

The Board submitted two alternative plans for consideration.

The resolution actually passed by the Board asked not only that these plans should be submitted to the Commission, but, in effect, that if the Commission could not see its way to approve either of the plans it should be asked to suggest any other means by which the desired result might be achieved. Unfortunately, the resolution of the Board as transmitted to the Department, and on which the Commission was drawn, failed to include the latter provision.

The Commission, after local investigation and the hearing of evidence, was not convinced that the difficulties which the Board desired to overcome were as real as the Board appeared to believe; but, even if they were, the Commission considered that the results desired could be achieved at less expense, and recommended further engineering investigation, and therefore refrained from approving either of the plans submitted.

The Department is aware that the Commission came to a conclusion as to how the results desired by the Board could be achieved at less expense; but the Commission also became aware, during its investigation, of the disparity between the resolution of the Board and its order of reference based on the Board's submission to the Department.

The Commission therefore felt itself constrained to act strictly in accord with its order of reference. Intermediary effort by the Department has failed to forward the matter.

SHIPPING AND SEAMEN ACT.

Survey of Ships. The normal requirement of law in regard to survey of ships is that every ship (with unimportant exceptions) under our jurisdiction is required to be presented for annual survey within thirty days prior to the expiry of her current survey certificate.

In 1916, owing to commandeering of ships for transport and other war purposes, the tonnage available for our own purposes became so restricted that application was made to extend the survey over a period of six months, and thus enable ships to avoid laying up for survey. This practice, though doubtless justified by the exigencies of the times, meant that a ship ordinarily due for survey in December might commence her survey in July, and extend it in half a dozen different ports and under a dozen different Surveyors over a period of six months. She would acquire her certificate for the ensuing twelve months at the end of December, which would mean that at the expiry of that certificate the survey of, at any rate, some parts of the ship would be eighteen months old. During the year this practice was cancelled and shipowners required to conform to pre-war practice.

In this country the general public seems to take an intense personal interest in the survey of ships. The Department makes no objection to this so long as those who may criticize have sufficient qualifications to justify expression of an opinion.

New Zealand requirements in the way of ship survey are more far-reaching than any other country in the world. They are simply that every ship, except a pleasure yacht or launch, or a fishing-boat under 10 tons, must be surveyed annually.

The British Board of Trade, whose practice we follow in most shipping matters, and the Commonwealth of Australia do not require any cargo-ship, no matter how large, to be surveyed at all; even a passenger-ship carrying up to twelve passengers is not required to be surveyed. Furthermore, even with ships under survey, conditions are in many respects much easier, such, for instance, as requiring twin unit vessels to open up engines for survey only every alternate year. Most of the ships not required in Great Britain or Australia to be surveyed by Government Surveyors are, of course, surveyed by Insurance Corporation Surveyors, such as Lloyds, but this survey is effected only every fourth year, and is not recognized by New Zealand law.

As to the manner in which ship survey work has been carried out in past years there may, in isolated cases, have been some individual slackness. Those individuals have been revealed and dealt with drastically. The public may rest assured that to-day the ships under our jurisdiction are annually subjected to rigid survey by men who are competent and perform their duty who understand that they must do clean straight work without fear or favour, and who know well that they will be supported in their action.

WIRELESS TELEGRAPH INSTALLATION ON SHIPS.

The legislation on this matter existing prior to last session of Parliament was weak, in that its power to require the installation of wireless equipment related only to equipment for the transmission of wireless messages, and was entirely silent as to equipment for the receipt of messages.

By the legislation of 1924 comprehensive power was given, and, Royal assent being given to the Act, draft regulations were prepared accordingly. In accordance with an undertaking given by you these were submitted to interested parties. The Shipowners' Federation considered the Department's proposals altogether too drastic; the Seamen's Union considered they were reasonable; the Merchant Service Guild thought they did not go far enough; while the Marine Engineers' Institute was satisfied with them.

In order to deal with the detail objections of the Shipowners' Federation you appointed a Committee consisting of Captain G. S. Hooper (Nautical Adviser), Mr. E. A. Shrimpton (Chief Telegraph Engineer), and myself to hear their objections. We accordingly held an inquiry in Auckland and in Wellington. The draft regulations, in so far as class of installation and requirements in the way of operators, were drawn very much on the lines of Board of Trade requirements, which in turn conform to International Wireless Convention requirements. These requirements are at least ten years old in their conception, and pay no regard to the extraordinary developments in wireless telegraphy which have since been achieved.