

Date.	Description of Document.
4th January, 1897	Chamber of Shipping of the United Kingdom to the Colonial Office.
11th January, 1897	Colonial Office reply.
4th June, 1897	Chamber of Shipping of the United Kingdom to the Colonial Office.
19th June, 1897	Colonial Office reply.
29th July, 1897	Agent-General to Colonial Office, enclosing
25th July, 1897	Letter from Mr. Seddon to the Chamber of Shipping.

Enclosures.

1, Whittington Avenue, Leadenhall Street, E.C., London,
4th January, 1897.

SIR,—

Referring to previous correspondence which has passed between the Colonial Office and this Chamber, and in which this Chamber has urged that colonial legislation with respect to British merchant shipping ought not to be allowed to exceed the requirements of "The Merchant Shipping (Consolidation) Act, 1894," I am directed by the executive council to state that they are informed that an Act, the short title of which is "The Shipping and Seamen's Act Amendment Act, 1896," was passed by the General Assembly of New Zealand on the 16th October last.

I am instructed by the council to specially call your attention to the provisions of section 10 of this Act, which runs as follows:—

"10. Notwithstanding anything contained in the principal Act, or in any amendment thereof, it is hereby declared that whenever the master, owner, or agent of any ship—

"(1.) Engages seamen in the colony, or

"(2.) Having engaged them abroad, employs them in the colony,—

such seamen, whilst so employed, shall be paid, and may recover, the current rate of wages for the time being ruling in the colony, and in the former case the engagement may be determined in the colony at any time after the ship's arrival at her final port of discharge in the colony, consequent on the completion of a round voyage, by twenty-four hours' previous notice on either side:

"Provided that this section shall not apply to ships arriving from abroad with passengers or cargo but not trading in the colony further or otherwise than for the purpose of discharging such original passengers or cargo in the colony, and there shipping fresh passengers or cargo to be carried abroad:

"Provided further that a Collector of Customs may, upon the application of an officer of a charitable institution, grant a permit in any special case to the master of a ship to engage a seaman at less than the current rate of wages for a particular voyage to be specified in the permit."

The marginal note to this section, which runs as follows: "Seamen engaged in colony to be paid current wages," seems to my council to be misleading, for the language of the section would, in their opinion, make it apply to the case of seamen who may be shipped in this country on a year's, or two years', or three years' agreement to proceed to New Zealand in a British vessel, and to trade out there on board of the vessel on time charter, either between different ports in New Zealand or between Australian and New Zealand ports, &c.

This section, indeed, appears to my council to offer an inducement—and, in the interests of public morality, a very objectionable inducement—to seamen to break the contracts into which they have voluntarily entered in this country in order to obtain the higher rate of wages which may be current in New Zealand. Moreover, in the (Imperial) "Merchant Shipping Act, 1894," there are no references to such subjects as "current wages," nor is any attempt made in that Act to fix a rate of wages by statute.

I am, accordingly, directed by the executive council of this Chamber to respectfully ask that you would advise Her Majesty to refuse her Royal assent to the Bill unless and until the provisions of section 10 are either struck out or amended.

In conclusion, my council have to once more strongly urge upon you that it is most desirable, in the best interests both of Great Britain and her colonies, that legislation which affects British merchant shipping should be on all-fours both at Home and in the colonies.

I have, &c.,

Right Hon. J. Chamberlain, M.P.,

Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies, &c.

W. H. COOKE, Secretary.

SIR,—

Colonial Office, S.W., 11th January, 1897.

In reply to your letter of the 4th instant, respecting "The Shipping and Seamen's Act Amendment Act, 1896," passed by the Legislature of New Zealand, I am directed by Mr. Secretary Chamberlain to inform you that the Act in question has not yet been received at this office. When the Act is received the objection put forward in your letter will receive Mr. Chamberlain's consideration.

I am, &c.,

The Secretary, Chamber of Shipping of the United Kingdom.

E. WINGFIELD.