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American Flag Must Win

Below we give the planks from the Republican National Platforms for the years 1900, 1904, and 1908, on the subject of the American Merchant Marine, and the ship-subsidy. Also extracts from the annual messages of Presidents Chester A. Arthur, Benjamin Harrison, William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt, recommending the passage of such measures as would again place the American flag on the high seas in the merchant marine service. Read them through and then see whether or not Congressman E. M. Pollard was not justified in voting for a mail subsidy to establish lines of steamships between the United States and the South American republics. Are such soreheads as Frank Harrison and H. M. Bushnell right or was Congressman Pollard right? Are such soreheads wiser or more patriotic than these four presidents of the United States.

The following is an extract from the Republican National Platform of 1900: "Our present dependence upon foreign shipping for nine-tenths of our foreign carrying is a great loss to the industry of this country. It is also a serious danger to our trade, for its sudden withdrawal in the event of European war would seriously cripple our expanding foreign commerce. The National defense and naval efficiency in this country, moreover, supply a compelling reason for legislation which will enable us to recover our former place among the trade carrying fleets of the world."

The following is an extract from the Republican National Platform of 1904: "While every other industry has prospered under the fostering aid of the Republican legislation, American shipping engaged in foreign trade in competition with the low cost of construction, low wages, and heavy subsidies of foreign governments, has not for many years received from the government of the United States adequate encouragement of any kind. We therefore favor legislation which will encourage and build up the American merchant marine, and we cordially approve the legislation of the last congress which created the merchant marine commission to investigate and report upon this subject."

A navy powerful enough to defend the United States against any attack, to uphold the Monroe doctrine, and watch over our commerce, is essential for the safety and the welfare of the American people. To maintain such a navy is the fixed policy of the Republican party."

The following is an extract from the Republican National Platform in 1908: "We adhere to the republican doctrine of encouragement to American shipping and urge such legislation as will revive the merchant marine prestige of the country, so essential to national defense; the enlargement of foreign trade and the industrial prosperity of our own people."

President Arthur in his annual message, December 4, 1882, said: "The Secretary of the Navy forcibly depicts the intimate connection and interdependence of the Navy and the commercial marine, and invites attention to the continued decadence of the latter, and the corresponding transfer of our growing commerce to foreign bottoms. The subject is one of the utmost importance to the national welfare. Methods of reviving American shipbuilding and restoring the United States flag in the ocean-carrying trade should receive the immediate attention of congress. We have mechanical skill and abundant material for the manufacture of modern iron steamship in fair competition with our commercial rivals. Our disadvantage in building ships is the greater cost of labor, and in sailing them higher taxes and greater interest on capital, while the ocean highways are already monopolized by our formidable competitors. These obstacles should, in some way, be overcome, and for our rapid communication with foreign lands we should not continue to depend wholly upon vessels built in the yards of other countries and sailing under foreign flags."

President Harrison in his annual message, December 3, 1889, said: "There is nothing more justly humiliating to the national pride and nothing more hurtful to the national prosperity than the inferiority of our merchant marine compared with that of other nations, whose general resources, wealth, and seacoast lines do not suggest any reason for their supremacy on the sea. It is not always so, and our people are agreed, I think, that it shall not continue to be so. That great steamship lines sailing under the flags of England, France, Germany, Spain and Italy, and engaged in foreign commerce, were promoted and have since been, and now are liberally aided by grants of public money in one form or another, is generally known. That the American lines of steamship have been abandoned by us to an unequal contest with the aided lines of other nations until they have been withdrawn, or in the few cases where they are still maintained, are subject to serious disadvantages, is a matter of common knowledge."

"I recommend that such appropriate measures be made for ocean mail service in American steamships between our ports and those of Central and South America, China, Japan, and the important islands in both of the great oceans as will be liberally remunerative for the service rendered, and as will encourage the establishment, and in some fair degree equalize the chances of American steamship lines in the competition which they must meet. That the American states lying south of us will cordially co-operate in establishing and maintaining such lines of steamships to their principal ports I do not doubt."

President McKinley in his annual message, December 5, 1899, said: "The value of an American merchant marine to the extension of our commercial trade and the strengthening of our power upon the sea invites the immediate action of congress. Our national development will be one-sided and unsatisfactory so long as the remarkable growth of our island industries remain unaccompanied by progress on the sea. There is no lack of constitutional authority for legislation which shall give to the country maritime strength commensurate with its industrial achievements and with its rank among the nations of the earth."

"Last year American vessels transported a smaller share of our exports and imports than during any former year in all our history, and the measure of our dependence upon foreign shipping was painfully manifested to our people. Without any choice of our own, the departments of the government charged with military and naval operations in the East and West Indies had to obtain from foreign flags vessels essential for those operations."

"The other great nations have not hesitated to adopt the required means to develop their shipping as a factor in national defense, and as one of the surest and speediest means of obtaining for their producers a share in foreign markets. Like vigilance and effort on our part can not fail to improve our situation, which is regarded with humiliation at home and surprise abroad. Even the seeming sacrifices, which at the beginning may be involved, will be offset later by more than equivalent gains."

"The expense is as nothing compared to the advantage to be achieved. The re-establishment of our merchant marine involves, in a large measure, our continued industrial progress and the extension of our commercial triumphs. I am satisfied the judgement of the country favors the policy of aid to our merchant marine, which will broaden our commerce and markets and upbuild our sea-carrying capacity for the products of agriculture and manufacture, which, with the increase of our Navy, mean more work and wages to our countrymen, as well as a safeguard to American interests in every part of the world."

President Roosevelt in his annual message, December 3, 1901, said: "The condition of the American merchant marine is such as to call for immediate remedial action by the congress. It is discreditable to us as a nation that our merchant marine should be utterly insignificant in comparison to that of other nations which we overtop in other forms of business. We should not longer submit to conditions under which only a trifling portion of our great commerce is carried in our own ships. To remedy this state of things would not merely serve to build up our shipping interests, but it would also result in benefit to all who are interested in the permanent establishment of a wider market for American products, and would provide an auxiliary force for the Navy. Ships work for their own countries just as railroads work for their terminal points. Shipping lines, if established to the principal countries with which we have dealings, would be of political as well as commercial benefit. From every standpoint it is unwise for the United States to continue to rely upon the ships of competing nations for the distribution of our goods. It should be made advantageous to carry American goods in American-built ships."

"At present American shipping is under certain great disadvantages when put in competition with the shipping of foreign countries. Many of the fast foreign steamships at a speed of 14 knots or above are subsidized, and all our ships—sailing vessels and steamers alike, cargo-carriers of slow speed and mail carriers of high speed—have to meet the fact that the original cost of building American ships is greater than is the case abroad; that the wages paid American officers and seamen are very much higher than those paid the officers and seamen of competing countries, and that the standard of living on our ships is far superior to the standard of living on the ships of our commercial rivals."

"Our government should take such action as will remedy these inequalities. The American merchant marine should be restored to the ocean."

President Roosevelt in his annual message, December 5, 1905, said: "To the spread of our trade in peace and the defense of our flag in war a great and prosperous merchant marine is indispensable. We should have ships of our own and seamen of our own to convey our goods to neutral markets, and in case of need to reinforce our battle line. It cannot but be

a source of regret and uneasiness to us that the lines of communication with our sister republics of South America should be chiefly under foreign control. It is not a good thing that American merchants and manufacturers should have to send their goods and letters to South America via Europe if they wish security and dispatch. Even on the Pacific, where our ships have held their own better than on the Atlantic, our merchant flag is now threatened through the liberal aid bestowed by other governments on their own steam lines. I ask your earnest consideration of the report with which the merchant marine commission has followed its long and careful inquiry."

President Roosevelt in his annual message, December 8, 1908, said: "I again recommend the extension of the ocean mail act of 1891 so that the satisfactory American ocean mail lines to South America, Asia, the Philippines, and Australasia may be established. The creation of such steamship lines should be the natural corollary of the voyage of the battle fleet. It should precede the opening of the Panama Canal. Even under favorable conditions several years must elapse before such lines can be put into operation. Accordingly I urge that the congress act promptly where foresight already shows that action sooner or later will be inevitable."

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