

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

SIR,—

I had the honour, on the 4th January last, of addressing a letter to you calling your attention to the provisions of section 10 of the New Zealand "Shipping and Seamen's Act Amendment Act, 1896," and, in reply, I was informed, under date of the 11th January last, that a copy of the Act had not been then received at the Colonial Office, but that when one was received the objection put forward in my letter would receive your consideration.

I am now directed by the executive council of this Chamber to state that they observe that in a speech of the New Zealand Premier (Mr. Seddon), which was delivered at the banquet of the Marine Engineers' Union at the Holborn Restaurant on the 2nd instant, that gentleman is reported in the *Shipping Gazette* of yesterday to have spoken as follows:—

"In New Zealand they had placed upon the statute-book a measure known as the Shipping and Seamen's Act. . . . He might add that not only had New Zealand done this—and he hoped that he was not saying a single word that would cause discord—(No, no)—but they had said that whenever any steamer whatever came to their ports the engineers should receive what was fixed and determined as being the current salaries payable in that Colony of New Zealand. That had been brought about in the Act of last session, and they claimed that it had been for the protection of commerce, not only of the colony, but of the Empire."

If this be correct the Act will affect—as I submitted to you in my letter of the 4th January last would probably be the case—the contracts of British shipowners made here with the engineers on board of their vessels trading to New Zealand.

As my council presume that by this time a copy of the New Zealand Act must have reached the Colonial Office, I am directed by them to respectfully ask that you would advise Her Majesty, for the reasons stated in my letter of the 4th January last, to refuse her Royal assent to the Act until the provisions of section 10 are either struck out or amended.

I have, &c.,

The 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., 19th June, 1897.

I am directed by Mr. Secretary Chamberlain to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 4th instant, respecting section 10 of the New Zealand "Shipping and Seamen's Act Amendment Act, 1896," and to inform you that Her Majesty's Government have now received the Act in question, and are in communication with the Colonial Government on the subject.

I am to request you to point out to the Chamber that a vessel trading on time charter between different ports in New Zealand would be practically a vessel engaged in the coasting trade of the colony, in respect of which the colonial Legislature has full power to legislate.

I am to take this opportunity of suggesting that the Chamber might take the opportunity of Mr. Seddon's presence in this country to bring their views on this question to his notice.

I am, &c.,

The Secretary, Chamber of Shipping of the United Kingdom.

JOHN BRAMSTON.

Westminster Chambers, 13, Victoria Street, London, S.W.,  
29th July, 1897.

SIR,—

I am directed by the Agent-General to forward, for the information of the Secretary of State, copy of letter addressed by the Premier of New Zealand to the Chamber of Shipping of the United Kingdom.

I have, &c.,

WALTER KENNAWAY.

The Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Downing Street, S.W.

DEAR SIR,—

Hotel Cecil, Strand, W.C., 25th July, 1897.

On receipt of your letter of the 6th July the same was formally acknowledged. I notice in perusing the communication in question that you stated that it was understood at the interview that the object of the New Zealand Government was to restrict the New Zealand coasting trade to the British flag.

I stated at the interview, which was certainly somewhat unique, that the legislation in question would assist in maintaining the position of our trade with the Mother-country; that it prevented foreign vessels, or vessels even under the flag, coming and periodically depleting the coastal trade to the detriment of the colony; and that in some cases the ships were manned by coloured and underpaid labour. I further pointed out to you that those engaged in the colonial trade have not complained at the legislation; and that it does not affect any one unless they accept freights from port to port, and by this voluntary action bring themselves under the Act in question.

As to the law of contract, it is unnecessary for me to point out to you that so long as contracts are within the law they hold good. Contracts entered into and within the law in New Zealand, if outside the law obtaining in Great Britain, would be void. In self-governing colonies we find it necessary, in our own interests, to pass legislation local in application; but that it would be well to have a codification and consultation for commercial laws I admit, and to this end a Commission has already been appointed. But in respect to the legislation of which you complain, we are within our constitutional rights. There is no disadvantage to shipowners, while there is a distinct advantage to the people of our colony.