

England Makes Shipping Scapegoat

The past year was the most critical one in the history of British shipping, says the annual report of the Cardiff and Bristol Channel Shipowners' Association, just issued. Sharp criticism of Government methods in shipping control characterizes the report. The output of standard ships is declared to have been negligible. In part, the report says:

"There has never been a period charged with so many vicissitudes as the year 1917. There has never been a year in which the importance of our shipping trade has been so strongly impressed upon the millions living in these islands. The year stands out as one in which the country was put to a more severe test than ever in its history. As regards the shipping trade, the outstanding features of the year were the drastic control of all tonnage, the ruthless submarine warfare, the negligible output of standardized ships, the exceptionally heavy working expenses which made it difficult for shipowners to pay their way at the existing Blue Book rates of freight, the attitude of the Government with respect to the shipowning trade, and the numberless regulations and orders rendered necessary as a consequence of increased Government control.

EFFECT OF U. S. ENTRY INTO WAR.

"America came into the war arena and immediately restricted exports to neutral countries to pre-war quantities, and enforced services by withholding supplies of bunker coal. Practically over 90 per cent of British-owned tonnage came under requisition at rates of freight which not only precluded the possibility of adequate profits being made, but in several instances led to losses, which must undoubtedly have an adverse influence on the shipping trade after the war. Unfortunately, a large section of the public still held to the erroneous idea that shipowners were making fortunes by running their steamers, and equally unfortunate is the fact that the Government did not seek to disabuse the minds of those who held that view by informing them of the real facts. The shipowner was the scapegoat for the rise in the costs of foodstuffs, although the many questions asked in the House of Commons with respect to the trading of requisitioned vessels at a profit by the Government disabused the thinking portion of the British public of the idea that shipowners were making fortunes out of the crisis.

"It was a favorite device on the part of labor leaders to denounce shipowners for making huge profits out of the disabilities of the nation. Many signally failed to appreciate the fact that large numbers of shipowners were working their vessels at a loss while neutral shipowners were free to earn the enormous freight rates offering on the open market. The merchant fleets of neutral nations have been given a stimulus which is likely to materially influence this country in the near future. Neutral shipowners have vast funds behind them, which will be used for the creation of larger mercantile marines, and our dominant position in respect of the world's carrying trade may be seriously challenged when normal times again obtain.

BLUE BOOK RATES.

"The question of Blue Book rates occupied the close attention of the association. Several meetings were held with respect to the matter in conjunction with the propaganda of the Chamber of Shipping. A Blue Book rates committee was appointed by the chamber, Daniel Radcliffe being the representative of the association upon that committee.

"These rates were instituted in October, 1914, by Lord Mersey's committee, and notwithstanding the greatly increased costs of running, no increase has been accorded since March 1, 1915, when the rates for one particular type of ocean tramp were raised. Since 1915 the abnormal increase in shipowners' working expenses has been such that the Blue Book rates of hire on requisitioned vessels were totally inadequate. Attention was drawn to the fact that owners, up to August, 1917, had to pay heavy war risk calls on requisitioned ships and were called upon to suffer loss of hire under circumstances where continuous hire should be paid by the Government, as in the case of time lost in fitting armaments, wireless installations and repairs. In addition, owners are called upon to bear heavy expenses in connection with special accommodation, wages and maintenance of wireless operators, additional costs for lifeboats, etc.

"All these additional costs are extraneous to Blue Book rates, and, consequently, owners of requisitioned vessels failed to make both ends meet, and many were compelled to work their vessels at heavy losses. The heavy burden of war risks was brought before

SHIPPING LOSSES.

London, April 10.

The sinking of British merchantmen by mines or submarines last week reached the next lowest level of any week since Germany began her intensive submarine campaign early in 1917. Four vessels of more than 1,600 tons, two of less than 1,600 tons, and two fishing boats were sunk. The Admiralty statement adds:

"Vessels unsuccessfully attacked, 11, including two previously.

"Arrivals, 2,534; sailings, 2,495.

"Both fishermen reported to-day were sunk during the week ending March 30."

The low record in sinkings for any week since Germany began her intensive submarine campaign was, in the aggregate weight of tonnage sunk, the week of November 11 last. Then only one vessel of over 1,600 tons, and five vessels of less than 1,600 tons were destroyed.

Last week's Admiralty statement announced the sinking of six merchantmen of more than 1,600 tons, seven of less than 1,600 tons and five fishing vessels. The previous week 28 merchantmen were sunk, 16 being of more than 1,600 tons burden.

RESULT OF SUB RAVAGES.

A semi-official announcement states that aeroplanes and dirigibles recently destroyed ten submarines with depth bombs. The figures of submarine sinkings as given out through Berlin look bad, but Great Britain maintains that the Germans exaggerate monthly sinkings by 50 per cent to over 100 per cent. The British figures indicate that the world's gross tonnage was decreased by 11,827,572 tons from the beginning of the war to January, 1918. Off-setting this with new tonnage constructed and with tonnage taken from Germany, the net loss of the world's shipping in this period was only 2,632,279 gross tons. England is building ships at the rate of 3,000,000 tons a year, and the United States should do as well when the shipping programme gets into full swing. This condition lends hope for optimism and undoubtedly figures in the strength of shipping securities.

U. S. TAKES OVER COASTWISE LINES.

In an effort to relieve transportation, provide for the rapid movement of coal, cotton and other commodities and to add to the overseas fleet, President Wilson issued a proclamation on Thursday last, giving William G. McAdoo, as Director-General of Railroads, control of the principal coastwise steamship lines.

As cited in the proclamation the lines affected are: "Clyde Steamship Co., a corporation of the State of Maine; Mallory Steamship Co., a corporation of the State of Maine; Merchants and Miners' Transportation Co., a corporation of the State of Maryland, and Southern Steamship Co., a corporation of the State of Delaware."

The properties taken over include "all steamships, tugs, lighters, barges, ships, boats and marine craft of any and every kind or description, and all the tackle and appurtenances to and appliances thereof, together with all wharves, docks, warehouses and other property of every kind or nature, real or chattel, owned, leased, chartered, controlled or used by said companies or either of them in conjunction or in connection with said transportation systems."

G. T. R. YEAR'S TRAFFIC.

Directors and shareholders of the Grand Trunk Railway will meet at the annual meeting to be held in London, Eng., on the 25th inst. The annual report will show that the Grand Trunk did more business during the year than in any previous, normal year in the history of the company — say 20 p.c. more. The freight business was the heaviest that the road has handled in years.

The Grand Trunk handled 25,000,000 tons of freight and live stock in the year. Raw materials and finished products — the latter brought to tidewater — were among the enormous freight bulks which taxed the capacity of the Grand Trunk to the full last year. The company suffered from high prices, from high wages, from inadequate rates and all these accounts for the passing of the dividends.

the attention of the Shipping Controller, and representations resulted in the institution of the New War Risks Scheme, under which, from August 20, 1917, requisitioned vessels were relieved from war risk calls. Negotiations are proceeding for an increase in Blue Book Rates."

U. S. ISSUES NEW BUNKER RULES.

Washington, April 10.

New bunker coal regulations were issued to-day by the United States Fuel Administration for the purpose of adding greatly to the efficiency of all ships engaged in overseas service and along the coast. Under these rules only what is known as "permissible coal" will be bunkered in ships at all ports north of Cape Hatteras. Regulations governing "permissible coal" for Gulf and South Atlantic ports will follow very shortly.

Coal of the "smokeless" variety and giving a greater steaming radius and, consequently greater speed when needed is all that, after the promulgation of these regulations, will be allowed to find its way into the bunkers of ships.

No coal may be delivered to any Atlantic or Gulf port for bunker purposes other than that which has been specified by the United States Fuel Administration as permissible. Outside of those qualities of coal already named prior to the effective date of to-day's regulation, no coal will be classified as permissible for bunkering except on the recommendation of the United States Bureau of Mines.

Shipment of slack, or size of coal smaller than run-of-mine, are prohibited from being shipped to any port for bunkering purposes, except under special permission of the United States Fuel Administration.

At Atlantic ports, north of Cape Hatteras, at which all tidewater coal is pooled and delivered through the tidewater coal exchange, permissible bunker coal is specified as follows:

At Hampton Roads — Coal originating in the Pocahontas and New River fields which has been or may be classified by the tidewater coal exchange for consignment to pool No. 1 or pool No. 2 at Lamberts Point, Sewalls Point or Newport News.

At Philadelphia, New York and Baltimore (A) coal originating in mines on the acceptable list of the United States Navy, which has been or may be classified by the Tidewater Coal Exchange for consignment to pool No. 1.

(B) Coal originating at mines on the New York Central Railroad, on the Pennsylvania Railroad or any of their connecting lines, which has or may be classified by the Tidewater Coal Exchange for consignment to pools Nos. 9 and 10.

(C) Coal originating at mines on the Buffalo, Rochester and Pittsburg Railroad which has been or may be classified by the Tidewater Coal Exchange for the consignment to pool No. 14.

(D) Coal originating at mines on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, western Maryland Railroad or any of their connecting lines, which has been or may be classified for consignment to pool No. 22.

At ports north of New York which receive their supply of coal from New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia or Hampton Roads, coal for steamship use is to be supplied from the permissible list as herein specified.

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