

P A P E R S

RELATIVE TO

DESERTIONS FROM SHIPS OF WAR

STATIONED AT WELLINGTON.

PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES BY COMMAND OF HIS EXCELLENCY,
14TH JUNE, 1861.

PAPERS RELATIVE TO DESERTIONS FROM SHIPS OF WAR STATIONED AT WELLINGTON.

No. 1.

COMMODORE SEYMOUR TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR.

H. M. S. "Pelorus,"
Auckland, 19th February, 1861.

SIR,—

I have the honor to inform your Excellency that Commander Cator having reported to me that the tranquility of Wellington remains undisturbed, I have withdrawn the "Fawn" from her Station at Port Nicholson, and I regret to say that I cannot, consistent with the duty I owe to Her Majesty's Service, consent to allow another of Her Majesty's Ships to be stationed at Wellington, so long as the crimping which prevails there both for the Sheep Farms and the Coasting Trade, is allowed to remain on its present footing.

During the past month 18 Seamen deserted from the "Fawn" at Wellington, not one of whom, in all probability, will be recovered, as no attempt has been made to regulate the entries and discharges of Seamen, either in the coasting or the long sea trade at that Port. There is no such an Official as a Shipping Master and every Seaman entering Port Nicholson is apparently free to come and go as he pleases.

Desertion is not confined to Ships of the Royal Navy, the Steamer "Robert Lowe" having lost 7 men during her short stay there: the police is utterly inefficient, and a licence prevails which is most prejudicial to Her Majesty's Service—under all which circumstances your Excellency will doubtless coincide with me in thinking that it is not advisable to station one of Her Majesty's Ships at Wellington.

I have, &c.,
F. BEAUCHAMP SEYMOUR,
Commodore.

To His Excellency
Colonel Gore Browne, C.B.,
&c., &c., &c.

No. 2.

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR TO COMMODORE SEYMOUR.

Government House,
19th February, 1861.

SIR,—

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of this day's date reporting that owing to the insufficient measures in force at Port Nicholson for the prevention of desertions in the Navy, you do not consider it will be conducive to the good of Her Majesty's Service to permit one of Her Majesty's Ships to remain at that Port.

Under the circumstances you have stated I agree with you in thinking it not advisable to station one of Her Majesty's Ships at Wellington.

I have, &c.,
T. GORE BROWNE.

Commodore Seymour, &c., &c.,
Auckland.

No. 3.

MR. PORTER TO THE COLLECTOR OF CUSTOMS, WELLINGTON.

Office of Commissioner of Customs,
Auckland, 26th February, 1861.

SIR,—

I have the honor, by direction of the Commissioner of Customs, to forward copy of a letter for Commodore Seymour to His Excellency the Governor, dated the 19th instant, complaining that no attempt is made to regulate the entries and discharges of Seamen at the Port of Wellington.

(No. 75.)

As the engagement and discharge of Seamen is regulated by the Imperial Act of Parliament, "The Merchant Shipping Act, 1854," under which Act the Chief Officer of Customs in the absence of a Public Shipping Master, is bound to act as such. I am to request you to furnish a report on the Commodore's representation for the Commissioner's information.

I have, &c.,

R. F. PORTER.

The Collector, H. M. Customs,
Wellington.

No. 4.

COLLECTOR OF CUSTOMS, WELLINGTON, TO THE COMMISSIONER OF CUSTOMS.

Custom House,
Wellington, 21st March, 1861.

SIR,—

I do myself the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 26th ult., No. 75, and beg leave to state for the information of His Excellency the Governor that the engagement and discharge of Seamen is properly conducted at this Port by myself, and regular returns furnished to the proper Officer in Great Britain. I further state that I do not know of a single instance of the discharge or engagement of a Seaman since the passing of the "Merchant Shipping Act, 1854," except before myself or the next superior Officer of Customs at this Port, the information Commodore Seymour has received on this point is utterly untrustworthy and without foundation.

I have, &c.,

S. CARKEEK,
Collector.

The Honorable the Commissioner
H. M. Customs, Auckland.

No. 5.

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR TO COMMODORE SEYMOUR.

Government House,
Auckland, 19th April, 1861.

SIR,—

Referring to your Letter of the 19th February last, complaining of the system of crimping which prevails at Wellington, and of the absence of any Regulation for the entries and discharges of Seamen there; I have to observe that the engagement and discharge of Seamen is regulated by the Imperial Act of Parliament, "The Merchant Shipping Act, 1854," under which the Chief Officer of Customs, in the absence of a Public Shipping Master, is bound to act as such; and that in reference to your letter to the Collector of Customs at Wellington, that Officer reports that the engagement and discharge of Seamen is properly conducted by himself, and regular Returns furnished to the proper Officer in Great Britain. He further states that he does not know of a single instance of the discharge or engagement of a Seaman since the passing of the Imperial Act above referred to, except before himself or the next Superior Officer of Customs at Wellington.

A copy of your Letter complaining of the inefficiency of the Police at Wellington has been sent to the Superintendent of that Province, under whose entire control that Force is placed by Law.

I have, &c.

T. GORE BROWNE.

Commodore Seymour, R.N.,
H.M.S. "Pelorus."

No. 6.

COMMODORE SEYMOUR TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR.

"Pelorus," Auckland,
21st April, 1861.

SIR,—

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your Excellency's letter No. 20, of the 19th instant, and I am glad to hear that the "engagement and discharge of Seamen at Wellington" is regulated by the Imperial Act of Parliament, but as the Collector of Customs does not state whether the Coasting trade of that Port is also under his superintendence; in the absence of a Shipping

Master; I very much fear that the official report made to me by Commander Cator of Her Majesty's Sloop "Fawn" on the subject, will be found to be a correct one in all particulars.

I have, &c.,

F. BEAUCHAMP SEYMOUR,
Commodore.

His Excellency Colonel Gore Browne, C.B.,
&c., &c., &c.,
Governor of New Zealand.

No. 7.

MR. STAFFORD TO THE SUPERINTENDENT OF WELLINGTON.

Colonial Secretary's Office,
Auckland, April 6th, 1861.

SIR,—

I have the honor to enclose a copy of a Letter dated 19th February last, from Commodore Seymour to His Excellency the Governor, and to call your Honor's attention to the last paragraph, in which the Commodore complains of the inefficiency of the Police at Wellington in the recovery of Seamen who have deserted.

I have, &c.,

His Honor the Superintendent,
Wellington.

E. W. STAFFORD.

No. 8.

THE SUPERINTENDENT OF WELLINGTON TO THE COLONIAL SECRETARY.

Superintendent's Office,
Wellington, 29th May, 1861.

SIR,—

I have the honor to acknowledge your letter of the 6th ultimo, enclosing a copy of one addressed to His Excellency the Governor by Commodore Seymour, in which the Commodore complains of the inefficiency of the Police of Wellington in the recovery of Seamen who have deserted, and of a license prevailing most prejudicial to Her Majesty's Service.

While I admit that during the long and ultimately fatal illness of the late Head of the Police, the efficiency of the Police Force was seriously impaired, I do not think that the Commodore's statements are borne out by facts, or that he is justified in making so sweeping a denunciation as that contained in his letter.

Commodore Seymour states that "eighteen men deserted from the 'Fawn' in January last, not one of whom in all probability will be recovered"; but the Commodore omits to mention the number of desertions from the "Fawn" during other periods, and from the "Pelorus" during the time she was in this harbour; he also omits to state the number of men who have been recovered by the Police.

Now from a Return before me, it appears that the Police have apprehended nine deserters from the "Fawn," and three from the "Pelorus," and I have no doubt more would have been taken had proper notice been given to the Police.

From what I can learn the custom of Commodore Seymour and his Officers is not to give notice of the absence of Seamen until some time after their leave of liberty has expired, and not to denounce them as deserters until there is a certainty that they have absconded. His practice of course, gives men intending to desert a clear start of several days before any one can be dispatched in pursuit of them, and affords them an opportunity of escaping by vessels leaving the harbour, long before any notice whatever has been given to the Police,—and yet in no instance that I am aware of, have vessels leaving the harbour while these desertions were taking place, been boarded and searched by Officers of Her Majesty's Ships.

Another difficulty under which the Police labour, arises from the fact that there are certain deserters of whom no description is given, and whose apprehension the Police very naturally conclude, is not desired. My own instructions to the Police to use their best exertions, and to spare no expense in recovering deserters from Her Majesty's Ships, have been most imperative, and I have every reason to believe that they have been honestly and diligently carried out.

Whether the Commodore, (admitting that all his charges against the Police of Wellington are well founded), is justified in refusing to station one of Her Majesty's Ships in this Port, thereby depriving the Province of Wellington of that protection which it was the intention of the Imperial Government to afford to the whole Colony when it consented to place so large a Naval Force at the disposal of the Governor, is a question solely for the consideration of His Excellency's Government.

I have, &c.,

I. E. FEATHERSTON,
Superintendent.

The Honourable
The Colonial Secretary,
Auckland.

No. 9.

COPY OF A DESPATCH FROM HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF NEWCASTLE TO GOVERNOR
GORE BROWNE, C.B.

Downing Street,
25th March, 1861.

NEW ZEALAND.

SIR,—

(No. 31.)

I transmit to you for your information the copy of a Letter from the Admiralty enclosing copy of one from the Officer Commanding on the Australian Station, in which he adverts to the number of desertions which have recently taken place from Her Majesty's Ship "Pelorus" while stationed at Wellington.

I have to call your serious attention to Commodore Seymour's statement that neither the Police nor the Local Authorities afforded him any assistance towards checking this evil, and I cannot but consider that he will be fully justified in withdrawing from the Port of Wellington, any Vessels now stationed there, if the Local Authorities refuse to give him that assistance which, under present circumstances is so eminently due to those in command of Her Majesty's Military and Naval Forces in New Zealand.

I have, &c.,

Governor Gore Browne, C.B.,
&c., &c., &c.

NEWCASTLE.

Enclosure in No. 9.

MR. ROMAINÉ TO THE UNDER-SECRETARY, COLONIAL OFFICE.

Admiralty,
21st March, 1861.

SIR,—

I am commanded by My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to send you herewith to be laid before the Secretary of State, the accompanying copy of a Letter received from Commodore Seymour in command of Her Majesty's Ships and Vessels on the Australian Station, giving an account of desertions from the "Pelorus," and shewing that during the period between May and December, 1860, the number was greater than over a period of upwards of three previous years which he attributes to the system of crimping carried on at Wellington for the Sheep Farmers, and which neither the Police nor the Local Authorities attempt to check;—in bringing this subject under the notice of His Grace the Duke of Newcastle, My Lords would request that the attention of the Colonial Authorities at Wellington may be drawn to the complaint made by Commodore Seymour.

I am, &c.,

The Under Secretary of State,
Colonial Office.

W. G. ROMAINÉ.

Sub-Enclosure to Enclosure in No. 9.

COMMODORE SEYMOUR TO THE SECRETARY TO THE ADMIRALTY.

Desertions from H.M.S. "Pelorus."

Camp, Waitara,
9th January, 1861.

SIR,—

In forwarding the accompanying Return of desertions from H.M.S. "Pelorus," I beg to be allowed to call the notice of My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to the fact that between the 16th July, 1857 and 18th September, 1860, the amount of desertion had been infinitesimally small, only two A.B.'s and one Cooper's crew having absconded from her during that period, fifteen months of which we passed in the Australian waters.

2. In the list now forwarded, nine cases of desertion are enumerated, and all in a space of three months,—this has resulted, excepting in one instance, that of an Acting Mate, from the system of crimping for the Sheep Farmers which prevails at Wellington, where the "Pelorus" was stationed from the 14th May to the 20th December last, and which neither the Police nor the Local Authorities attempt to check.

3. The "Fawn" which is manned almost entirely with young Merchant Seamen, has now relieved the "Pelorus," and should desertions take place from her in the same proportion, I shall, despite the remonstrances of the Colonial Government, withdraw Her Majesty's Ships from those waters.

I have, &c.,

F. BEAUCHAMP SEYMOUR,
Commodore Commanding the Australian Station.

The Secretary of the Admiralty,
London, S.W.