

Letters to the Editor

RADAR USAGE AND SPEED IN FOG

SIR,

In Vol. V, p. 101, Captain Robb continues the discussion on his article. I feel that it is worth prolonging, at least until all misunderstandings are removed.

In his para. 3 there seems to me to be a contradiction. In my view speed is as much a part of 'manœuvre' as course. Maintenance or alteration of either may avoid or invite collision. The speed of all ships, radar-fitted or not, at a meeting-place or in a traffic lane, in conjunction with the extent of visibility, has an undoubted effect on the general risk of collision, quite apart from any alterations which may be made.

Of all the 'circumstances and conditions' which must enter into a full appreciation for the assessment of moderate speed, Captain Robb's moderate speed formula takes account of two only: the detection range appropriate to the locality and the astern power of the ship. Once these have been assessed the formula gives a precise answer in terms of speed. Admittedly in his article Captain Robb mentions efficient radar cover and efficient use of radar information as essential factors to acceptance of the formula, but, even assuming an equipment of high quality on installation, these factors are known to be variable over wide limits in the general case. Is it safe to assume that all seamen, anxious to hurry along on their ways, will, or will be able to, reach a re-assessment of speed to suit the instrumental and personal efficiency of the moment?

Estimating the visibility is certainly one of the difficulties which face the seaman in deciding on a current interpretation of the unwritten rule for moderate speed in fog. If efficient radar efficiently used may be regarded as one of the 'circumstances and conditions', it certainly reduces the importance of an accurate estimate of the visibility; but the extent to which it may do so clearly rests with the individual who is in a position to estimate the various efficiencies, including his own.

Some of the variables which radar usage brings along with it in this connection would be disclosed by the answers to the following questions, which might be posed by an Admiralty lawyer (despite all efforts to keep him out of the kitchen!).

Have you a good radar set?

How do you judge its goodness?

Was it working?

Was it working well? How well?

Are you experienced in its operation?

Are you experienced in taking action on radar information?

Were you plotting the observations of the target in question?

Are you experienced in plotting?

The questions, the answers to most of which depend upon the opinions of individuals, who themselves vary between wide limits, comprise but a few of those which come to mind. The implications of their intrusion appear to me far to outweigh the alleged removal of the need to estimate the visibility. I do not believe that any practical formula can resolve these uncertainties effectively and

I suggest that to place one claiming to do so in the hands of many who will fail to appreciate its limitations would be of little service to the cause of safe navigation.

Radio Advisory Service,
Cory Buildings,
117 Fenchurch Street,
London, E.C.3.

Yours faithfully,
F. J. WYLIE.

SIR,

Whilst not wishing to prolong correspondence on 'Radar Usage & Speed in Fog', may I refer to the remark of Captain Robb in his letter: 'Thou shalt not be found out'? I have held that a man is not in legal jeopardy until he is before a court, and he won't appear there unless he has (in this instance) collided. Near misses and unconventional tactics, though from a seaman's view reprehensible, will not ensure his arrival at the place of retribution; in short, if collision is avoided even by non-adherence to the Rule of the Road, repercussions are unlikely. It may be bad seamanship to stop when in doubt and let the other vessel contemplate the circumstances but I feel it is a sounder procedure than to steam along assuming knowledge one 'doesn't possess. 'Thou shalt not be found out' is a good commandment, and you won't be unless you collide. Some years ago, in broad daylight, I missed a ship by the thickness of a visiting card. I am uncertain of her nationality, but about 14 different tongues called down blessings on my head till I went into the chart house and shut the door. But for a millimetre, I would be writing you from Dartmoor, but, of course, there was no collision and I wasn't found out, Rule of the Road notwithstanding.

Legally, I believe, a near miss is tantamount to collision, since the essence of faulty navigation is there and, in event of collision, the extent of damage is immaterial to the navigational offence; but the guilty navigator who misses fortunately misses publicity too.

Mill View,
Outwood,
Redhill.

Yours faithfully,
RONALD G. BOLTON.

LE RADAR DE NAVIGATION

SIR,

In my review of *Le Radar de Navigation* (Vol. V, p. 96) I wrote that the book was '... the work of a philosopher rather than a navigator; of a man who reaches his conclusions by reflection rather than from experience'. Since the time of writing my attention has been drawn to the fact that Professor Hugon, the author, has had considerable seagoing experience, much of it in command of French naval vessels. I would like, therefore, to correct any false impression my review may have given of the author's qualifications. I may perhaps add that the point I had in making my remark was to congratulate the author on coming to conclusions which few users of radar would dispute.

I am, Sir,
Your Reviewer, L. S. L.