

Arrangements have now been made for the establishment of Schools of Practical Seamanship at Montreal and Halifax, in anticipation of the coming into force in Canada of an ILO convention respecting the certification of Able Seamen. This convention requires an Able Seaman to hold a certificate of qualification before signing on a Canadian ship to sail abroad. Those who have completed three years at sea before a specified date are eligible for certificates without examination, if considered competent, but others must pass an examination. The new schools will provide the necessary instruction and conduct the examinations.

There is presently a scarcity of qualified officers in Canada, particularly engineers. This condition is part of a world-wide shortage, and hence each country must find its own solution. In Canada my department is arranging for training facilities so that young Canadians can prepare themselves to be marine engineers in the merchant navy.

That pretty well outlines what the Canadian Government is doing to ensure on the one hand that we have a healthy merchant marine able to offer good wages and working conditions, and on the other hand that we have sufficient men of good training to man our vessels. Those of you from the United States will be conscious of the fact that your Government has faced the same problems on a far greater scale. In conclusion, I want to emphasize that the voluntary work of your agencies, and others like them in the ports of the world, plays an important and complementary part in making the life at sea an attractive one.

It is a work that deserves whole-hearted public support in both countries. I have mentioned how important our water-borne commerce is to Canada, far more important than our comparatively small fleet would indicate. The United States for its part sees a truly staggering volume of goods handled in ocean, coastal, and inland trades. These facts alone would justify a wide appeal on behalf of the welfare of seamen when ashore. But I would like to make my appeal to the seaport cities in particular.

Now I know that many of our ports on this continent give you generous support, and I rejoice with you in that fact. But no one knows better than you how much more could be done with more ample funds, and no one has more at stake than the citizens of our seaports.

Firstly, there is the matter of reciprocating at home the hospitality our own seamen enjoy in other ports. After all, your problem is not so much one of looking after men in their home port as in strange ports. And as such, it is as much a matter of entertaining foreign sailors as our own nationals. Common humanity demands no less.

Then there is the matter of practical self-interest. Seaports prosper or decline along with the vessels and the trades they serve. In them is focused much of the advantage that attends a great maritime commerce. They share in many ways the fortunes of the seamen in their harbours. They show wisdom therefore in doing their bit to make ocean life attractive and the individual seaman a happy visitor....