic* home promptly after their arrival in New York, perhaps as soon as the following day.

This could have been Ismay showing compassion for the employees under his charge. They had survived a terrifying ordeal and were probably eager to return to their families. Additionally, many of them had lost nearly everything they had in the sinking and, per company policy, their pay had ceased the moment *Titanic* slipped beneath the surface of the Atlantic. Many of *Titanic's* surviving crew needed simply to recover their losses and get back to work.

At the same time, Ismay's insistence that *Titanic's* crew be returned home as swiftly as possible could be read as an attempt at a cover-up. What if he carried some liability for the tremendous loss of life that night and sought only to whisk away, bribe, or intimidate crucial witnesses before they could be questioned?

And so, Senator Smith and Senator Newlands took it upon themselves to meet *Carpathia* as she arrived in New York's Chelsea Piers on April 18, 1912, and to board her and issue subpoenas to Ismay and all of *Titanic's* surviving officers and crew before anyone would be permitted to disembark.

The US Senate Inquiry into the sinking of the RMS *Titanic* commenced April 19th, 1912 at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. The “Hyphen’s” Myrtle Room would serve as the backdrop for much of the 18 days of hearings, before they were moved for a time to the Russell Senate Office Building in Washington D.C. and finally concluding in New York, once again, where Senator Smith was permitted to inspect the watertight doors and bulkheads of *Titanic*’s sister ship, the RMS *Olympic*.

The primary questions that the Inquiry sought to answer were:

Was the *Titanic* fitted with adequate lifesaving equipment and were her crew and passengers adequately prepared to use it? Did she have the correct number of lifeboats, lifebelts, binoculars for the lookouts, etc.

Was Captain E.J. Smith guilty of any negligence or recklessness that put *Titanic* and her passengers at unnecessary risk? Was he speeding through that ice field too fast?

Did J. Bruce Ismay put any pressure on Captain Smith to speed up in potentially dangerous conditions?

Was the Leyland Line SS *Californian* in a position to respond to *Titanic*’s distress calls, and is her captain, Stanley Lord, at fault for neglecting to respond? Many of the questioned passengers and crew testified to seeing the lights of a ship in the distance on the night of the sinking. This was believed to be the *Californian*, as her last recorded position was close to *Titanic*’s last reported position – much closer than that of her rescue ship, the *Carpathia*.

And had Third Class passengers been prevented from boarding lifeboats in any way, contributing to the overrepresentation of Third Class passengers in the final death toll?

The Inquiry was arduous, involving the testimony of 86 people that ranged from detailed and monotonous descriptions of *Titanic*’s construction and sea trials (the phase of sailing and testing after which she is deemed seaworthy) to the exciting and heartrending stories of survivors still reeling from their ordeal.

Among them, the First Class survivor, Mary Smith, who’d been on her way home from her honeymoon. Her husband, Lucien’s, last ever words to her as she was being lowered in Lifeboat 6 were “Keep your hands in your pockets; it is very cold weather.” In November of that year, the widowed Mary would give birth to Lucien’s son.

Also, the testimony of Third Class passenger Olaus Abelsest whose daring escape I’m fairly certain inspired Jack and Rose’s from the James Cameron film. Olaus stated that he and his cousin and brother-in-law waited until it was almost under, leaping from the ship when they were about five feet from the water’s surface, holding hands. Once they were under:

“I got a rope tangled around me, and I let loose of my brother-in-law’s hand to get away from the rope. I thought then ‘I am a goner.’ But I came on top again, and I was trying to swim, and there

was a man - lots of them floating around - and he got me on the neck like and pressed me under, trying to get on top of me. I said to him, 'Let go.'"

Olaus eventually broke loose and swam for a collapsible. He never saw his brother-in-law or cousin again.

The reaction to the Inquiry from the press was brutal, especially in the British papers. The British did not take kindly to an American Senator subpoenaing British citizens and questioning them about the sinking of a British ocean liner, regardless of whether or not it had an American parent company. To much of the British press and British public, the US Senate Inquiry seemed like a lazy and self-serving spectacle aimed at improving the political prospects of the subcommittee members, especially Senator Smith.

Smith was roundly mocked for his apparent lack of knowledge of marining. Famed belligerent, large-font magazine for retired people with a fifth grade reading level, *The Daily Mail*, awarded Senator Smith the nickname "Watertight Smith" for, according to a contemporary response by the *New York Times*, inquiring "whether watertight compartments were intended as a refuge for passengers."

The actual exchange went a little more like this (this exchange is edited for brevity):

Senator SMITH.

Were there any watertight compartments in that ship?

Mr. LIGHTOLLER.

Yes, sir.

Senator SMITH.

Were those watertight compartments known to the passengers or crew?

Mr. LIGHTOLLER.

They must have been.

Senator SMITH.

How would they know it?

Mr. LIGHTOLLER.

By the plans distributed about the ship.

Senator SMITH.

Were they advised at any time that there were watertight compartments - about how many?

Mr. LIGHTOLLER.

Forty or fifty.

Senator SMITH.

Were they advised that there were 40 or 50 watertight compartments?

Mr. LIGHTOLLER.

I could not say, sir.

Senator SMITH.

You heard nothing of that kind and gave no such warning yourself?

Mr. LIGHTOLLER.

No, sir.

Senator SMITH.

Are you able to say whether any of the crew or passengers took to these upper watertight compartments as a final, last resort; I mean as a place to die?

Mr. LIGHTOLLER.

I am quite unable to say, sir.

Senator SMITH.

Is that at all likely?

Mr. LIGHTOLLER.

No, sir; very unlikely.

And as the hearings wore on, and witnesses were recalled again and again, the patience of *Titanic's* officers also began to wear thin.

When questioning Fifth Officer, Harold Lowe, Smith asked:

Senator SMITH.

Do you know what an iceberg is composed of?

And Lowe responded with the rather pithy exchange:

Mr. LOWE.

Ice, I suppose, sir.

The mockery of Senator Smith's line of questioning, I think, in itself betrays a kind of ignorance on the part of the contemporary press and... even the occasional credulous Reddit post or YouTube video about William Alden Smith today.

Smith was not a stupid man. He was not an experienced mariner, that much is true, but he was an experienced lawyer and an experienced thorn-in-the-side of railroad tycoons. He knew three things that were absolutely guaranteed: everything that happened at the hearings was a matter of public record, each day of the hearings would be reported on by the press, and that *Titanic's* surviving officers were likely to obscure the facts of the case using industry jargon that the wider public could not be expected to understand.

His line of questioning was designed to make the facts of the case accessible to the layperson, and also to assuage the public's fears. To this day *Titanic* is the subject of dozens of conspiracies and urban legends. In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, rumors and speculation were out of control – in no small part due to publications like *The Daily Mail* and the *New York World and Journal*.

The idea that some passengers or crew might have crawled into a watertight bulkhead and ridden down to the bottom of the ocean in an air bubble only to implode or suffocate or die of starvation of course sounds ridiculous to an expert. But, given that it's a query I *still* see people asking about on r/titanic, even with our contemporary knowledge about just how deep she lies and the kind of damage she sustained on her way down... well, I don't personally think it's so ridiculous that Senator Smith asked Officer Lightoller to allay that particular anxiety on public record.

Even Smith's question as to the composition of icebergs isn't actually as silly as it sounds. Because icebergs are *not* just composed of ice! They're chunks of mostly freshwater ice, but also sediment, rock, and other earthy materials from an iceberg's parent glacier. During the British Inquiry, Antarctic explorer, Sir Ernest Shackleton testified to this, stating:

"There are many bergs I have seen that appear to be black, due to the construction of the berg itself, and also due to the earthy matter and rocks that are in all bergs. In fact, in the south many of these so-called islands, and charted as islands, must have been big bergs with earthy matter on them. Again, after a berg has capsized, if it is not of close construction it is more porous and taking up the water does not reflect light in any way."

Questioning experts and officers about the appearance and makeup of icebergs wouldn't have been in service of some kind of childish science lesson, but to demonstrate that the people charged with navigating icebergs understood what they looked like and how they worked. And it seems like maybe Fifth Officer Harold Lowe wasn't as familiar with icebergs as he maybe should have been.

While Senator William Alden Smith was being excoriated and mocked in the British newspapers, the British government was gearing up to conduct its own inquiry into the *Titanic* disaster.

The governmental organization responsible for overseeing an inquiry into a maritime disaster would be the British Board of Trade, the very same organization that was responsible for setting British maritime regulations; the very same organization that had originally inspected *Titanic* and

certified her seaworthiness. If that sounds like a conflict of interest to you, you'd be correct. If that sounds like a perfect opportunity for a coverup, you're not alone in that assessment.

If Senator Smith and his fellow committeemen looked like clowns for asking what icebergs were made of, The British Inquiry was a similar clown show for taking two months and £20,000 of taxpayers' money (equivalent to over £2 million today) to simply conclude "we investigated ourselves and found no wrongdoing."

On April 22, a week to the day after the sinking, the President of the Board of Trade, Sydney Buxton, first Earl of Buxton, asked the Lord Chancellor, the earl of Loreburn, to form a commission for the inquiry. Chosen to lead this British Wreck Commissioner's Inquiry into the sinking of the *Titanic* was one John Bigham, first Viscount of Mersey.

Like his American counterpart, the 72-year-old Lord Mersey's path to serving on the *Titanic* commission began with a career in law. He practiced commercial law for a period of time in his 30s, before being nominated Queen's Council in 1883 at the age of 43 – that's under Queen Victoria's reign. By the time Lord Mersey would serve as the head of the Wreck Commissioner's Inquiry, he'd see the coronation of two more monarchs, Edward VII and George V.

After a lukewarm attempt at a political career involving two failed campaigns, and one successful election leading to an uneventful term as a Liberal Unionist in his hometown of Liverpool, Lord Mersey was eventually named a judge to the Queen's Bench which relieved him of his half-hearted political aspirations.

However weak a politician he may have been, Lord Mersey was a very popular lawyer and judge. Similar to Senator Smith with his background as counsel to Michigan's railways, Lord Mersey spent time as the president of the Railway and Canal Commission.

The assessors of the British Wreck Commissioner's Inquiry had backgrounds in the maritime industry, which led to lines of questioning in the British Inquiry dealing much more with the technical intricacies of *Titanic*'s construction and operation. They included a Rear Admiral of the Royal Navy, Commander of the Royal Navy Reserve, an expert on naval architecture at the University of Glasgow, the commander of the UK's general lighthouse authority, and a senior engineer of the Admiralty. These were boat people.

This meant that the British Inquiry's final report could make a clearer assessment of the damage done to the ship and its seaworthiness, as well as more well-informed recommendations when it came to ship construction and operations going forward. But it also meant that, as the US Inquiry tried to avoid, the British Inquiry was bogged down with days of mind-numbing, jargon-filled testimony.

Notably, the British Board of Trade and White Star Line also had a number of barristers and even the Attorney General, Sir Rufus Isaacs, to represent them at the hearings. In his memoir,

written more than two decades later, Charles Lightoller, who had rolled his eyes at the ineptitude of the US Inquiry, would describe the British Inquiry as a “whitewash” by the Board of Trade.

The Wreck Commissioner’s Inquiry into the sinking of *Titanic* officially began on May 2, 1912. Much of the inquiry covered the same ground as the US Inquiry and the witnesses who had been subpoenaed and questioned for weeks by the Americans began to grow weary.

The survivors questioned were mostly *Titanic*’s officers and crew but, notably, among the few passengers cross-examined by the British Inquiry were Sir Cosmo Duff-Gordon and his wife, Lucille, Lady Duff-Gordon.

The Duff-Gordons had been among the celebrity First Class passengers aboard *Titanic*. Sir Cosmo Duff-Gordon was a British aristocrat and accomplished fencer, who’d represented Great Britain at the 1906 Olympic Games (then called the Intercalated Games). Lady Duff-Gordon was a celebrity fashion designer who created luxury lingerie sets for women under the professional name, Lucille.

The mere presence of the Duff-Gordons aboard the maiden voyage of *Titanic* was newsworthy in and of itself, but when their names were listed among the survivors, they came under significant scrutiny.

First of all, Sir Cosmo was a man who survived when so many other wealthy and famous men had died – J.J. Astor, Isador Straus, the co-founder of Macy’s Department Store, Benjamin Guggenheim...

Secondly, there was the matter of a £5 note Sir Cosmo had offered to one or more officers in charge of Lifeboat 1. Lifeboat 1, which had a capacity of around 40 people, left *Titanic* shortly after 1:00 am on April 15, 1912 carrying only 12 passengers. Despite all this extra room, the boat never returned to pick up any victims in the water. Rumors quickly circulated in the press that Sir Cosmo and his wife bribed the crewmen aboard Lifeboat 1 £5 to not return to save any further passengers, lest the boat be swamped.

The British Inquiry ultimately found no evidence that the Duff-Gordons bribed anyone, and described the charges against Sir Cosmo Duff-Gordon as “gross” and “unfounded”.

The rumor seems to have stemmed from two similar conversations that happened on the night in question. One of the crewmen manning the boat, fireman Charles Hendrickson, testified that he suggested returning for passengers in the water, but that the women on the boat, Lady Duff-Gordon and her secretary Mabel Francatelli, objected, fearing that they’d be swamped.

In another exchange entirely, occurring around 3:00 am, long after they’d missed their chance to return to save anyone, fireman Robert Pusey recalled overhearing Lady Duff-Gordon remark to Mabel in the manner of a classic fashionista: “there is your beautiful nightdress gone.” Robert Pusey, who was not a millionaire underwear designer married to an aristocrat and celebrity

athlete, was rightfully annoyed by this comment and reminded the women that they had escaped with their lives and could buy new clothes. Pusey and his fellow crewmen, however, had lost everything they had. At this, Sir Cosmo Duff-Gordon chimed in and promised to make “a present” to each of the crewmen aboard Lifeboat 1 as soon as they were all saved.

And allegedly he did, shortly after they were all rescued by *Carpathia*. The crewmen were awarded cigars and £5 each to buy themselves a new kit – roughly £500 in today’s money.

The final report issued by the US Senate Inquiry on May 28th, 1912 was nineteen pages long, summarizing over a thousand pages of official testimony. The British Wreck Commissioners Inquiry issued its final report on July 30th, 1912, which summarized over fifteen-hundred pages of official testimony.

The US report concluded that Titanic’s number of lifeboats didn’t *technically* didn’t fall afoul of the law. In fact, she had *more* lifeboats than was legally required. But Senator Smith stated in no uncertain terms that the legal requirement, established in 1894 by the British Board of Trade, was woefully, recklessly outdated. As the British Inquiry noted, the number of legally required lifeboats was determined, not by a ship’s capacity, but by her gross tonnage. And it capped out at 10,000 tons. This meant that any ship larger than 10,000 tons needed only to have 16 lifeboats. *Titanic* had 20 with a total capacity of 1,176 persons, less than half of her total capacity. Her davits had actually been constructed to hold a maximum of three boats per davit, giving her a total capacity of 48 lifeboats. With each lifeboat holding a maximum of somewhere around 60 people, 48 lifeboats would have held far more people than she would have needed on her maiden voyage and somewhere close to her maximum capacity. But when she was sent out to sail, she was only equipped with only 20 lifeboats.

The British report did not find fault with the British Board of Trade’s regulation for the lack of lifeboats, but in its final recommendations, it did include a provision that enough lifeboats and liferafts should accommodate all passengers aboard.

So, let’s talk about lifeboats for a moment because they really are a major supporting character in the story of *Titanic*. Why would it even occur to a steamship operator to not have enough lifeboats to fit every crewmember and passenger? Many shipping companies assumed that carrying more than just a few lifeboats would crowd the decks of ships, creating an aesthetic and logistical nightmare. More boats are useless if it’s impossible to launch them. Additionally, in order to continue launching the boats, in the 1910s at least, some crewmembers would need to remain aboard the foundering vessel. Someone has to be at the davits. Many shipbuilders thought it better to put more resources into the quality and durability of the ships themselves than to invest in more lifeboats.

Even to this day a lifeboat on the open sea is really a worst case scenario. Your ideal situation in any emergency is to use a few lifeboats as tender vehicles between your foundering ship and a rescue ship.

And thanks to those advancements in shipbuilding at the time, they really did believe that these gigantic vessels were virtually unsinkable – that is to say that even if one were totaled by an accident, she'd stay afloat long enough to conduct a complete rescue of anyone and everyone aboard. And they weren't far off! *Titanic* actually stayed afloat far longer than her shipbuilder, Thomas Andrews, was said to have estimated. It took her two hours and forty minutes to sink - a bit longer than the runtime of an average Marvel movie - but not long enough to get her passengers to safety.

So would more lifeboats have helped? Probably not, actually. It took so long to launch them, that the last two Collapsibles remained unlaunched. Collapsible B flipped upside down and served as a horrible floatation device for about 30 of those in the water, including Officer Lightoller, and Collapsible A floated away off the deck during *Titanic*'s final plunge. An additional 28 lifeboats probably would have meant another 28 boats going down with *Titanic*, still lashed to her side.

What almost definitely would have saved more people was the lifeboats being filled to capacity or as near to capacity as possible, and a crew that was better trained and prepared to launch the boats.

The US Senate Inquiry found that *Titanic*'s crew and passengers were left in "a state of absolute unpreparedness". There was confusion, miscommunication, and a lackadaisical approach to the evacuation that cost many human lives. Several passengers reported not understanding the seriousness of the situation until *Titanic* was very clearly going down by the head. Those reluctant to board lifeboats in the earlier part of the evacuation were not compelled to do so, leading many to stay aboard the ship until it was too late.

Shockingly, according to the findings of both inquiries, not a single boat drill was had since she left port, and her safety gear was not adequately tested or demonstrated to crew, leading many of her officers to intentionally underfill the boats – some of them because they feared the lifeboats couldn't withstand the weight of being filled to capacity, and some because they assumed that more passengers were to be loaded onto lifeboats from open portholes after they were partially loaded on the upper decks. But obviously, there weren't any officers below decks loading passengers through portholes because there was no standard operating procedure in place because these guys were never holding any damn drills!

The British Inquiry pointed to all of these reasons and also, the fear of the women passengers and the reluctance of the women passengers to leave their husbands as to why the boats were underfilled. That's a lot of blaming women for a disaster that claimed the lives of 80% of it's male passengers versus 25% of its female passengers, but I suppose that's to be expected from a commission formed during Prime Minister H.H. Asquith's administration.

Both inquiries found that not enough lifeboats returned for passengers in the water, and that if they had, more lives would most likely been saved.

Additionally, *Titanic*'s lookouts were not provided with binoculars after she left Queenstown, despite repeated requests, nor did *Titanic* carry any searchlights for her lookouts and, according to the findings of the British Inquiry, not enough lookouts were placed on the decks, given the ice and sea conditions the evening of the disaster.

The Senate Inquiry also found that *Titanic*'s captain and officers did not appropriately heed ice warnings from other ships. She was not, as is often reported, going full speed through an ice field, but she was going very fast. And Senator Smith accused Captain E.J. Smith of showing an "indifference to danger [that] was one of the direct and contributing causes of" the tragedy."

Continuing at speed through an ice field, like inadequate lifeboats, was simply one of those "done things" when it came to maritime industries that the senators in charge of the *Titanic* commission balked at. "But", to quote the British Inquiry "the event has proved the practice to be bad."

Neither inquiry found evidence that J. Bruce Ismay pushed Captain Smith to increase the ship's speed, or that his conduct during the evacuation was anything but above board. However, the US Inquiry suggested that Ismay's presence and Thomas Andrews' presence aboard *Titanic* may still have influenced Captain Smith's decision to pick up her speed.

Both Inquiries did find Captain Lord of the SS *Californian* to be negligent in his response to *Titanic*'s distress calls.

The Senate Inquiry report read "[i]n our opinion such conduct, whether arising from indifference or gross carelessness, is most reprehensible, and places upon the commander of the *Californian* a grave responsibility. Had assistance been promptly proffered... that ship might have had the proud distinction of rescuing the lives of the passengers and crew of the *Titanic*."

Senator Smith urged Lord's home country, Great Britain, to press criminal charges. In his speech before the Senate, Smith speculated that *Californian*'s actual position was much closer to *Titanic* than Captain Lord's stated position. He pointed to testimony from *Titanic* survivors that indicated passengers from both ships could see one another's lights, and that Captain Lord and his crew saw *Titanic*'s distress rockets and ignored them.

The British Inquiry's final report stated that *Californian*'s actual position was likely within 10 miles of *Titanic* and not impeded by as much ice as Captain Lord had insisted. They also concluded that had she responded to *Titanic*'s rockets and distress calls, *Californian* could have saved "many, if not all, of the lives that were lost."

However, they stopped short of pressing any sort of charges against Lord or any of his crew. Stanley Lord would be fired by the *Californian*'s parent company, Leyland Line, shortly after the conclusion of the British Inquiry. While he was never officially tried or convicted of a crime, Stanley Lord's reputation was ruined. Lord would spend the rest of his life attempting to clear his name, filing a petition to the British Board of Trade to reexamine the facts of his case in 1958.

The petition remained unresolved at the time of Stanley Lord's death in 1962, and his petition was finally rejected in 1965 as Lord had provided no additional evidence to support his case.

As to whether Third Class passengers were prevented from reaching lifeboats, both inquiries only found that "[i]n loading the boats no distinction was made between First, Second, and Third Class passengers, although the proportion of lost is larger among Third Class passengers than in either of the other classes," and that that proportion was accounted for by "the greater reluctance of Third Class passengers to leave the ship, by their unwillingness to part with their baggage, by the difficulty in getting them up from their quarters, and by other similar causes."

Of the twenty-one passengers that were interviewed during the US Senate Inquiry, only three were from Third Class. And the British Inquiry only sought to interview three passengers total, all from First Class: Bruce Ismay and Lord and Lady Duff Gordon. Thus, their conclusions that "no distinctions were made" among the classes of passengers and the implication that the Third Class passengers were simply overly suspicious, greedy, and unwilling to rise from their beds seem more informed by the biases of the educated officers and wealthy politicians and peers of the realm that helmed the doomed ship and the messy inquiries than by the experiences of the survivors themselves.

In reality, one of the major reasons for the dramatically low survival rate of Third Class passengers is simply that *Titanic's* lower decks could be labyrinthine, and all of her signage was in English. A far greater proportion of Third Class passengers were immigrants who could read no English at all and were stuck below until it was too late. Sure, no Third Class passenger was deliberately prevented from reaching the boat deck, but were it not for the soft and hard anti-immigrant biases of the American subcommittee and British Wreck Commission in 1912, I'd imagine that their recommendations might include more accessible signage and posted maps, like those seen on many ships today.

The US Senate Inquiry ultimately lacked the knowledge and political influence to enforce change. The more erudite investigation held by the British Inquiry was taken more seriously by the British shipping companies, but the British Board of Trade was somewhat disincentivized to punish itself too harshly. And, after all, the combined investigations revealed that while some mistakes were made, no crimes were committed. No one was going to be found at fault for the destruction of those 1500 lives and the ruination of many more.

Of the actual pieces of legislation enacted in response to the findings of the inquiries were initially only a resolution to award Captain Rostron of the *Carpathia* a Congressional Gold Medal and the federal Radio Act of 1912, which mandated, among other things, that all vessels at sea continually monitor distress signals.

However, the recommendations of both inquiries would ultimately be implemented into the International Convention for the Safety of Life At Sea or SOLAS Treaty of 1914. This treaty mandated that all ships belonging to signatory countries carry enough lifeboats to safely transfer

all of their passengers and maintain continuous radio monitoring. SOLAS is still in effect to this day, although it's been updated a few times. The current version was enacted in 1974.

And even before the SOLAS Treaty was passed, the enormous publicity surrounding both inquiries forced the hands of the massive shipping companies in charge of the industry. It no longer served their interests to advertise "unsinkable" ships, rather ships with enough lifeboats and up to date safety equipment.

Immediately following the *Titanic* disaster, near the end of April, 1912, White Star Line's firemen went on strike fearing that the lifeboats aboard *Titanic*'s surviving twin, the RMS *Olympic*, weren't seaworthy. They were, as non-union workers often are, fired and replaced by another crew of scabs. When the strikebreaker crew came aboard *Olympic*, the other members of the crew objected to it. Fifty-four crewmembers refused to sail, ultimately being charged and convicted of mutiny in May of 1912. But the mutineers were discharged without sentence or fine and allowed to return to their jobs at White Star Line in a move that seemed designed to avoid more bad press.

In October of 1912, *Olympic* would be refitted with new davits and her number of lifeboats would be increased from twenty to sixty-eight. When her little sister, *Britannic*, finally set sail on her maiden voyage in 1915, she too would carry more than enough lifeboats, as well as fifteen improved watertight compartments that would allow for six to completely flood without sinking the vessel. The number of compartments that doomed her big sister, *Titanic*.

"After *Titanic*" is a podcast by Bash Back Productions. Written, recorded, and edited by Amanda Hootman. Theme music by Neilly Farrell. Artwork by Paul Scott Canavan. Voice acting in this episode provided by LegalKimchi, Chris Wallinger, Lyle Friederichs, Sooz Kempner, Felix O'Connor and David Melville. Full cast list, transcripts and sources are available on aftertitanic.com. "After *Titanic*" is supported by our generous Indiegogo backers and patrons. Help support the podcast by heading to Patreon.com/AfterTitanic where you'll get exclusive access to our Discord server, and join an entire community of fellow Titanophiles to hang out with between episodes. I've been your host, Amanda Hootman. Thanks for listening.

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