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THE SHIP SUBSIDY MATTER.

The Astorian is in receipt of a letter from the Commercial Club of Topeka, Kan., inclosing a copy of a report rendered by the club's committee on state and national legislation with reference to American shipping interests. The report is in part as follows:

"An investigation shows that the merchant marine instead of keeping pace with commercial development has actually declined. Our registered ocean fleet in 1810 was 108,000 tons larger than it is now. A comparison of the tonnage of fleet registered for deep sea commerce of several nations shows the inexcusable weakness of our merchant marine.

United States	873,000
Italy	1,180,000
France	1,480,000
Norway	1,660,000
Germany	2,960,000
British Empire	14,800,000

"The United States has developed the most marvelous foreign commerce of any nation in the world. We are sending into other lands nearly \$5,000,000 worth of American products and commodities every day, but it is a significant fact that American ships carry less than 9 per cent of our exports and imports. The tribute paid to foreign ships for conveying merchandise to and from the United States amounted to over \$100,000,000 last year. Our country is foremost in all lines of industrial and commercial development, but it is lagging behind even the smaller foreign nations in its merchant marine. The patriotic pride and the commercial instinct of our people suggest the improvement of our fleet commensurate with our commercial needs.

"Without committing ourselves to any definite plan, we urge upon congress the commercial necessity of prompt and decisive action to the end that all American commerce may be carried in American vessels. A patriotic and self-reliant people will be satisfied with nothing less than this."

The showing is certainly not a flattering one so far as our merchant marine is concerned. We ought to have more merchant vessels, but just why the tonnage is so relatively small and just what steps shall be taken to increase it are problems of great moment. It is very evident that the American people have not gone in for shipbuilding. They are devoting their attention to other lines of commerce—are putting their money into manufacturing enterprises and providing the surplus that is sent away in foreign bottoms.

The American people are not slow, but, to the contrary, are the best developers in the world. They perhaps have not gone into the shipbuilding business on a more extensive scale because they find better use for their money. We have an idea the Topeka club is sending out its circular in the interests of the ship subsidy bill, but it is not plain that the proposed subsidy would help matters to any material extent. If the business of building ships is not profitable—and the poor showing of our country indicates that our investors find better opportunities—subsidies would not put it on a permanent, successful basis. Whatever impetus that might result would be due to the desire of speculators to earn the subsidy. There would be no genuine commercial activity behind it. In view of the showing it would seem best to permit the foreigners to continue to carry our surplus products, as our money will net better returns in other lines of trade. When shipbuilding becomes legitimately profitable, the thrifty Yankee will go into the business.

ROOSEVELT'S PROSPECTS.

While present indications seem to point to President Roosevelt as the republican standard-bearer in the approaching campaign, it is to be kept in mind that political nominating conventions in this country often have a way of suddenly crushing the most promising booms.

Polk, the democratic nominee for president in 1844, didn't receive a solitary vote on the first ballot in the democratic national convention of that year, and the same thing is true of Pierce, the democratic

presidential nominee in 1852. Seymour's name was not mentioned on the first ballot in the democratic national convention in 1868.

Hays was near the bottom of the list on the first ballot in the republican convention that nominated him for president in 1876, while Garfield, up to the fourth ballot in the republican national convention in 1880, received only one vote for president. Until the fourth ballot in the republican convention of 1888 Harrison received less than 100 votes for president, while in the democratic convention that nominated Bryan in 1896 Bland was far in the lead of all other presidential candidates on the first ballot.

Van Buren in 1844, Cass in 1852, Pendleton in 1868 and Bland in 1896, although they outstripped all rivals on the first ballot for president in the democratic conventions of the years mentioned, were defeated in the end. Blaine lacked only 88 votes of being nominated on the first ballot for president in the republican convention of 1876, but Hayes got away with the coveted prize. Only 72 votes were needed in the republican convention of 1880 to nominate Grant on the first ballot for president for a third term; and Sherman in the republican convention of 1888, had over twice as many votes on the first ballot for president as either of his closest competitors, Gresham and Depew.

It is to be noted, however, that whenever leading candidates for the presidential nomination have been thus defeated they have been confronted with a stubborn opposition, with usually several "dark horses" in the background. Whether this is likely to be the situation that President Roosevelt will have to face next June remains for time to develop. Such a situation does not, the New York Commercial thinks, now appear to be probable.

THE SNOWBALLING PASTIME.

With the coming of the snow, even in limited quantities, there will be a general recurrence of snowballing. Men and boys will throw snowballs at each other, and, as is the case every year, some one will be badly injured. Discussion of the subject, then, is not untimely.

As is the case of every other question of public import, there are two sides to this snowballing proposition. The men and boys who delight in the pastime cling to the opinion that it is only a little recreation. They believe there is no harm in it and marvel at the complaint offered by others. They enter enthusiastically into the play, and quite naturally believe that every one else should feel the same way about it. Those who are opposed to promiscuous snowballing do not fancy being struck with the hardened balls of ice and snow. When they go upon the street they are nervous, fearful always that a well-directed snowball may spend its force on the neck or perhaps the eye. Some men do not like to have guns pointed at them, even if the guns aren't loaded and for a similar reason some men do not like to be made targets for snowballs hurled by reckless enthusiasts.

Generally speaking promiscuous snowballing is bad business. It is all right for those who enjoy it, but unfortunately for the rest of us, they do not confine their attention to those who seem to entertain a liking for the sport. All is fish that comes to their nets, and all are pelted alike. Last winter several Astorians were quite severely injured by snowballs. One gentleman was struck by a missile and injured so severely that he was compelled to remain at his home for a week or 10 days; another young man was struck on the head and knocked down. Both gentlemen were walking along the streets, attending to their own affairs, when the enthusiastically inclined commenced the fusillade. For a time snowballing became so general that one actually took a chance when passing the most frequented corner in the city. Women and children were likewise subjected to the marksmanship of the fun-lovers, and in one instance a child was struck with a water-soaked snowball and rendered unconscious. The matter was not made public "on account of the prominence of the parents of the lad" who hurled the snowball.

Those who do not go in for the sport ought to be protected from the antics of those who have a liking for it. The one class is entitled to equally as much consideration as the other. Above all, snowballing should not be permitted on the crowded streets, not alone on account of the danger thereby created for passersby, but also because of the likelihood of trouble following the injury of some one who might resent it in forcible manner. To strike a person with a snowball constitutes the crime of assault, the penalty for which is fixed by the civil law, and not infrequently imposed under the moral law.

While it is interesting to note that the total volume of money in circulation in this country on January 1 was \$117,000,000 more than it was on the corresponding date of last year, the gratifying thing about the matter is that \$75,000,000 of this increase consists of gold. What is more, almost half of the amount of money now in circulation in the United States consists of the yellow metal. There is nearly double the amount of gold in circulation than there are silver dollars, and the volume of gold to that of greenbacks is as three to one. The monetary system of this republic today, in spite of some minor defects, is as solid, financially, says the New York Commercial, as Gibraltar.

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