



Fair Play or is there?

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Abstract

INTRODUCTION

The author doubts that there is the desired amount of fair play between the powers that be ashore and those working at sea. This paper asks a number of thought-provoking questions without providing answers trusting that eventually and hopefully sooner than later, realistic results may come to the fore.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

1. On-board expertise
Shore-based institutions, both corporate and official, take it for granted that ship masters and chief engineers have more than a basic grip of a vast number of disciplines, ranging from seafaring to leadership to codes, rules and regulations to safety and security, far too many to enumerate in this abstract. Are we being fair and reasonable, and what can be done to resolve this situation?
2. Shore-based expertise
Not a single person in any organisation ashore can truthfully claim to have a firm grasp of all those disciplines. Instead, there are many specialists, but do they really know what happens on board ships? What can terminal staff realistically do to improve their maritime knowledge?
3. Is there enough communication?
What can be done to improve two-way communication? Do we encourage dialogue and feedback? Are we making sufficient use of experience?

SELECTED DETAILED QUESTIONS

1. Responsibilities along the distribution chain
Are shippers (the term includes freight forwarders) aware of their responsibilities when stuffing containers, and when declaring contents and weights? Barring the chemical experts, do shippers realise the importance of the IMDG Code?
2. Working hours
Realistically, how can a master or a chief engineer on board, say, a busy Baltic Sea feeder ship, comply with the "W" part of the STCW Code?
3. Garbage and slops
Why is there no binding international legislation making it mandatory for all ports to provide receiving facilities for garbage and slops, at reasonable fees?
4. Ballast water
Are all ships designed to comply with the rules dealing with ballast water treatment?
5. Port State Control
If in some countries PSC lacks suitably trained officers and if ship masters find themselves at the mercy of overbearing or blackmailing PSC personnel, where are the institutions which can give instant relief?



6. Security – ISPS

What can be done to make the ISPS Code more practice-oriented? Are ISPS responsibilities evenly distributed among port facilities and ships?

7. Safety – ISM

Other than through PSC, whose officers are sometimes unaware of the finer points of ISM compliance, and flag state supervision, where are the remedies against 'off-the-shelf' ISM documentation being put on board minus any shipboard training, audits, reporting, etc.?

8. Paperwork

It is probably true that, considering STCW and the facts of on-board life, masters, officers and engineers often find themselves unable to cope with the paperwork they are expected to complete. And who is being made responsible for gaps, errors and omissions?

CONCLUSION

Are we being fair to those working at sea? And what should we do to remedy the situation?