

No. 22.

(Circular.)

SIR,—

Downing Street, 5th July, 1887.

I have the honour to transmit to you, for communication to your Government, a copy of a correspondence which has passed between the Admiralty, the Board of Trade, and this department, respecting the question of the clearance of vessels from ports in the Australasian Colonies for fictitious ports, and I request that I may be favoured with the views of your Government on the subject.

I have, &c.,

H. T. HOLLAND.

The Officer Administering the Government of New Zealand.

Enclosures.

SIR,—

Admiralty, 16th April, 1887.

I am commanded by my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to transmit to you herewith copy of a letter (with enclosure) dated 14th February last, No. 73, from the Commander-in-Chief on the Australian station, calling attention to the clearance of vessels from ports in the Australasian Colonies without their proper destination being stated.

2. My Lords desire me to request that you will lay Admiral Tryon's letter before the Secretary of State for the Colonies, with a view to the question being brought forward for consideration by the Colonial Conference.

I have, &c.,

The Under-Secretary of State, Colonial Office.

EVAN MACGREGOR.

Clearance of Vessels from Ports in Australasian Colonies without their proper Destination being known.

SIR,—

"Nelson," at Ascension, 14th February, 1887.

Be pleased to acquaint their Lordships that during the period, two years ago, when defence questions in these colonies were the subject of special consideration, it came prominently before me that vessels were in the habit of clearing for "Guam," an imaginary port, which conveyed no idea of the destination of the vessel, or for very distant ports with very little regard to whether they ever went there or not.

2. At the time to which I have referred I took steps to ascertain the ports to which coal was despatched from the Australasian coal-ports. For some weeks I was enabled to keep a watch on the important points involved, but soon the cargoes despatched to "Guam," &c., defeated the object I had in view.

3. I do not fully know what are the regulations on this subject at Home, but I believe the destination of coal affects the question whether it is or is not contraband of war.

I refer to this matter at this moment, as there is about to be a Conference in London, in case their Lordships should think it desirable to draw attention to the subject, that the colonies may be asked to take power, if it is necessary to do so, by Act of Parliament, so as to be able to insist on all vessels declaring truly their port of destination, at such times as the Governors may deem such a step to be necessary. I believe a willing assent would be given by the colonies to such a step, or to doing whatever is required to secure a like result.

I enclose a specimen sheet of the return I caused to be kept at that time with the assistance cordially given by the Government of New South Wales.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary, Admiralty.

G. TRYON, Rear-Admiral.

SIR,—

Colonial Office, Downing Street, 25th April, 1887.

I am directed by Secretary Sir H. Holland to transmit copy of a letter from the Admiralty on the subject of vessels clearing for fictitious ports, and I am to ask to be favoured with the views of the Board of Trade on the subject, and to be informed whether such a practice exists in England, and what means the present law affords for checking it. Sir H. Holland will be much obliged if he can receive an early answer.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary, Marine Department, Board of Trade.

JOHN BRAMSTON.

SIR,—

Board of Trade (Marine Department), London, S.W., 2nd June, 1887.

I am directed by the Board of Trade to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 25th of April last, with enclosure, inquiring whether the practice of vessels clearing outwards for fictitious ports exists in the United Kingdom, and what means the present law affords of checking it. In reply, I am to state, for the information of Secretary Sir Henry Holland, that, as the Board were not in a position to answer the inquiries directly, they referred your letter to the Commissioners of Her Majesty's Customs, and have received a reply, of which I am to enclose a copy, in the hope that it may be found to convey the desired information.

I have, &c.,

The Under-Secretary of State, Colonial Office, S.W.

THOMAS GRAY.

SIR,—

Customhouse, London, 25th May, 1887.

With reference to Mr. Swanston's letter of the 29th ultimo, M 8391, requesting to be furnished with such information as would enable the Board of Trade to reply to an inquiry from