

M.V. "NORA MAERSK"

In this letter Mr. Moller states that he has directed his Superintendent to consider very carefully, both in his existing vessels and in those building, the following problems:-

1. By what means can the danger of fire breaking out be avoided or reduced?
2. By what means can the likelihood of a fire, that has broken out, spreading be avoided or reduced?
3. If we fail therein, by what means can we reduce the possibility of a fire developing into a destructive calamity?

He asks that the Society will give him the benefit of their advice based on experience, and on the study which he presumes has been made of the whole problem.

Mr. Moller's ships are either cargo vessels or tankers. So far as the former are concerned it is assumed that he is aware of the usual causes which lead to fire. These are

Bad stowage, by which parcels of unsuitable cargo are stowed in close proximity to each other;

Spontaneous combustion, as in the case of coal; and

Careless operating of the ship in respect of the use of unprotected lights and imperfect control over electric leads.

Mr. Moller as a practical shipowner of great experience will be fully aware of the dangers involved in these respects, so that there is no need to enlarge upon them, but it would perhaps be useful to send Mr. Moller ^{an advance} a copy of the Chief Ship Surveyor's recent paper on "Safety at Sea", which is to be read in New York on September 15th, and to direct his attention to that part dealing with fire, which begins on page 12.

He might also be supplied with a copy of the report entitled "Fires in Merchant Ships" which was prepared for the information of the Committee and dated November, 1932.

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He might also be informed as follows:-

When a fire has broken out it can only spread if a sufficient supply of air is available to support and maintain the combustion, and therefore the arrangements which are usually made to limit the effect of a fire are in the direction of limiting the air supply. There are three methods usually quoted in this connection, namely:-

(a) A chemical form of fire extinguisher, in the form of Carbon Di-oxide or Sulphur Di-oxide gas. This involves a plant of some complexity and weight.

(b) Water; and

(c) Steam.

A great deal of difference of opinion exists as to the relative efficiency of these various methods of extinguishing a fire. So far as the first is concerned, a cargo owner must consider that its use may raise questions as to the integrity of cargo carried in other parts of the ship away from the immediate scene of the fire, the consignee of which may make claims in respect of damage due to faults of taste, smell, or colour.

Water is, strictly speaking, not a method of limitation of air to the seat of the fire but an endeavour to limit its scope by reducing the temperature. If water is used, a suitable installation of deck piping fed by an ample supply of water, and with numerous hose connections to the various parts of the ship, should be provided.

As steam is generally available, even on motorships, it provides a convenient means of dealing with fires, and by using the winch pipes and by adapting the hold sounding pipes an installation can be arranged at relatively small cost.

The Surveyors have witnessed tests of these various methods, and certain observations are contained in the report of November 1932 above mentioned. Experience available does not justify any definite preference being expressed.

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In the case of tankers, the systems of fire extinguishing by steam or by Carbon-Di-oxide gas have their advocates, but the leading Tanker Companies in this country lean to the view that the provision of perforated steam pipes in the different compartments is the most efficient means of dealing with an outbreak.

Some of Mr. Moller's ships are of the shelter deck type, and experience has proved that the fitting of steel fire-resisting bulkheads in positions corresponding to the watertight bulkheads below have a decided effect in limiting an outbreak of fire when it occurs. In the Chief Ship Surveyor's paper, of which Mr. Moller is receiving a copy, there are certain actual cases which are characteristic of several others in which it is clear that the presence of bulkheads or other fire-resisting material in the shelter 'tweendeck has substantially reduced any risk of damage to cargo and loss of life.

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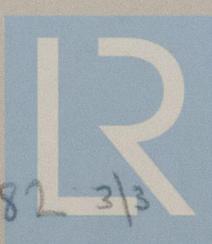
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P.C. etc. Cpn.*

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*Also advise
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 2.9.20

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