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**THE SHIP SUBSIDY MESSAGE**

On January 23 President Roosevelt sent a special message to congress advocating the ship subsidy and urging legislation providing for aid to lines of swift steamers to South America and oriental ports. The message is as follows:

"I call your attention to the great desirability of enacting legislation to help American shipping trade by encouraging the building and running of lines of large and swift steamers to South America and the Orient.

"The urgent need of our country's making an effort to do something like its share of its own carrying trade on the ocean has been called to our attention in a striking fashion by the experiences of Secretary Root on his recent South American tour. The result of these experiences he has set forth in his address before the Trans-Mississippi Commercial congress at Kansas City on November 4, last, an address so important that it deserves the careful study of all public men.

"The facts set forth by Mr. Root are striking and they can not but arrest the attention of our people. The great continent to the south of us, which should be knit to us by the closest commercial ties, is hardly in direct communication with us at all, its commercial relations being almost exclusively with Europe. Between all the principal South American ports and Europe lines of swift and commodious steamers, subsidized by their home governments, ply regularly. There is no such line of steamers between these ports and the United States. In consequence our shipping in South American ports is almost a negligible quantity; for instance, in the year ending June 30, 1905, there entered the port of Rio de Janeiro over 3,000 steamers and sailing vessels from Europe, but from the United States no steamers and only seven sailing vessels, two of which were in distress. One prime reason for this state of things is the fact that those who now do business on the sea do business in a world, not of natural competition, but of subsidized competition.

"State aid to steamship lines is as much a part of the commercial system of today as state employment of consuls to promote business. Our commercial competitors in Europe pay in the aggregate sum \$25,000,000 a year to their steamship lines—Great Britain paying nearly \$7,000,000. Japan pays between \$3,000,000 and \$4,000,000. By the proposed legislation the United States will pay relatively less than any one of our competitors pay. Three years ago the Trans-Mississippi congress formally set forth as axiomatic the statement that every ship is a missionary of trade, that the lines work for their own countries just as railroads work for their terminal points, and that it is as absurd for the United States to depend upon foreign ships to distribute its product as it would be for a department store to depend upon wagons of a competing house to deliver its goods. This statement is the literal truth.

"Moreover, it must be remembered that American ships do not have to contend merely against the subsidization of their foreign competitors. The higher wages and the greater cost of maintenance of American officers and crews make it almost impossible for our people who do business on the ocean to compete on equal terms with foreign ships unless they are protected somewhat as their fellow countrymen who do business on land are protected. We can not, as a country, have the wages and manner of life of our seamen cut down; and the only alternative, if we are to have seamen at all, is to offset the expense by giving some advantage to the ship itself. The proposed law which has been intro-

duced in congress is in no sense experimental. It is based on the best and most successful precedents, as for instance, on the recent Cunard contract with the British government. As far as South America is concerned, its aim is to provide from the Atlantic to the Pacific coasts better American lines to the great ports of South America than the present European lines. The South American republics see now only our warships. Under this bill our trade will be made evident to them. The bill proposes to build large sized steamers of sixteen knots speed. There are nearly 200 such steamships already in the world's foreign trade, and over three-fourths of them draw subsidies—postal or admiralty—or both.

"The bill will encourage our shipyards, which are almost as necessary to the national defense as battleships and the efficiency of which depends in a large measure upon their employment in large construction. It is of importance to our navy because it gives a considerable fleet of auxiliary steamships, such as is now almost wholly lacking, and also provides for an effective naval reserve.

"The bill provides for fourteen steamships, subsidized to the extent of over \$1,600,000, from the Atlantic coast, all to run to South American ports. It provides on the Pacific coast for twenty-two steamers, subsidized to the extent of \$3,225,000, some of those to run to South America, most of them to Manila, Australia and Asia. Be it remembered that while the ships will be owned on the coasts, the cargoes will largely be supplied by the interior and that the bill will benefit the Mississippi valley as much as it benefits the seaboard.

"I have laid stress upon the benefit to be expected from our trade with South America. The lines to the Orient are of vital importance. The

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