

Merchant Marine Vitaly Needed by U. S.--Federal Operation Impossible

(The Summer Nebraskan herewith prints the first of a series of eight articles by Albert D. Lasker, chairman of the United States shipping board, in which he will explain the conditions of the American merchant marine).

By Albert D. Lasker, Chairman U. S.

Shipping Board

Nations, like individuals, are seldom the masters of their own destinies. Whether America wills it or no, the time has come when we must perforce occupy the first place on the stage of world commerce—a place never occupied in history by any nation not strong in its own right in sea power. Sea power means a strong merchant marine; for there is no need of a navy save to protect the nationals, the shores, and the water transportation of a nation.

The first act ever passed by an American congress was one designed to encourage American shipping. During the period from the establishment of our republic until the civil war, America developed into one of the leading maritime nations of the world.

Halted by Civil War

With the finding of gold in California, the lure of adventure and profit attracted our young men from the seaboard and the Alleghenies to the great and at the time, undeveloped empire lying to the westward. The movement then inaugurated (a movement of vast importance to ourselves and, indeed, the whole world) marked the beginning of the decline of the American merchant marine.

The hurt given our merchant marine through the civil war, historically known to all, followed by the great demand for men and capital in the development of our country, resulted in a steady drop of interest in shipping.

At Outset of World War

At the start of the world war in 1914, America's passenger fleet in the North Atlantic had dwindled to the shameful total of six, to-wit: The Finland, Kroonland, St. Paul, St. Louis, Philadelphia and New York. The aid given them in the way of postal subsidy by our government was undoubtedly the chief reason four of them were able to continue in service at that date.

In other words, 1914 found us no longer a merchant marine power, but one utterly dependent on foreign flags for the carriage of our surpluses; and, of course, we had had to pay, and pay heavily, for the service rendered by them.

Fortunately for us, Great Britain and its allies, in the prosecution of the world war, needed all the materials we could give them, and therefore sent their ships to our shores in their own interest.

Lesson to U. S. in Boer War

Perhaps not as fresh in public memory is the marine experience of the Boer war. This, conducted on a lesser scale but at a greater distance, required more of Britain's tonnage for her own use and less of America's materials. It resulted in the serious curtailment of our industrial line; for when Britain, on whom we were dependent for the greater portion of our sea carriage, withdrew a million tons of ships from the North Atlantic, our farmers and our manufacturers saw their surpluses on which their foreign market depended waiting vainly for ships, until even their domestic market was destroyed.

Immediately upon our entrance into the war in 1917 there arose a cry from all the allies, voiced by Lloyd George, the prime minister of the greatest maritime nation of the world for "ships, more ships, and again more ships", as the foremost contribution from America.

Building to Fill a Gap

We all remember the feverish enthusiasm with which, through treasury drains, shipyards were created at all available points, resulting in government building of more than 1,700 ships, with more than 11,000,000 dead-weight tons capacity.

We started to build these ships that we might quickly and in great quantity carry our men and supplies to the battle front. No one factor brought the war to a quicker conclusion than the kaiser's recognition that America was verily arranging to span the Atlantic with a bridge of ships.

So that if every ship built or then being built by the government, involving a total cost of more than three billion dollars, had been dismantled or sunk at the war's end, they would properly have paid for themselves in the short cut that resulted in the ending of the war and in the saving of men and treasure.

Hasten Return of Prosperity

Happily, while everything else created for war purposes has had to be salvaged as scrap, America's war built merchant marine has been turned into a peace-time asset, thus establishing the possibility of turning the sword into the plowshare. It is apparent that after the war terminated the great prosperity America enjoyed would have been impossible without the existence of our government owned fleet.

America came out of the war a creditor nation, whereas before it had been a debtor nation. Prior to 1914 the maritime nations of the world, to whom we owed vast sums, could surely be counted upon to send their ships to our shores that we might pay in our products the debts we owed them.

Today, however, they are the debtors, we the creditors; there is not the same reasons why they should send their ships for our surpluses. Moreover, we must compete with them if we are to dispose of our surplus products in the available markets of the world. It is not to be supposed they will give us those facilities which are essential to world commerce to enable us to compete with them.

Stop Government Operation

Of the 1,430 steel ships owned by the government, 983 are tied up; the other 447 the government has been operating to make sure the American flag shall reach every needed port of the world. This operation is being conducted at a cash loss of \$50,000,000 a year and at the expense of the deterioration of the fleet.

President Harding and the present shipping board aver, because of reasons to be covered in subsequent articles, that government operation of ships is impossible on the one hand, and that for America to turn back and depend on foreigners for its sea carriage is unthinkable on the other. The only alternative is to make it possible for private American initiative to maintain American flag ships on the seas and to get the government itself out of the business of ship operation.

The editor has been good enough to give me an opportunity, in a series of articles of which this is the first to discuss the premises here laid

down and the remedies the government proposes.

LAW COLLEGE SENDS OUT CASE BULLETINS

First Issue of Nebraska Law Bulletin is Being Sent to Lawyers of State

The first issue of the Nebraska law bulletin is being sent out from the University of Nebraska to lawyers of the state. The bulletin is a compilation of criticism of the laws of Nebraska in selected ways. The college of law is endeavoring in this way to better serve to members of the profession practicing throughout the state.

The Nebraska law bulletin is to be published quarterly. It will be sent out in July, October, January and April of each year. It is sent free to lawyers of Nebraska upon request to the college.

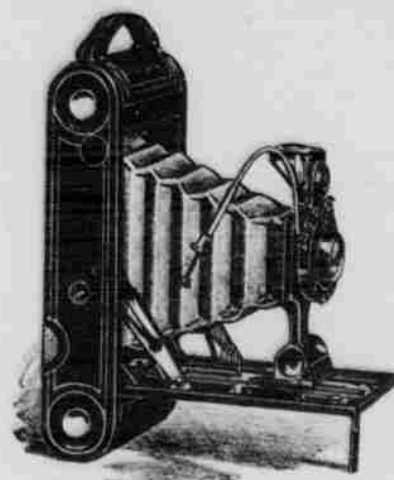
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