

FORUM

'The Dover Strait Information Service'

Captain R. H. Parry

CAPTAIN R. K. Emden in his paper in the April 1975 issue of this *Journal* notes on page 135 that 'the chief problem' is 'to identify by name and port of registry the radar "blip" deemed to be a contravening ship', and that 'the problem will be exacerbated as the Service expands'. In the discussion which followed Commander R. B. Richardson mentioned the m.f./d.f. receivers being used to assist ships to keep in lanes, and Captain Lusted mentioned investigations into the use of shore based v.h.f./d.f. for identifying ships.

In a paper which I read in March to the Hong Kong Branch of the Institute, I mentioned a paper by H. J. Haase—'Possibilities of using the v.h.f. transceiver in traffic surveillance systems' in the *Bulletin de L'A.I.S.M.*, Paris, No. 59-1974-2. In my opinion this latter paper contains observations of such far-reaching importance to navigation as a controlled group activity that I consider their general promulgation to those directly concerned with that activity to be essential. Mr. Haase points out that with the provision of direction-finders of sufficient accuracy in the v.h.f.-band, and some modifications to the shipborne v.h.f.-transceiver, a system can be implemented whereby the shipborne v.h.f.-set becomes a transponder and *the position* as well as identification of the ship can be ascertained. Experiments show that this can be successfully achieved. He goes on to consider the introduction of selective calling techniques under the Radio Regulations and the benefits of this facility, insofar as by selectively calling a vessel the shore base will be able to locate it as soon as the person on board operates the 'press to talk' button. He also draws attention to a supplementary application of selective calling which could be achieved by the introduction of an additional signal to key the transmitter of the selectively called vessel, thus enabling the shore base to *locate and identify* that vessel *without* active response on the part of any personnel on board that vessel. From another (commercial) source of information I learn that such an application could be achieved with 'only minor modifications of the selective call device as planned today'.

The beneficial effect that the widespread introduction of such facilities in busy waters, such as the English Channel, could have is so evident that surely steps should be taken to develop and establish such facilities as quickly as possible, so that Captain Emden's 'paramount aim' of safety can become that much more a reality.

Patterns in Encounters Between Ships

G. J. P. Lang

As one of the perhaps 'younger personnel' mentioned by P. R. J. Rawlinson in his note (this *Journal*, 28, 243) I would like to make a few points. First and

foremost, in agreeing with him, I can best quote the Preliminary to the Steering and Sailing Rules of the Rules and Regulations for Preventing Collision at Sea, 1965: 'In obeying and construing these rules, any action taken should be positive, in ample time, and with due regard to the observance of good seamanship . . .'

I hardly think that Spooner's vessel abided by the above conditions. Action may have been positive but at three miles, in unlimited searoom, it would not appear to be in ample time. A report at three miles, in good visibility, and the fact that the 'stand-on' vessel altered (presumably invoking Rule 21) certainly seems to me to strain the phrase 'observance of good seamanship'. It would appear to be another example to the old question as to what constitutes ample sea room 'ample time' and 'close quarter situation'. It is my practice to pass all other vessels at a minimum distance of two miles and I usually alter course at about five miles, sometimes earlier for faster or bigger vessels. In my experience this tends to avoid any confusion about anyone's intentions.

As to Rawlinson's remarks concerning the use of radar in clear weather, in my previous company it was a rule that all vessels kept their radars operating between sunset and sunrise regardless of visibility. In my present company it is policy to have the radar on from commencement to termination of voyage; these voyages include the Persian Gulf/Europe run and trans-Pacific voyages. The radars work well and I am assured that much trouble caused by indiscriminate switching on and off is avoided.

I always maintain a visual lookout, but am also aware of the visibility at all times and am always in a position to practise 'clear weather plotting'; both aids to greater safety.