'Requirements for an Automatic Collision Avoidance System'

from Lt Cdr R. W. Cooper

I am disturbed by Perkins and Redfern's paper in the May 1996 Journal.[1]

The COLREGS have been developed over many years of tinkering and tuning. They are not designed only for educated European masters driving big merchant ships. The users; fishermen, yachtsmen, oarsmen, tugmasters, Rhine bargemasters, and Yangtse junkmen, etc, are from all educational standards and from all the world's cultures. The COLREGS are now well-known. There is such a huge investment of time and effort, of learning by millions of different people, that the prospect of tampering with their fundamentals is horrific, even if it would suit a small class of user belonging to the more advanced countries. Change is painful, and too much change, too fast, kills. Compare the practical decision not to change the side of the road on which we British drive: it might be convenient, but it would cost too much. The same applies to the COLREGS.

What is needed to reduce collisions can be deduced from the paper by Professor Motte in the January issue.[2] If big ship operators gave more attention to officer selection and training there would be fewer collisions. From a collision point of view, the sea feels more dangerous nowadays after a substantial input from scientists than it was when I first went to sea before radar, when it was far more crowded, but bridge discipline was strict. *Cost Cutting Causes Collisions!*

The COLREGS have stood the test of time, and they are fundamentally good. It is the practitioners who are at fault. It is no use the surgeon blaming the scalpel if he cuts himself with it.

REFERENCES

[1] Perkins, C. and Redfern, A. (1996). Requirements for coordination and the application of an automatic collision avoidance system. This *Journal*, **49**, 129.

[2] Motte, R. (1996). Safe navigation, ship loss and applications of technology. This *Journal*, **49**, 36.

KEY WORDS

1. Collision avoidance. 2. Collision regulations. 3. Safety.