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GOVERNMENTS

Reciprocal guarantees key to Liner Code accord with US

Tony Redding

A THIRD round of talks designed to avoid a serious dispute between the United States and other Western shipping nations over the UNCTAD Liner Code has been held in London.

Top of the agenda at the key meeting was the search for a formula which will avoid a split with the United States on the Liner Code.

The Code could enter into force at the end of this year, if accepted by the Member States of the European Community. While the EEC has accepted the Code in a modified form, known as the 'Brussels Package' (allowing for non-protectionist arrangements among the developed countries) and Japan has accepted, as it is not a significant cross-trader, the Americans have rejected it as a protectionist measure.

The cross-trading European shipping nations have been anxious to put their case for a halt to bi-lateral shipping deals between the United States and Asian and Latin American countries.

A senior source within the UK Department of Trade told LSM that the Third Round talks were designed to move on to different ground — centring on the issue of reciprocal guarantees of competitive access.

Past talks have seen emergence of American demands that, in the event of their non-conference lines being excluded from certain routes due to the application of the Liner Code, these lines would then be allowed to join closed conferences.

The DoT official said that the idea of reciprocal guarantees was 'fine in principle'. But: 'It is really a question of what we are actually in a position to guarantee. What can be done, for example, if a country simply decides that third-flag carriers are not to be permitted?

'Undoubtedly, the crucial point concerns guarantees and entry into closed conferences.' He made it clear that there could be no 'free' entry into such conferences.

Meanwhile, the Greek shipowning lobby has been campaigning in Washington for support in its attempt to win modification of EEC policy on the Liner Code. The Greek owners have stressed their opposition to such regulation of shipping trades.

In Britain, the implementing regulations for the Liner Code are expected during

May. The enabling law (the Merchant Shipping (Liner Conferences) Act) was passed last year. It is known that the proposed regulations proved extremely difficult to draft. A period of consultation is now under way.

The Liner Code will enter into effect six months after ratification by 24 states with at least 25% of world tonnage.

BERMUDA

Grounding brings 'no-go' zone call

A CALL for the introduction of a prohibited zone around Bermuda has been made, following the grounding of the Liberian tanker 'Tifoso' in January of this year.

The official report of the inquiry into the incident stressed the potential pollution threat from tankers operating in these waters and the dire consequences that such a disaster would have on the tourist industry.

The *Tifoso* grounded on a reef 11 miles off Bermuda. Fortunately, she was in ballast, and hundreds of tons of fuel oil were off-loaded to reduce pollution risks. The inquiry report recommended that charts should be amended to show a prohibited zone.

IMO

Srivastava rejects 'toothless' criticism

'THE most important single instrument dealing with the human element in shipping' was how International Maritime Organisation Secretary-General, C.P. Srivastava, described the 1978 Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watch-keeping.

Srivastava made the statement on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of IMO (Mar 17) to stress the importance of maritime training. SC'TW is now nearing

fulfilment of entry-into-force requirements.

The Secretary-General also acknowledged that the growth in IMO membership, now totalling 122 countries, had brought problems as well as benefits. Many of the emerging nations faced great difficulties in achieving compliance with conventions and protocols incorporating IMO was responding to this problem by stepping up its technical assistance programmes of the Third World shipping nations.

He also underlined the new initiative to set up the World Maritime University at Malmö, which will open on July 4.

Srivastava strongly rejected the arguments of critics who have attacked IMO's lack of teeth to enforce its international conventions. He posed the question: 'How can IMO enforce an instrument in respect of a state which is unwilling to do so?'

Commenting on criticism that IMO moved too slowly in its efforts to achieve implementation of international measures, he declared: 'We now have 28 conventions and protocols incorporating standards on nearly every aspect of shipping. These standards have all been developed within a reasonable time. There has not been a single conference organised by this organisation which has failed and there has been no wastage of effort.'

INMARSAT guides

THE INMARSAT satellite communications organization has issued two publications for shore users. The first, 'Shore-Ship Calling Procedures', sets out instructions for calling vessels in the 1,600-strong satcom-equipped fleets. The second guide, the 'Ship Earth Station Directory', lists the seven-digit identity numbers of satcom vessels.

REGULATIONS

The 1976 INMARSAT Convention: the United Arab Emirates acceded Jan 13.

The 1954 Oil Pollution Convention: Vanuatu accepted Feb 2.

The 1969 Civil Liability, Oil Pollution Damage, Convention: Vanuatu acceded Feb 2.

The 1969 Tonnage Measurement Convention: Kuwait accepted Mar 3.

The 1974 SOLAS Convention: Fiji acceded Mar 4.

The 1972 International Collision Regulations: Fiji acceded Mar 4.

The 1971 Fund Convention: Fiji acceded Mar 4.