

War's Effect on World Shipping

U. S. Shipping Board Figures Denied Patriotic Education Society Disputes Claims

In sharp contrast to the United States Shipping Board's estimate of a production of 6,000,000 tonnage by the end of 1918 is the view taken by the Patriotic Education Society in a statement on "The World Shipping Problem" just issued from its Washington headquarters. The society estimates that unless conditions are materially changed the production cannot exceed 1,500,000 deadweight tons. General criticism is made of the methods employed in handling the shipping situation.

The society, whose purpose is announced as being "to present important truths for a more united and effective America," is headed by the following men:

Henry Wise Wood, president; Henry B. Joy, vice-president; Raymond B. Price, treasurer; Perry Belmont, Martin J. Gillin, Albert Bond Lambert and Henry Woodhouse.

Recommendations for legislation by Congress are made. This, it is stated, should provide for a National Employment Bureau, priority of labor and material for the most important needs and the appointment of a war planning committee.

Referring to the tonnage problem, the report says:

"Our investigation shows that America's problem is not merely one of building to overcome the losses of the submarine. If not another ship were sunk, we would still be hard pushed to find ships to supply our army and our Allies and to carry the raw materials needed to maintain our munition plants.

"The loss of world's tonnage up to September, 1917, actually amounted to 12,000,000 tons, although the destruction by submarine and mine was only 8,783,080 tons. This is figured by estimating the unusual depreciation due to the exigencies of war, and including the ships that are held in port as well as the falling off in the world's shipbuilding. If the war had not intervened, the world tonnage in 1917 would have been about 59,000,000 gross tons.

"We have been led to believe that America has done a great deal more in ship construction than is actually the case. This is due to the unfortunate wording of our Government announcements. Any one reading these announcements might readily be led to believe that the great tonnage, building on American ways for foreign account at the outbreak of the war and which has since been commandeered by the Shipping Board, actually represented new shipping produced out of the blue sky when the United States went to war. As a matter of fact, most of these ships would eventually have found their way into the Atlantic service whether or not this country went to war. The Shipping Board also announces its building programme in 'deadweight tonnage' which makes a vessel of a given size appear about twice as great as if the British 'gross ton' were used. Unless the recently reconstructed Emergency Fleet Corporation can find means to greatly increase present facilities, including labor and materials, men who know the present capacity of our shipyards declare that we cannot possibly produce more than 1,500,000 deadweight tons in 1918.

"While we are focussing attention upon ocean going vessels, it is a serious mistake to neglect our coastwise trade and our inland waterways. Recently, a large number of barges and tugboats, needed to supply our New England factories, were sold to foreign account. The Erie Canal, capable of transporting 10,000,000 tons of freight during a season, is ready, but we have not a single modern barge to enter the trade."

WHAT BRITAIN HAS DONE.

The critical nature of the situation is discussed in an introduction to the report, which says:

"Major General Maurice, Director Military Operations for Great Britain, is reported to have stated that the British importation of war material into France increased between January and September, 1917, in the ratio of 245 to 114. In other words, the British war effort in terms of tonnage and human labor has more than doubled in eight months.

"Meanwhile some of our officials point with pride to our tremendous achievements, which they measure by the slow pace of peace, not by the celerity demanded by war. Sir Arthur Balfour, Lord Northcliffe, our French, Italian and other visitors issue warnings, but because they are softened by compliments we fail to read their meaning or we consider them evidences that we have done enough. But the truth is that well informed Britons and Frenchmen express the fear that by sending an army to France, for want of adequate ship tonnage, we will do more harm than good;

that by depriving the present trained and fighting forces and populations of our Allies of necessary supplies we will weaken the Allies' power more than our raw military forces will strengthen it. The British Shipping Controller, armed with complete knowledge of tonnage construction and destruction, and of the tonnage needs of the world, says bluntly that America must build 6,000,000 tons of ships per year, and he means at once, not in the year 1920, after the fashion of our once proposed five-year naval construction programme, of which nothing better could be said than that it was a good promise. Following the British Shipping Controller's warning, reinforced by Lord Northcliffe, there appeared in the American press what seemed to be an officially inspired statement indicating that our shipbuilding plans were adequate, and attempting to allay our fears with what again may be only expectation. Inefficiency always spurs for time until truth or disaster appears.

No matter how well we have prepared to meet our obligations in this war, if the need is yet greater we have so far failed. Most of us must admit that, under added pressure of greater inspiration, he could have accomplished more. If facts like the following had been driven home to our people during the past months, is it not certain that we should have more men, more money, more ships, more supplies, more speed, because delays very visible at times would not have been tolerated? Consider well these facts:—

1.—Italian munition plants run part time for want of coal. Germany is not worried over the Italian offensive, because she knows it is limited by lack of coal. Unless we send Italy 250,000 tons of coal per month she cannot long continue her offensive military operations. The ships are not in sight to carry that coal to Italy.

2.—The Italian and French navies are crippled for lack of fuel. Germany knows this and seeks to destroy coal and oil ships above all others.

3.—If not another ship were destroyed by mine or submarine from now on, we still could not send 1,000,000 men to France and maintain them one year from to-day.

"In the light of recent history this sounds almost like prophecy, but it was based upon mathematics of a very simple sort. Nobody knew, or was then trying to know in any adequate way, what tonnage was necessary for even the needs of last June. There was, it was only too evident, a shortage of ships. And it was also as evident that the need of tonnage and the labor necessary to win the war were visibly increasing every month. But our officials neglected to add two and two and work out the necessary sum in arithmetic. Our wisest critics, as it turns out, were those who demanded the greatest tonnage of all and of every kind of ship that could be built, and these critics were merely civilian observers.

WRANGLING CAUSED DELAY.

"To-day we see millions of bushels of wheat lying idle in Australia, a million tons of sugar useless in Java, while the rest of the world hungers for them. Sailing vessels, slow, small wooden steamers, would be a Godsend to the world, were any to be had, to bring these supplies even to bountiful America. But Washington permitted months of wrangling to delay the building of any ships, while conditions to-day are not so much better as the public is being led to believe. If our words were seamen and our promises ships, the war's end would be in sight.

"Italy has not been short of men. But her national industries have been almost completely stopped, every resource being strained to increase war production, hampered by lack of coal, iron and cotton, and even grain for the workers. Thus the Italian offensive has been turned to defeat for lack of ships. Even if Italy did not send men to France, assuming she had them to spare; even if Italy's ambitions in Dalmatia, Croatia, the Aegean, or Albania exceed our desires for her, we were and are trying to win Germany, and the quickest way is to strengthen Germany's trained enemies. Have we taken the quickest way? Have we done what we could for Italy? Assuredly not.

"And to-day, while we are being officially warned by our Allies of the need for more ships, for the still faster construction of ships, Washington conveys the impression that we are doing all that could be expected. This is not the fact. We could do, and could have done, far more. Indeed, we must do far more if the war is to be won by ourselves and Allies.

"A great army is being formed to go to Europe,

but nobody seems to know just how much shipping will be successively needed for its transportation. The approximate answer depends, of course, upon the number of men and the quantity of supplies to be sent. Except in the most general way, these two elements remain fairly unknown factors. Then, in addition, shipping is needed for the sending of supplies to our Allies, but how much tonnage will be demanded for this purpose no one appears to be in a position to say precisely. Also a large tonnage must be provided for the present and immediate future needs of commerce. These needs not only comprise the ocean-going traffic to all parts of the world, but coastwise and inland waterway as well. Our exports have enormously increased, and what, with the necessity of rehabilitating drained and devastated European countries after the war, the great outrush of exports is likely to continue for a long time.

"What the world's tonnage is at present no one here can say with exactitude. The United States Government has depended upon Lloyd's Register of Shipping, the leading British authority, for its annual figures. Late last year Lloyds announced that it would not make public any more statistics—during the war, at least.

The world's shipping up to June 30, 1916, as recorded in Lloyd's Register of Shipping, was:

Year.	Total Vessels.	
	Number.	Tons.
1913	30,591	46,970,113
1914	30,836	49,089,552
1915	30,720	49,261,769
1916	30,167	48,683,136
1917 (to June 30)	*45,000,000

* Estimated to be about.

(Note.—Here the fact should be pointed out that among the different nations reporting on their merchant marine returns there is no uniformity in statistical records. Some nations content themselves with giving statistics of gross tons, while others rest on net tonnage. This diversity in returns of tonnage tends to confuse comparative statistics. In official reports the term gross tons is held to express in units of 100 cubic feet the entire cubical capacity of the vessel, including spaces occupied by cabins, engines, boilers and coal bunkers. The net ton is regarded as equaling 100 cubic feet of carrying capacity, exclusive of deductions for space occupied by cabins, machinery, etc. Deadweight tonnage signifies the maximum weight of cargo, bunkers, consumable stores and all weight, including passengers and crew. To insure better accuracy in the world's returns of shipping tonnage, it is highly advisable that there should be an internationalizing of standards and statistics.)

From the foregoing figures it is seen that, according to official estimates, there was a distinct net loss since the beginning of the war of 4,000,000 tons. Counting the estimated published losses since June, 1917, the total tonnage lost since the beginning of the war up to October 1, 1917, was about 6,500,000 gross tons. Since then German warships have destroyed considerable tonnage; on a single day recently ten merchant vessels were sunk.

"The British Controller of Shipping has announced (October, 1917) that the loss of shipping since the beginning of the ruthless German submarine war is now roughly equal to the total losses prior to that campaign. Inasmuch, as nearly as can be ascertained, about 4,391,540 gross tons were destroyed before warfare started, this would indicate that from the before February, 1917, when the indiscriminate U-boat ginning of the war up to the end of September, 1917, 8,783,800 tons had been destroyed. Lord Beresford declared not long ago (July 20, 1917) that since February 1, 1917, the total loss of British Allied and neutral shipping was at a rate of more than 7,000,000 tons a year. But this figure may be set down as probably an over-estimate, in view of the claim that destruction by mine or submarine has decreased recently. What, however, of the losses of the Central Powers? The destruction of the ships of the Central Powers has been trifling. The fact should be considered, too, that in whatever degree the dangers of submarine warfare may be decreased, a considerable additional amount of tonnage is doomed to destruction. The British Controller of Shipping says that it is reasonable to expect that by next spring Germany will destroy 200 vessels more than can be built in the meantime.

"But the outright destruction of tonnage does not give a full idea by any means of the actual shortage of tonnage. This shortage should be estimated not merely by ships sunk. Every ship that has been bottled up in neutral countries, such as Holland, Spain, Chili, and Argentina, is, for all practical purposes, a deduction for the time from the world's tonnage. The same applies to disabled ships, laid up for serious repairs. What is also equivalent a considerable loss in the world's tonnage is the holding up of ships in