

Harding Says Ship Policy Would Save U.S. \$25,000,000 Annually

AD OF MARINE IS IMPERATIVE, CONGRESS TOLD

WASHINGTON, Nov. 21.—(U. N. S.)—President Harding, in his message to congress today on the ship subsidy, spoke as follows:

"Members of the congress: Last February I reported to you relative to the American merchant marine, and recommended legislation which the executive branch of the government deemed essential to promote our national welfare. Other problems were pressing and other questions pending, and for that reason another which need not be recited the suggested legislation has not progressed beyond a favorable recommendation by the house committee. The committee has given the question a full and painstaking inquiry and study, and I hope that its favorable report shortly will be given the force of law.

"It will be helpful in clearing the atmosphere if we start with the frank recitation of divided opinion and determined opposition. It is no experience. Like proposals have divided the congress on various previous occasions. Perhaps a more resolute hostility never manifested before, and I am very sure the need for decisive action—decisive, favorable action—never was so urgent before.

CALLS IT GRIM ACTUALITY

"We are not now dealing with a policy founded on theory. We have a problem which is one of grim actuality. We are facing insistent conditions, out of which come either additional and increasing government losses and national impotence on the sea, or else the uttering of the flag on a great American merchant marine commensally significant before, and to serve as carrier of our cargoes in peace and to meet the necessities of our defense in war. There is no thought here and now to magnify the relation of a merchant marine to our national defense. It is enough to recall that we entered the World War almost wholly dependent on our allies for transportation by sea. We expended approximately three billions, feverishly, extravagantly, wastefully and impractically. Out of our eagerness to make up for the commissions of peace and to meet the war emergency we built and otherwise acquired with public treasury funds, which the government owns today.

TO HALT TREASURY DRAIN

"In the simplest way I can say it, our immediate problem is not to build up support of merchant shipping, which I hold to be one of the highest and most worthy aspirations of any great people; our problem is to deal with what we now possess. Our problem is to reduce the public treasury drain it is now meeting. Let us omit particulars about the frenzied war-time building. Possibly we did not have the public treasury drain in the anxious circumstances. Let us pass for the moment the vital relationship between a merchant marine and private enterprise, and the question, Aye, let us suppose for a moment the absurdity that with one \$1,000,000,000 experience and with the incalculable costs in life and treasure which may be chargeable to our inability promptly to apply our potency—which God forbid happening again—let us momentarily ignore all of these things and note the bare business problem, the practical question of dollars and cents with which we are confronted.

\$4,000,000 LOSS MONTHLY

"The war construction and the later completion of war contracts, where completion was believed to be the great economy to the public treasury, left us approximately 12,000,000 gross tonnage in ships. The figures are nearer 12,000,000 gross tonnage owing to the scrapping of the wooden fleet. More than half this tonnage is government owned, and approximately 2,500,000 tons are under government operation and approximately 9,500,000 tons are under private operation. The net loss to the United States treasury—numbers actually taken therefrom in this government operation—averages approximately \$1,000,000 per month during the year prior to the assumption of responsibility by the present administration. A constant warfare on this loss of public funds, and the draft of service of capable business management and experienced operating directors, have resulted in applied efficiency and enforced economies. It is very gratifying to report the diminution of the losses to \$4,000,000 per month, or a total of \$50,000,000 a year; but it is intolerable that the government should continue its policy from which so enormous a treasury loss is the inevitable outcome.

"This loss, moreover, attends operation of less than a third of the government owned fleet.

NO BURDEN ADDED

"It is not, therefore, a question of adding new treasury burdens to maintain our shipping; we are paying the burden now. It is not a question of contracting an outlay to support our merchant shipping because we are paying already. I am not asking your authorization of a new and added draft on the public treasury; I am asking for a program to diminish the burden we are already bearing.

"When your executive government knows of public expenditures aggregating 50 millions annually, which it believes could be reduced by half through change of policy, your government would be unworthy of public trust if such a change were not recommended, nay, if it were not insistently urged.

"And the pity of it is that our present expenditures in losses is not constructive. It looks as if no future attainments. It is utterly ineffective in the establishment of a dependable merchant marine, whereas the encouragement of private enterprise and the application of individual initiative would make for a permanent creation, ready and answerable at all times to the needs of the nation.

"But I have not properly portrayed all the current losses to the public treasury. We are paying out for ships without any provision for replacement. We are having these losses through deterioration now, and are

Text of President's Message

charging nothing against our capital account. But the losses are there, and regretfully larger under government than under private ownership. Only a few years of continued losses on the capital account will make these losses through depreciation alone to exceed the millions a year now drawn to cover losses in operation.

SAYS WORK WAS POOR

"The gloomy picture of losses does not end there. Notwithstanding the known cost of three billions of dollars for the present tonnage, I will not venture to appraise its cash value today. It may all well be confessed as at some later time that in the mad rush to build, in establishing shipyards wherever man would organize to expend government money, when we make shipbuilders overnight quites without regard to previous occupation or training, we were very poorly served. Moreover, we constructed without any formulated program for a merchant marine. The war emergency hurried and hurried us for ships, any kind of ships. The error is recalled in regret, rather than in criticism. The point is that our fleet, consisting about three billions worth, before the war, of that cost today. Whatever that fraction may be, the truth remains that we have no market in which to sell these billions worth of ships, and the liquidation which is inevitable will cost scores of millions more."

ANSWERS OWN QUESTION

"Again the question is asked, why the United States should have a merchant marine act now? The answer is apparent. Waiving every inspiration which lies in a constructive plan for maintaining our flag on the sea, commercial highways of the sea, waiving the prudence in safeguarding against an \$1,000,000,000 madness if war ever again impels us to have the unavoidable task of wiping out 12,000,000 annual loss in operation and losses aggregating many hundreds of millions in war, we have the unscrapped shipping, then the supreme humiliation, the admission that the United States—our America, once eminent among the maritime nations of the world—has the capacity of assisting its independence on the seas of the world. It would seem to me doubly humiliating when we own the ships and all that they carry, and yet we are unable to maintain them, and yet we are unable to maintain them, and yet we are unable to maintain them.

"The first is constructive—enact the pending bill, under which, I believe, an American merchant marine, privately owned and privately operated, but serving all the people and all the purposes of the nation, may be established and maintained.

"The second is obstructive—continue government operations and attending government losses and discourage private enterprise by government competition under which losses are met by the public treasury and witness the continued losses and deterioration until the colossal failure ends in sheer exhaustion.

"The third is destruction—involving the scrapping of them at home, the surrender of our aspirations and the confession of our impotence to the world in general and our humiliation before the competing world in particular.

CHOICE IS INEVITABLE

"A choice among the three is inevitable. It is unbelievable that the American people or the congress which represents their power will consent to surrender and destruction. It is equally unbelievable that our people and the congress which translates their wishes into action will longer sustain a program of obstruction and attending losses to the treasury.

"I have come to urge the constructive alternative—to assert an American 'we will.' I have come to ask you to relieve the responsible administrative branch of the government from a program upon which failure and hopelessness and staggering losses are written for every page and let us turn to a program of assured shipping to serve us in war and to give guaranty to our independence in peace.

"I know full well the hostility in the popular mind to the word 'subsidy.' It is stressed by the opposition and meant should continue, as policy from those who are unflinching advocates of government aid when very vast numbers are directly concerned. Government aid would be a fairer term than 'subsidy' in defining what we are seeking to do for our merchant marine; and the interests are those of all the people, even though the aid goes to the few who serve.

NAME AS ROAD AID

"If government aid is a fair term, and I think it is to apply to authorizations aggregating \$75,000,000 to promote good roads for market highways, it is equally to be applied to the establishment and maintenance of American market highways on the salted sea. If government aid is the proper designation for a needed assistance to establish and maintain ocean highways where there is actual commerce to be carried.

"But call it 'subsidy,' since there are those who prefer to appear to shun taken prejudice rather than make frank and logical argument. We might also call the annual loss of millions which we are paying now without protest by those who most abhor, we might as well call that a 'subsidy.' If so I am proposing to meet the problem as it presents itself, the saving thus effected there would be added millions upon millions of further savings through ending losses on the account of government capital out of the public treasury, always remember—and there would be at least the promise of the prospect of the permanent establishment of the needed merchant marine.

APPEALS TO SAVE TREASURY

"I challenge every illustration of favored interests and the enrichment of the special few at the expense of the public treasury. I am, first of all, appealing to the treasury. Perhaps the unlimited bestowal of government aid might justify the apprehension of special favoring, but the pending bill, if passed, proposed which carries such a provision, automatically guards against enrichment or favoritism. It provides that shipping these enterprises government aid must have their actual investment and their operating expenses audited by the government, that government aid will only be paid until the shipping enterprise earns the 10 per cent on actual capital employed and immediately thereafter, half of the

excess earnings must be applied to the repayment of the government aid which has been previously advanced. Thus the possible earnings are limited to a very reasonable amount if capital is to be risked and management is to be attracted. If success attends, as we hope it will, the government outlay is returned, the inspiration of opportunity to earn remains and American prestige at sea is established.

SEES FOREIGN OPPOSITION

"Although differing in detail, it is not more in proportion to their population and capacity than any other great nations have gone in aiding the establishment of their merchant marines, and it is timely to recall that we gave them our commerce to aid in their upbuilding, while the American task now is to uphold and establish in the face of their most active competition. Indeed, the American development will have to overcome every obstacle which may be put in our path, except that of international comity forbids. Concern about our policy is not limited to our own domain, though the interest in the United States is very different. I hope it is timely to say it, because it must be said, the maritime nations of the world are in complete accord with the American viewpoint, and the pending legislation is sanctioned. It will cost scores of millions more."

SHIPPER ASKS TRANSFER

"Not so many months ago the head of a company operating a fleet of ships under our flag called at the executive office to discuss a permit to transfer his fleet of cargo vessels to a foreign flag, though he wanted to continue them in a distinctly American service. He based his request for transfer on the alleged fact that such a transfer would reduce his labor costs sufficiently to provide a profit on capital invested. I do not voice for the accuracy of the statement, nor mean to discuss it. The allusion is made to recall that in good conscience congress has created by law conditions surrounding labor on American ships which shipping men the world over declare result in higher costs of operation than in any other country. American ships have been established. More justice suggests that when congress fixes these standards, it is fair to extend government aid in maintaining them, until world competition is brought to the same level, or until our shipping lines are so firmly established that they can face world competition alone.

"Having full details of the policy and provisions of the pending bill when previously addressing you,

\$20,000,000 of our present annual operating loss. If the maximum is ever reached, the establishment of our merchant marine will have been definitely recorded and the government-owned fleet fortunately liquidated.

WISDOM TO SAVE

"From this point of view, it is the simple, incontestable wisdom of business that every instance of our possible of the annual loss and avoid the millions sure to be lost to the government's capital account in sacrificing our fleet. But there is a bigger, broader, more inspiring viewpoint, a patriotic viewpoint. I refer to the constructive action of today, which offers the only dependable promise of making our wartime inheritance of ships the foundation of a great agency of commerce in peace and guaranty when it is needed for our national defense.

"Thus far I have been urging federal aid to American shipping, having in mind every instance of our producing population, whether of mine, factory or farm, because expanding commerce is the foremost thought of every nation. It should be our first duty. FEDERAL AID UPHOLD

"I believe in government aid becomingly bestowed. We have aided industry through our tariffs; we have aided railroads through our grants and loans. We have aided the construction of market roads and the improvement of international waterways. We have aided reclamation and irrigation and the development of water power; we have loaned for seed grains in anticipation of harvests. We have aided railroads through our experimentation to promote a common benefit, though a limited few are the direct beneficiaries. We have aided hundreds of millions in the marketing of American goods. It has been all commendable and highly worthy while.

"At the present moment the American farmer is the chief sufferer from the cruel readjustments which follow war's inflections, and befitting government aid to our farmers is highly essential to our national welfare. No people may safely boast a good fortune which the farmer does not share. MUCH AID ALREADY GIVEN

"Already this congress and the administrative branch of the government have given willing ear to the agricultural plea for post-war relief, and much has been done which has proven helpful. Admittedly, it is not enough. Our credit system, land government provision and control, must be promptly and safely broadened to relieve our agricultural distress.

"Now this problem and such others of pressing importance as reasonably may be dealt with in the next session. I shall invite your attention to an early date.

WANTS MEASURE EXPEDITED

"I have chosen to confine myself to the specific problem of dealing with our merchant marine because I have asked you to assemble two weeks in advance of the regularly appointed time to expedite its consideration. The executive branch of the government would feel itself remiss to contemplate your yearly loss and attending failure to accomplish if the conditions were not presented for your decision. More, I would feel myself lacking confidence for America's future, if I

to re-assert an American 'we will.' Mr. Harding fairly shouted the last few words and there was an outburst of applause which quickly subsided.

Two other outbursts of applause marked the progress of the address—one when the president said he was glad that American labor was protected in the shipping world; again when he promised additional aid to the farmers.

The president spoke about one half hour. There was a short outburst of applause when he finished, and then the senators left their desks and both houses went back to work.

The president returned to the White House.

The president indulged in very little rhetorical 'flag waving' although he did say it was the patriotic duty of congress to provide a strong American merchant marine. He observed that the 'great nations' are in complete accord with the opposition here to the pending bill.

PLAIN BUSINESS ARGUMENT

But, for the first time, President Harding laid before congress a cold dollar and cents argument.

He told the congress that the American fleet of ships is now costing the taxpayers of the country \$50,000,000 a year and the ships are rotting at their wharves, so that ultimately the great fleet built at such enormous cost during the war will represent a total loss.

The subsidy provisions of the new bill, he declared, will reduce this annual expenditure of half in other words, save \$25,000,000 and instead of the ships rotting at anchor, they will be carrying American commerce to the four parts of the earth, ultimately become altogether self-supporting and finally, provide the nation with a strong, capable merchant marine—the dream of years ago.

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HARDING BEGINS BIG PARTY SCRAP

WASHINGTON, Nov. 21.—(U. N. S.)—The government would not more than 30 millions, the economy of 20 millions. To overcome that argument the opponents of the bill must show an alternative equally good if not better. Congress has permitted the shipping situation to drift ever since the war. Under Chairman Lasker's guidance operations have become more efficient and business-like, but even Mr. Lasker insists that as a business proposition more money will have to be spent in the long run in the bill than in the long run in the bill than in the long run in the bill.

The administration's strength in this fight lies in the fact that the opponents of the bill have revived a pre-war prejudice against the principle of subsidy without offering any concrete program to deal with the fleet which was inspired from the war. The case against subsidy is built largely on the idea that it will cost the government more money and the farmer communities of the West are represented as being money should be spent to help them, and the chances are that he will come to an understanding with the farm element in support of their proposals in the December session of congress.

HIS BIGGEST FIGHT

For the moment, the president is making the biggest fight of his political career. He feels his arguments and position are favorable, for the responsibility of congress will be definitely fixed if the bill isn't passed. Will the Republican party in the present congress, where the majority is more than comfortable, turn the president down? A group of insurgents are already defying the party leaders, but they haven't the votes to defeat the bill if the regulars stick together. Mr. Harding looked dark for the merchant marine bill until this week. Mr. Harding hadn't out on the heavy artillery—a square statement of the issues involved and his readiness to fight for those issues. A special rule will have to be invoked to limit debate in the house and push it through. The administration is confident it can win in the house. Once the fight is won in the lower branch of congress, the prospects of passage in the senate will be brighter. The psychological effect of victory by President Harding on so complex a subject as ship subsidy would be beneficial to the chief executive. It would help him in other tasks. He is, therefore, fighting not merely for government aid to merchant shipping, but for the first constructive measure of importance in this administration—but, fighting for his leadership of the Republican party.

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Olympia Oyster Sandwich Supreme—1 qt. (600) Olympia Oysters (chopped fine), 1/2 cup melted butter, 1/2 cup milk, 1/2 eggs (white, stiff), 6 crackers (powdered), 1 teaspoon pepper. Cook until smooth, lay hot (20 min.), cool, cut in this slice, place between slices bread. Number servings 4½ dozen; cost oysters less than 40¢ per sandwich.—University of Washington tested recipe.

In California Sometimes called California!