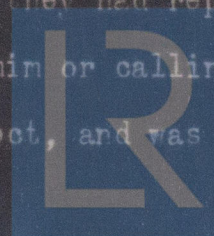


D U R B A N,

Natal, Sth. Africa.

21st May, 1930.

We learn here that the s.s. "Huntress", belonging to the Government of South Africa, has been in serious trouble at Singapore, where she has had to discharge her cargo of Rice and go into drydock for thorough repairs. It has come to my ears here that when she left this Port in January with a cargo of Coal, her collision bulkhead was leaking, and that the engine room bulkhead was also leaking, and that she was delayed loading her cargo coal on account of necessary repairs. No mention of this was made to Lloyd's Surveyor, and it looks as if the cause of the present trouble may be that the vessel was not in a fit state to load her cargo of rice. The Hulls, of course, are not insured, but the Union of South Africa run that risk themselves; the steamers being run by the Railways, which are also Government owned. I had a chat with Mr. -----, Surveyor here, and he tells me that he finds the Railway Administration are not anxious for his services in connection with repairs, if they can avoid it. He tells me that the s.s. "Aloe" had a cracked plate, which he found they had repaired by putting a patch over same, without notifying him or calling him in. He called to see the Port Captain on the subject, and was told by him that the

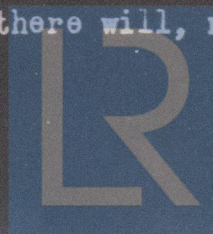


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ship was Government property, and that they could do with her as they liked. Mr. ----- said, "Oh yes, that is all very well, but you must understand that, if you do this kind of thing, in the event of your steamers carrying general cargo for other people instead of Government cargo, you may one day get into serious trouble, as, in the event of any repairs being needed to the hull of any of your steamers, the same should be certified by me".

These steamers are the s.s. "Huntress", s.s. "Aloe" and s.s. "Erica", and they have been used by the Government for bringing cargoes of Railway Sleepers from Australia, being Government property, and are generally chartered outwards from here for cargoes of Coal. It now seems that the Government are going in for Steel Sleepers instead of Wooden Sleepers, and they are consequently finding difficulty in getting cargo for their steamers to South Africa, and are interfering with the regular Lines bringing cargoes of Rice &c. to Africa, Mauritius and Reunion from the Far East. This being the case, naturally we want to see that they at least keep their steamers in good order and condition, and in all their ways should be on the same footing as the regular Lines.

I do not know who the cargo Underwriters are in the case of the s.s. "Huntress", but as there will, no doubt, be a very



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heavy General Average to be settled, I thought it as well to give you the facts, as they have come to my knowledge.

You could, no doubt, arrange to let any Lloyd's Underwriters know what I have written, should they be interested in the cargo.



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