

the Secretary of State for the Colonies as to—(1) whether the practice of clearing vessels for fictitious ports exists in the United Kingdom, and (2) what means the present law affords of checking it—I am desired by the Commissioners of Her Majesty's Customs to state—(1) That the practice of entering ships for fictitious ports is not known to exist in the United Kingdom. The expression "Guam" (referred to in the correspondence) is said to be well understood in the shipping trade to mean an open destination; but no clearance for such a place has ever been granted in London, nor, as far as the Board are aware, at any other port in the United Kingdom. (2.) All the documents which have to be delivered to the officers of Customs on the departure of a ship from a port in the United Kingdom are required to bear the name of her port of destination; and the question as to destination may also be personally replied to by the master of the vessel: a false statement (and the naming of a fictitious port either in writing or verbally would be such) would subject the maker to a penalty of £100. I am to state, however, that the Board do not require any great vigilance to be exercised to see that statements on this point are correctly made; one of several ports of debarcation, or even a genuine port of call, would probably be a statement that would prevent the imposition of a penalty, and in any case a false statement as to destination is a difficult offence to prove, as it is not easy to fix the master with certain knowledge at the time of the clearance outwards, or to guard altogether against the erection of a defence of change of purpose.

Although the Colonial Office do not allude to the point referred to by Rear-Admiral Tryon with regard to coal as contraband of war, the Board desire me to add that they are advised that the destination of mere contraband of war as distinct from warlike equipments concerns not the Government of a neutral country, but only the trader who runs the risk. It is, however, doubtful whether coal is contraband of war.

Should the Secretary of State for the Colonies desire any further information as to practice with regard to the clearance of vessels outwards, it will probably save the Board of Trade trouble in transmitting communications between the two departments if the Colonial Office were to communicate direct with this department.

The Secretary, Marine Department, Board of Trade.

I have, &c.,

ED. GOODWYN.

SIR,—

Downing Street, 14th June, 1887.

With reference to your letter of the 16th April on the question of the clearance of vessels from ports in Australasian Colonies without a correct statement of their destination, I am directed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to transmit to you, to be laid before the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, a copy of a letter from the Board of Trade, enclosing one from the Department of Her Majesty's Commissioners of Customs on the subject.

I have, &c.,

JOHN BRAMSTON.

The Secretary to the Admiralty.

SIR,—

Admiralty, 17th June, 1887.

I am commanded by my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to request that you will convey their thanks to the Secretary of State for the Colonies for the copies of the letters from the Board of Trade and Customs Departments relating to the question of the clearance of vessels from ports in the Australian Colonies without a correct statement of their destination, and which were forwarded in your letter of the 14th instant.

2. With reference to Admiralty letter addressed to you on the 16th April last, L 854, my Lords desire me to request that they may be informed whether this subject was brought before the recent Colonial Conference, and whether it is proposed to take any further steps, the question of the true destination of shipments of coals being of importance from a naval point of view.

I have, &c.,

The Under-Secretary of State, Colonial Office.

R. D. AWDRY.

SIR,—

Colonial Office, Downing Street, 2nd July, 1887.

With reference to your letter of the 17th ultimo, inquiring whether the question of the clearance of vessels from ports in the Australian Colonies without a correct statement of their destination was brought before the recent Colonial Conference, I am directed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to request that you will inform the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that the subject was not brought formally before the Conference, as when the matter was mentioned to some of the Australian delegates it was found that they were already cognisant of it, and seemed to consider the existing law sufficient, and that no further legislation is required. The work of the Conference was so heavy that Sir H. Holland was unwilling to increase it by adding subjects for discussion which did not appear to be absolutely necessary. It is his intention, however, to transmit the correspondence to the Governors of the Australasian Colonies for the consideration of their Governments.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary to the Admiralty.

JOHN BRAMSTON.

No. 23.

(Circular.)

SIR,—

Downing Street, 6th July, 1887.

I have the honour to transmit to you, for communication to your Government, a copy of a letter from the Secretary to the Gilchrist Educational Trust, announcing the intention of the Trustees to withdraw the annual