

In the case of a British steamer, merely trading to the Colony, and surveyed in the United Kingdom under the provisions of the Imperial Act, and already in possession of a passenger certificate granted by the Imperial Government, it would, it appears to the Board of Trade, be both unjust and inconvenient to require a re-survey in the Colony, and that in such a case a re-survey ought not to be required.

But where a British steamship, registered in Great Britain, or in any Colony or possession other than New Zealand, proceeds to New Zealand, and enters into the coasting or other regular trade of New Zealand without returning to the United Kingdom, or without obtaining a certificate from any other Colony, then the Board of Trade think that she should be treated as any other ship belonging to New Zealand, and employed in the trade of the place.

The same may be said in the case of steamers belonging to foreign countries and trading under a foreign flag, between their own country and the Colony.

It would obviously be an act of unnecessary interference on the part of any country or Colony to require that foreign vessels merely trading to it should be surveyed and licensed by the Government of the country or Colony to which she plies, as well as by the Government of the country to which she belongs.

With regard to the enactment as to lights and signals under clause 30, I am to point out that an error has been committed in requiring that the rules issued by the Imperial Board of Admiralty in 1858 shall now be of force in New Zealand.

The Rules of 1858 have been repealed by the Statute of 1862 (copy enclosed) and the rules contained in the schedule to the Statute of 1862, have, by virtue of that Act, been repealed by an Order in Council dated the 9th of January, 1863, of which the substance is enclosed (pamphlet).

The rules contained in the Order in Council of the 9th January, 1863, issued under the Imperial Act of 1862, should, therefore, be the rules referred to in the New Zealand Statute, if any rules are referred to at all; but I am to add, that any Colonial enactment as regards the lights of sea-going ships is altogether unnecessary, as all British sea-going ships, whether registered in the United Kingdom or in any other part of Her Majesty's dominions, and all sea-going ships belonging to the countries named in the pamphlet, are absolutely bound by the rules contained in the Order in Council (enclosed), issued under the Imperial Act.

The only ships to which it is possible for the New Zealand Statute to be made to apply are vessels which ply within the harbours and rivers of the Colony, and never go to sea.

The above remarks refer to the more serious points for consideration; but, there are a few other points upon which the Board of Trade think it advisable to offer some remarks, founded on their experience of the working of the Imperial Act.

Clause five of the New Zealand Act provides for the three monthly inspection of the boilers of steamers carrying a greater pressure than thirty pounds to the square inch, and a six monthly inspection of all other boilers. The Imperial Act makes no distinction between one set of boilers and another. It provides for a six monthly inspection of all alike.

The Board of Trade do not see the advantage of a three monthly inspection, provided that the surveyor who inspects the boilers once in six months does his duty, and determines the weight to be placed on the safety valve with due regard to the condition, strength, and stay power of the boiler.

On the other hand it appears to this Board, that there is a great disadvantage in making the inspection too frequently, as frequent inspection and supervision on the part of the Government tend to remove the responsibility connected with the safety and proper condition and working of the ships, and their equipments from the owners and their servants, who ought to be held responsible to the surveyor, who ought not, and, as a matter of fact, cannot be responsible.

The Board of Trade would strongly advise, that in legislation of this sort, the surveys of the Government Surveyors should be made, to assist in promoting the safety of the public, without in any way relieving the owners of their responsibility and liability at common law.

There is a provision in section five as regards the compasses, in which an exemption is made in favour of Cameron's patent compass. To this the Board of Trade would wish to point out that it appears to them to be doubtful whether it is advisable to grant a special exemption (in favour of any one compass or invention) from the provisions of a Statute. If an exemption in favour of one invention or one class of inventions is thought to be necessary at the time an Act is passed, this Board would suggest that the exemption should be in general terms, and that instead of naming the special invention in the Act, it should be worded in such a way as to give Her Majesty or the Governor power from time to time to make regulations as to the equipments to be carried, &c.

It may so happen that Cameron's compass is the best compass now known in New Zealand, and it may now be thought desirable to encourage its use there. On this the Board of Trade cannot form an opinion; but if it is now the best, it does not follow that it will be the best compass in a year or two hence. If it is specially named in the Act, a better compass hereafter invented will be kept out of use; but if it is not specially named then the regulations framed under the Act may require that a compass to be approved by the surveyors shall comply with certain conditions to be named. By these means an exemption in favour of one compass can only exist so long as it is held to be superior to others, and complies with conditions that the others do not.

From clause six it would appear that the master and engineer of a steamship are to be examined and are to obtain fresh certificates whenever they are appointed to a vessel, and that their certificates are to apply only to the vessel for which they are certified.

The Legislature of New Zealand are doubtless in possession of information which shows the necessity for these frequent renewals of certificates there. The system proposed will no doubt do away with the necessity for cancelling a certificate after a wreck, and the authorities will no doubt be careful not to grant a fresh certificate without due inquiry, but it would appear to the Board of Trade that these frequent examinations would probably be found to give trouble, and unless the standard of examinations was alike at each port would give still further trouble. Special care will be necessary that men who are refused as unfit at one place, do not afterwards pass and obtain certificates at another.