

Clampdown on certificates for foreign officers

I READ in the November 2004 Telegraph (which I found onboard the ship I was serving) about NUMAST's concern over jobs threats in the marine industry for British seafarers.

If NUMAST wants to keep British seafarers' jobs, then it will have to very vigorously lobby the British government to stop non-UK Certificate of Competency holders from obtaining Equivalent UK CoCs on the basis of their national CoCs.

This action has been taken by many unions to protect the jobs of their members. One such clear example is that of the Canadian Seafarers' Union —

they lobbied the Canadian government and now all those seeking jobs on Canadian ships have to first appear for all the written and oral examinations, get their Canadian CoC and only then can work on Canadian ships.

No equivalent CoC is issued by Transport Canada — not even to UK CoC holders who were issued Canadian CoCs in the past.
H.M. FITTER

Was this John Prescott's striking vision?

I WAS amazed to read (October Telegraph, page 1) of a ship plying the oceans, registered in London, flying the red duster, and without one British soul onboard, manned by foreign nationals.



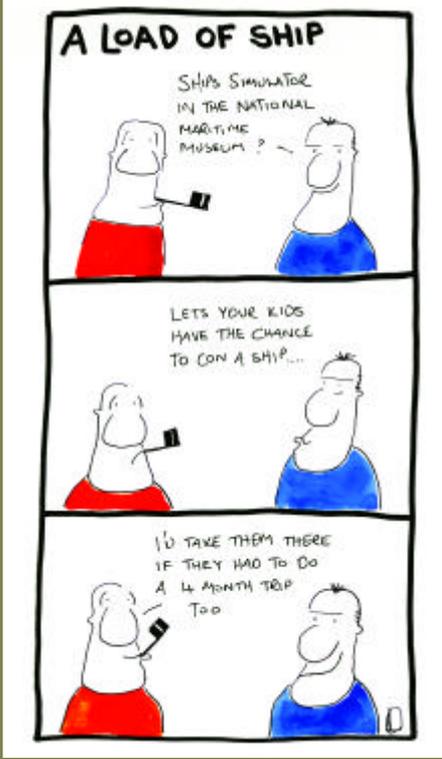
I refer, of course, to the Hyundai Dominion, above. Just how is this sort of thing allowed to go on? Was this John Prescott's vision when he led the NUS strike in the 1960s? Now that the

British flag is FoC, you can see why he was given a pat on the back by the shipowners — at the Baltic Exchange, earlier this year.
E.W. SHANNON
Retired member

What's on your mind?

Tell your fellow officers in NUMAST — and the wider world of shipping — through a letter to the Telegraph. Keep to a limit of 300 words if you can — though longer contributions will be considered. You may use a pen name or just your membership number if you don't want to be identified — say so in an accompanying note — but you must let the Telegraph have your name, address and membership number. Send your letter to the editor, Telegraph, NUMAST, 750-760 High Road, Leytonstone, London E11 3BB, or use head office fax 020 8530 1015, or e-mail telegraph@numast.org

The view from Muirhead



No distinction for FED

I READ with interest the comments regarding the abuse of foreign earnings deduction (letters, October Telegraph).

Having started my seagoing career some years ago as a cadet with P&OCL, moved on to a career in surveying, then come ashore as a VTS operator, I appreciate the issue from both sides.

I understand the frustration that this member's vessel was taken over by a group of whingeing individuals, but would like to assure him that this is not a fair representation of the offshore industry as a whole.

I do, though, take exception to the comments that individuals are 'abusing' the system.

As I understand it, foreign earnings

deduction applies to a diverse spectrum of people employed 'on seagoing vessels' and is not restricted to just 'deck and engineering' officers.

On a cruiseship, is it not normal for a barman or entertainer to be equally entitled to a discharge book and seaman's card, and ultimately to claim foreign earnings deduction?

The possession of a discharge book does in no way guarantee acceptance of claims for foreign earnings deduction. The fact remains, however, that if an individual is carrying out the duties of their employment, on a vessel which the Inland Revenue accepts as qualifying for seafaring status, a claim can still be agreed, even without a discharge book.

The statement that people are falsely

obtaining discharge books for the purpose of claiming foreign earnings deduction is somewhat profound and without substance.

It is also worth noting that the possibility exists that these people were actually self-employed (as they were obviously contractors/freelancers on a day rate) and would not, in fact, be able to claim foreign earnings deduction directly.

I believe NUMAST should clarify these allegations. As I understand it, as long as you serve on a qualifying vessel and qualify for the deduction there is no distinction between capacities.

MARK PAYNE
DipHS, MRICS, MCSE
Member of the Hydrographic Society

...but it's time to put an end to these abuses

I AM writing to say that I agree with member number 185852 on his views on abuse of the seafarers tax allowance system (letters October 2005).

I am employed worldwide on DSVs and the company I work for also permits this abuse.

I have even witnessed non-seafarers with discharge books taking a day jolly over to France to have their 'discharge books' stamped when a company ship is in port so they can claim to have a foreign port to assist in their next fraudulent tax claim. I have written to Cardiff Marine tax office regarding this problem, but seem to have got nowhere.

The company I work for seems to encourage 'supernumeraries' and offshore workers onboard by assisting them in obtaining discharge books, and booking their travel on seafarers' tickets.

These seafarers (?) have no seafarers' qualifications, ENG 1, STCW 95 documentation, but expect every consideration in their tax claims.

The company I work for seems to go further in permitting 'supernumeraries' to occupy officers' cabins — giving some of them single berth cabins while officers who are entitled to single accommodation are doubled up, contrary to various registry

regulations.

If and when the working time directive is settled in respect of holidays for offshore workers, I wonder whether these same people will expect to qualify for four weeks' holiday per year as an offshore worker as well as an FED claim as a seafarer!

I also feel there should be heavy fines for companies who assist non seafarers in falsely obtaining discharge books. Is this not also assisting to defraud the Inland Revenue?

Not signed on ships articles, no seafaring qualifications, no FED claim!
mem no 183556

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