

The third step was the temporary provision of direct subsidies to ensure the maintenance of a limited number of vessels under the Canadian flag -- under Canadian registry, that is, not merely Canadian ownership. This plan was announced late in 1949. Under it the Maritime Commission made contracts with the owners of 37 vessels to operate them with Canadian crews. In each case the assistance was contracted for one year only.

Following the Korean outbreak in 1950, ocean freight rates rose rapidly once more. Subsidies were no longer required, and the plan has been dropped. But it did assist in tiding owners over a difficult period.

With this brief review of our maritime history I turn now to the seamen themselves. Let me say first of all that no body of men contributed more to winning the War than the gallant seamen of the allied merchant navies. All were volunteers and were engaged in a civilian capacity. Nevertheless their duties took them through desperate risks and hazards in the face of the enemy, comparable to those experienced by the average man in uniform.

You will appreciate from what I have said of the wartime growth of the merchant marine what a manpower problem we had. Manning pools and training schools were established to service the convoys, and new facilities were provided ashore for the allied problem of seamen's welfare at our eastern convoy ports. These projects later helped to provide the men to man our own merchant fleet, a requirement that grew to over 13,000 from a pre-war employment of about 1400. Some of the best seamen were recruited from as far away as the Prairies, where they had never seen the sea.

It must be noted that many seamen of other countries were employed on Canadian vessels. Many of the ships did not carry Canadian crews because their operations did not bring them to Canada. Accordingly the post-war readjustments which I have described did not cause serious unemployment of Canadian seamen. Nevertheless there has been a considerable reduction of employment opportunities. The seamen affected were made eligible for vocational training to assist them in finding shore employment.

At the same time there is a continuing need for providing training for those in Canada who would follow the sea. Canadian flag vessels are open to world-wide competition. If they are to be successful while paying Canadian wage scales, they must be manned by officers and men with high standards of competence and efficiency.

There are a number of schools of navigation and seamanship at various Canadian ports, some of them private and some sponsored by the provinces and receiving federal assistance. One is right here in this city in space provided by the Montreal Sailor's Institute. I might also mention Vancouver, Halifax, Saint John, New Brunswick, and St. John's Newfoundland, Yarmouth, Toronto, Kingston, and others. At Quebec City my own Department maintains a school of navigation and seamanship in the Pilotage Building. At Rimouski, a new marine school gives pre-sea training as well as tuition for all grades of masters and mates examinations.