

### TO DEVELOP RUSSIA'S MERCHANT MARINE.

The rehabilitation and development of the Russian mercantile marine are among the urgent economic problems with which the Government of Russia has to deal. With the elimination of German shipping interests as intermediaries in the sea-borne trade of Russia, the Government recognizes the importance of immediate measures calculated to secure the increased activity of the mercantile marine after the war, and of creating conditions that will promote the independence of the overseas commerce of Russia and the establishment of a commercial fleet in conformity with the needs and resources of the country.

Proposals having these objects in view have been put forward by the Russian Ministry of Trade and Industry in a memorandum accompanying the estimates of that department for 1917, says the British "Board of Trade Journal." The following is a summary of the proposals:

Two main principles governing the development of national shipping are laid down:

(1) The creation of favorable shipping conditions in general, which would place Russian shipowners on an equal footing with shipowners in other countries; and (2) the increase of the Russian mercantile marine by such a number of ships as would not only replace the losses sustained during the war, but make it possible for Russian merchant vessels to take an active share in the trade movement on the most important sea routes.

It is stated that Russia's activities must be directed toward maintaining in full efficiency, and even in adding to, all her steamship services which have not been interrupted by the war, viz., in the White Ocean, the Caspian Sea, and in the Far East. In the regions served by these lines great developments are to be expected; in the north, from the construction of the Murman Railway, and in the south, from the development of relations with Persia and the Russian Dominions in Central Asia, while in the Far East the growing fishing industry and the development of the Maritime Provinces are creating unexpected traffic conditions which will have to be met.

Another important task to be undertaken will be the re-establishment of those shipping lines which have been suspended during the war, the most important being the Black Sea coast services; those on the Danube and the river Pruth; the traffic with Persia and the Near East by way of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean; and the Odessa-Vladivostok line of the Russian Volunteer Fleet.

Concurrently with the re-establishment and expansion of existing steamship lines, vigorous action is recommended in connection with plans which have been prepared by the Department for the following new shipping services: (1) A line from Odessa to London for the exportation of perishable products from Russia, which is intended to take over in future the Russian exports that were formerly sent abroad via Austria; (2) a line from Baltic ports to Vladivostok, which it is considered will prove useful in securing return shipments from the Far East, and will facilitate the direct importation of foreign grocery goods hitherto received through foreign distributing centres; and (3) services establishing communication between Russia and foreign ports in Europe with the estuaries of the rivers Obi and Yenisei for the development of the natural resources of Siberia.

In order to secure the desired increase in the number of merchant vessels on the Russian register, the existing law regulating duty-free admission of merchant vessels purchased abroad is to continue in force indefinitely; regulations will also be issued authorizing the advance of sums of money for the acquisition of ships abroad.

It is not possible to say what Russia's tonnage requirements will be when relations with the outside world are resumed. It may be assumed, however, that on the whole, the tonnage requirements will be greater than in the past, having regard to the determination of the Russian Government to discourage trade exchanges by the western land frontier, and to favor by all possible means the development of Russian ports and sea communications.

The latest figures published by the Statistical Bureau of the Russian Ministry of Commerce show that on January 1, 1914, Russia's mercantile fleet consisted of 3,700 vessels with a total of 783,000 net registered tons. Of these, 1,044 were steam vessels of a net registered tonnage of 513,000 tons, 59 motor boats of 13,000 registered tons, and 2,597 sailing vessels of 257,000 registered tons.

The construction in Russia of sea-going tonnage for the mercantile marine is somewhat small in

### AID FOR CANADIAN SHIPPING.

Canada's part in the shipping history of the world is discussed by the Regina Leader, which says in part:

"Canada is not only an agricultural and industrial nation, but nature designed it to be a maritime nation, with its east and west borders created by the seas, and with the greatest chain of lakes in the world located in its centre. Many Canadians of the present generation either do not know or have forgotten that one time in our history Canada was the third shipbuilding and shipowning nation in the world, with its vessels manned by Canadian seamen, who took second place to no men on the 'seven seas,' and who carried our flag and commerce to the remotest corners of the world. Nor should it be forgotten that the first ship to make the transatlantic trip under its own steam was a Canadian boat, built in Quebec and manned by Canadians.

"Canada's decline as a shipbuilding and shipowning nation dates, so many authorities claim, from the making of an Order-in-Council in 1873 allowing Norwegian and other foreign ships and crews in Canada's coastwise or port-to-port trade. This Order-in-Council was revoked by the Laurier Government in 1908, and since then there has been a gradual revival in Canadian shipping and shipbuilding. A little less than a year ago the last of these Orders-in-Council was canceled, thus placing Canada on the same footing as the United States in regard to coastwise or port-to-port trade.

"Following the cancellation of these Orders-in-Council the Nova Scotia Government provided \$2,000,000 to assist shipbuilding in that province, and British Columbia has voted a like amount. It is felt, however, that Dominion Government assistance is necessary to stimulate Canadian shipbuilding, just as the British, German and United States governments have found it necessary.

"No longer does anybody advance the opinion that Canadian workmen cannot build modern ships of any size or description short of dreadnaughts and great liners like the ill-fated Lusitania, nor do we hear that it is impossible to find the right kind of foundations for yards in which large vessels can be constructed.

"Millions of capital and thousands of workmen are already employed in shipbuilding in the Maritime Provinces, along the St. Lawrence, on the Great Lakes, and in British Columbia. A start is thus being made to win back for Canada her position in the shipping world. In a circular recently received it is estimated that since the first Order-in-Council passed, as already referred to, in 1873, or forty-four years ago, Canada has lost over \$1,000,000,000 of invested capital in shipping, shipbuilding and commerce, and at least 100,000 seamen, besides being reduced from third shipping nation in the world to eleventh place.

"In this same circular the following question is asked and answered:

"What has it cost Canada since the war in having no ships of her own to carry her soldiers and wheat to Europe? Hundreds of millions of dollars in excess freights alone. The amount of tonnage that would be required for transport is usually put at about twenty tons per man in a fully equipped force. For 500,000 men, therefore, about ten million tons would be necessary—and Canada has less than a million tons of all classes of merchant ships."

"If the Union Government grapples with this question of shipbuilding in a really big way, and once again places Canada in the front rank of the world's shipbuilding and ship-owning nations—and it is recognized that these are the nations that command influence and wealth—it will have accomplished a national work of the first importance and conferred substantial benefits on the grain-growers of the West equally with the people of our seacoast provinces. It will be a great step forward in making this Dominion economically and financially independent, self-contained and self-supporting."

amount. There have been built in Russia 187 steamships with a gross tonnage of 107,642; the machinery for these boats is, however, mostly of foreign manufacture, and in view of the facilities that are to be provided in future for the purchase of merchant vessels abroad local construction is hardly likely to show great development. As a matter of fact, shipbuilding in Russia has been confined hitherto chiefly to the provision of vessels of all classes for the Russian navy, and both of the naval dockyards and the few private yards are generally full of Government work. The private yards also execute general ship repairs.

### SHIPPING LOSSES.

Only one British merchant vessel of more than 1,600 tons was sunk by mine or submarine last week, according to the weekly statement of shipping losses issued on November 14. This is the lowest record since Germany began her submarine campaign.

Five vessels of less than 1,600 tons and one fishing boat were sunk during the week.

The Admiralty statement follows:

Arrivals, 2,125.

Sailings, 2,307.

British merchantmen over 1,600 tons sunk by mine or submarine, one; under 1,600 tons, five.

Fishing vessels sunk, one, previously.

British merchantmen unsuccessfully attacked, including three previously, eight.

Not since February has the total number of British merchantmen sunk by mine or submarine been as small as the above Admiralty statement shows. The previous low record was 12 merchantmen, eight of them of a tonnage in excess of 1,600 and four of less than 1,600 tons.

The greatest number of British merchantmen sunk was during the week of April 22, when forty ships of 1,600 tons and over and 15 of less tonnage were sunk—a total of 55. The next high record was the following week, when 38 vessels of the larger and 13 of the smaller category were sent to the bottom.

### THE SHORTEST AND BEST PAYING RAILROAD IN WORLD.

A railway whose total length of track does not exceed a quarter of a mile, and whose rolling stock consists of but two battered lorries, and yet earns a handsome profit every year, is an enterprise worthy of notice. It is at once the shortest and best-paying railway in the world. The official title of this unique line is the Grand Island Railway. Built of scrap-iron laid on wooden rails on top of wooden ties, it stretches across Grand Island, a strip of land a quarter of a mile long lying in the centre of the Athabasca River, in Northern Canada. On either side of the island, and running its full length, is a dangerous rapid. The right hand channel, however, can be navigated by scows. Along this river pass a large quantity of trade goods for the fur-posts in the great wilderness beyond, while in a like manner millions of pounds worth of furs are brought out to civilization every year by means of the river. Although the scows can negotiate the rapid, there is always the risk of their capsizing, which means the loss of valuable goods or furs. At either end of this island, however, the water is fairly quiet, offering an excellent passageway for the conveyance of goods while the scows are coming down "light" through the rapid. It was this fact that brought the "Grand Island Railway" into being about half a century ago. The rolling stock, as already stated, consists of two old lorries, and upon these goods are loaded at the upper end of the island. The lorries are then propelled by hand at the lower end.

People making use of the railway must not only load the cars themselves, but haul them to the other end of the island. The charge is ten shillings a ton. Sometimes, on the trip "out" boats are carried across, when the charge is two pounds. The fortunate owner of this queer little railway makes an income of several thousand pounds a year, and declares that since its inception it has returned a million dollars in profits.—Wide World.

### LOSSES THROUGH POOR PACKING.

The startling statement is made by the Pennsylvania Railroad Co. that the loss and damage to freight in transit over its lines, due mainly to improper or insufficient packing, will this year reach \$2,000,000, doubling last year's total. This 100 per cent increase is only in part accounted for by the increased value of many commodities. The major portion of this indefensible waste of \$2,000,000 annually, on a single railway system, is due to misdirected economy in the matter of packing. It goes without saying that the experience of the railroad company quoted is that of every other public carrier in the country, to a greater or less degree according to the volume of freight transported.

### TWENTY SHIPS FOR FRANCE.

The United States will furnish France with twenty ships for the transport of supplies. Ten of them are ships that have been taken by the Government from the Great Lakes.