

Under the present Imperial law British ships engaged in carrying grain are liable to certain penalties, not only in the carrying trade of the United Kingdom, but also in that of any part of the world. Foreign ships are not liable to those penalties, which has created much dissatisfaction among British ship-owners, and if a remedy could be found for this unsatisfactory state of affairs, which places foreign ships in a more advantageous position than British ships, it is probable much of the discontent which now prevails among Canadian ship-owners, with reference to Imperial legislation would disappear; and the undersigned is of opinion that one of the best remedies which can be found to allay much of the present uneasiness and excitement in connection with this question, would be to provide in any future legislation that all foreign vessels when in ports of the United Kingdom should be subject to the same restrictions, inspections and penalties as British ships. This principle has been in full operation for some time in Canada, in respect to vessels loaded with grain, and vessels carrying deck cargo, thus placing all vessels both British and foreign on the same footing in Canadian waters. The tendency of recent Imperial legislation with reference to Merchant shipping, has been practically to make a discriminating difference in favour of foreign as against British ships.

He has reason to believe that cases have already occurred where merchants have had cargoes to ship in the United Kingdom, which they were anxious to have placed at their destination as soon as possible, and that in making their selection of vessels they had given a preference to foreign over British ships on account of the certainty which existed, in the case of foreign ships, that no detention would arise owing to alleged unseaworthiness or overloading. Legislation which has such an effect as this—favouring the ship as against a British ship, while loading in British ports, is not based on a sound principle and cannot be satisfactory or permanent; and some solution of the difficulty must therefore be found before Canadian ship-owners will rest satisfied or cease agitation. It is not reasonable to assume that the owner of a Canadian ship which has just completed taking in a full cargo, say, of coals, in an English dock, alongside a foreign ship of the same size, with an equal quantity of coals on board will be satisfied, when directed by a Board of Trade Surveyor, to take a portion of his cargo out, say one hundred tons, thus losing time and a portion of his freight and incurring additional dock dues and charges, while the foreign ship proceeds to sea immediately, without any risk of detention or additional charges to which her less fortunate rival alongside has been subjected.

It is possible it may be argued as against the proposition to treat all vessels alike, foreign as well as British, that foreign Governments may retaliate on British ships, and pass such laws as may cause them detention, expense and annoyance while in their ports; but the undersigned is of opinion that there is very little force in this argument as no foreign Government would be likely to legislate in this respect in a different manner for foreign ships than for ships of their own country; and if they did legislate in the direction of recent British legislation for the safety of life and property, the undersigned cannot see that either the British Government or British ship-owners could reasonably object to it.

He believes that the rules relating to the loading of guano on the west coast of South America apply to all vessels indiscriminately; and he cannot see that Canadian ship-owners who employ a large amount of their tonnage in that trade, can fairly object to such rules, arbitrary though they be, when they are aware they are enforced on all alike.

If foreign ships are to have equal rights and privileges in the British carrying trade with British ships, care must be taken in future legislation that no undue advantage be given to them in any respect whatever, either directly or indirectly. Legislation having any other effect must eventually be injurious to the interests of British ship-owners and tend to the depreciation and reduction of our Merchant Marine.

With regard to British ships in foreign ports the undersigned is of opinion that no Imperial legislation should be adopted rendering such ships liable to any restrictions or penalties while carrying cargoes from foreign ports to the United Kingdom, or