

which we can not use for lack of lawful authority else they might be doing useful work today for private commerce and in some measure perhaps tend to hold down the rates exacted of our citizens elsewhere.

I have not spoken of freight charges because we know that much of what is said concerning them will not bear analysis. In our export trade the buyer pays the freight and it only affects the American seller by adding to the expense of the transaction, and hence to his difficulty in making his sale. The actual money paid for outward freight, however, is not paid by us but is paid by the foreign buyer to the foreign ship-owners. So also of other charges on the outward shipment. The bulk of freight we pay to foreign owners, though considerable, is not in its aggregate serious as compared with the total of our commerce or with the necessity that that commerce shall be conducted by friendly hands and under our own control. It is a fact, however, that bears heavily upon us that ocean charges are now from six to ten times what they were before the war.

Apart from the private yards there are government plants capable of shipbuilding in various navy yards, most of which can build something if properly equipped but also most of which now build nothing. I should like to see such yards equipped for building merchant ships under the supervision of naval constructors to see that they are substantially constructed for use as possible naval auxiliaries in time of need, but to be used by private concerns as part of our merchant marine in time of peace. Personally I should be glad to see this whole matter of the merchant marine put in the hands of a shipping board, a majority of whom should be men from civil life, who should have no other business or function than to watch over and promote the merchant marine of our country. I should give them broad supervisory powers. They should be empowered to construct in private or public ship yards vessels for the merchant marine, or to purchase them and to charter, lease or sell them to individuals, firms or corporations, desiring to use them in the foreign trade of the United States or between its ports and those of our insular possessions. This would be the principle of public ownership with private operation, so exemplified in your own subways. I should not stop at this, however, but would give the shipping board power to organize a corporation or corporations and to subscribe on behalf of the United States to part or all of their stock, as the judgment of the board might after discussion think best, and in the open order that the inability of private capital might in such cases as should prove necessary be supplemented by the power of the government. There are cases where American commerce as a whole may need communications which private capital can not, and under its necessary conditions ought not, to supply, but which the interests of all may for a time at least require that it be done at the expense of all. Under those conditions the shipping board should have power to act for the general good and also power to sell the stock which it owned, whether as a minority or a majority holder in the corporation. The board should be empowered to provide for ships under the American flag the privilege of shipping for specific sailing and where need existed, after public discussion, it should have the power to grant preferential rates in American ships. It should have as its supreme duty the continuous promotion and upbuilding of our merchant marine, taking into strict account also its availability as an auxiliary in time of war and having

due provision made for that in the act creating it.

There are certain subjects to which the suggested board may well give thought and concerning which it should have regulative power. One of these is whether a marine carrier should have the unregulated right to select which American goods it will carry and which it will refuse to carry. Recognizing the physical limitations that are in the nature of the business, it yet seems unfair that a marine carrier should be able to say to a part of American commerce "We will take your goods," while at the same time saying to another part "We refuse to take yours." This has been more than once done in recent months.

The right should be given the board to license all vessels, foreign and domestic, to enter our ports and do business therein, and by that right the terms and conditions under which they should so do business may be prescribed. The privilege of doing business in the ports of the United States is a great and lucrative one. It has direct bearing upon the prosperity of our people. It is therefore a privilege over which careful supervision should be exercised by a body representing the entire public and sympathetic with American shipping.

The board should consider how far the unregulated right should exist on the part of a steamship company to abandon an existing line, and whether such an abandonment should take place without public consent. Great industrial and commercial enterprises come into being dependent upon a certain line of transit. If for reasons of its own that line may withdraw and close the avenues of trade, very serious damage may be done not only to the special interests that have grown up in dependence upon the channel thus interrupted but upon the whole of American commerce. The difficulties in the matter are recognized, but public opinion would hardly permit an established railway to stop its operations for reasons peculiar to itself, and certainly it would seem that the act whereby a great avenue of commerce is closed is one respecting which there should be some means of safe-guarding the public interest.

The one greatest element of value in the plan which I suggest as my personal view would be the creation of the board with the duty to hear and with power to act. It must so hear and act in the open, and that which is openly done must be guided and controlled by the public opinion which is the master of us all. Such a board, so active and so guided and in the presence of a congress which reflects public opinion, need not be feared. Should it go astray, it must do so in the sight of all men and in the presence of a power which can correct it. The law which gave it birth might at any time terminate its life. There is precedent for both. Law gave birth to the United States banks. Law permitted the taking by the government of stock in those banks.

We need not be concerned about any talk of socialism. It is absurd to say that New York has gone over to socialism because it owns its own docks and its water works, or operates its own ferries or asphalt plants. The United States has not gone over to socialism because it is building a railway in Alaska or operates in the far west, or runs the Panama Railroad company and the steamship line connected with it. There has been no terror impending over our heads because the government has long owned and run some of the steamers to the Isthmus, and has chartered and operated others. Surely the people of the United States are not afraid of a word. Need one fear to say that socialism, or any other ism or cult,

may contain one element of truth, and need we be afraid to use a truth because it is a portion of some creed or faith which we may not as a whole accept. I have a friend who once said that when the muezzin called from the minaret of the Mosque in Cairo, he could go part way with his proclamation of Mohammedan faith, though himself a Presbyterian, for he was quite willing to say "God is God" and "There is no God but God," which were two of the tenets thus proclaimed.

One thing ought to be clear to us all, that whereas the nation was blind to the need of its own shipping, now it sees. I confess to some impatience with hard-frozen opinions that will yield nothing unless the marine problem is worked out in just their own personal way. There is no great

measure which has benefited and blessed our country that has not before its birth been proclaimed as a bringer of evil. In very recent times the Federal Reserve act, on which we all now gladly depend and which we recognize as an anchor and safeguard, was condemned publicly by men whose profession and experience was such as would cause them to be esteemed sound leaders of opinion. May we not lay aside something of pride of opinion and get together on this subject, trusting that common sense discussion and the future will altar and amend such things as are unwisely done in the respects in which they need correction, but remembering that the nation requires its ships on every sea to be its messengers in peace and its supporters in the storms of war.

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