

West Europe Hopes Discrimination Against Their Shipping Stops

Maritime Services More Important Than Ordinary Exports to Dollar Belt

By WILLIAM H. STONEMAN, Times Foreign Correspondent
LONDON, June 22—Abolition of the United States Maritime Commission has led the governments of Western Europe to hope for an end to what they describe as "wild-eyed discrimination" against their shipping interests.

Unless American regulations and American subsidies in favor of American shipping are altered, they protest, it is futile for the American administration to urge American citizens to "buy European goods."

Shipbuilding and shipping services, they point out, are a major source of revenue to Western Europe and are far more important from the dollar-earning point of view than any ordinary exports to the dollar belt.

Up until now, they say, this means of earning dollars has been hamstrung by "unbearable subsidies and impossible regulations" in keeping with the Maritime Commission's free spending policy.

Hope for Policy Change

It is the hope of the Norwegians, the British and other important shipping nations that the Department of Commerce, which has assumed the functions of the Maritime Commission, will at least investigate the possibility of modifying American shipping policy to make it conform with American political and commercial policy toward Western Europe.

At present the U. S. government pays 50 per cent of the cost of new American ships constructed in the United States.

It also subsidizes the operation of American shipping lines up to the full amount of the difference between operating a ship under the American flag and a foreign flag.

American Hauls Favored
Special laws provide that 50 per cent of all Marshall Plan goods and 50 per cent of all goods shipped under the military aid program shall be shipped in American hulls.

The obvious purpose, which is fully appreciated by Europeans, is to maintain in being a large with personnel to man it, which would be ready in case of war.

They complain, however, that there is a happy medium between anticipating American defense needs and entirely preventing European shipping interests from earning the dollars that their countries need.

They point out that the United States already has 14 million deadweight tons of merchant shipping in use and 22 million tons more—or 2200 individual ships—laid up.

A country such as the United

States—which was building one 10,000-ton ship every four hours at the height of the war and could do even better another time does not need much more, they protest.

Protest U. S. Method

American ships, they add, cost between twice and five times as much to operate as European ships and they could not hold their own under a regime of free competition such as the Americans urge upon Western Europeans in other fields of activity.

They estimate that shipbuilding capacity by 1952 will be three times world replacement requirements with a resultant slump of colossal proportions in the shipbuilding business and in shipping rates.

What they urge upon Americans in this situation is "a reasonably large merchant marine, supported by reasonable subsidies, plus a reasonably good-sized shipbuilding industry supported by reasonable subsidies."

Amazed at Subsidy

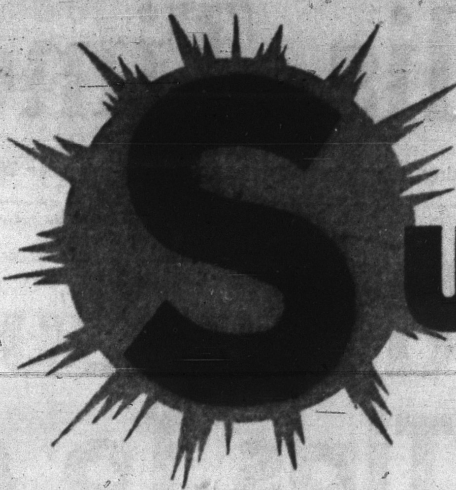
They do not regard it as "reasonable" for the Maritime Commission to have guaranteed a sum for the construction of six new American ships which has been estimated at \$25 million more than the legal subsidy should have been. They accept the strategic importance of the new American superliner United States but are amazed at the fact that the government is going to pay \$42 million out of the total bill of \$70 millions.

It is a popular form of American sport to investigate the European shipping and shipbuilding business but nothing ever seems to come of it.

Two recent investigations have been Sen. Brewster of Maine, and Congressman James Francis Murphy of New York.

Sen. Brewster is reported to have said upon his return to Washington that he visited 38 European shipyards. But he appears to have missed all of the big yards in Britain and Congressman Murphy who came over to see "how European shipments could help the United States in time of war" didn't see any shipyards or any shipbuilders.

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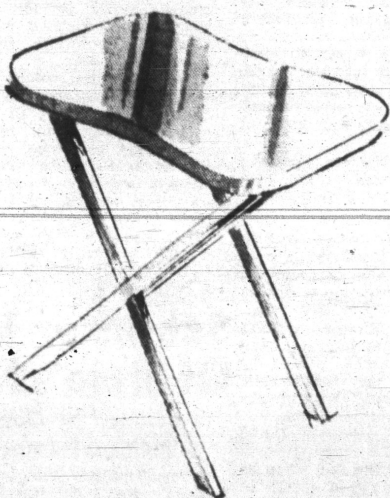
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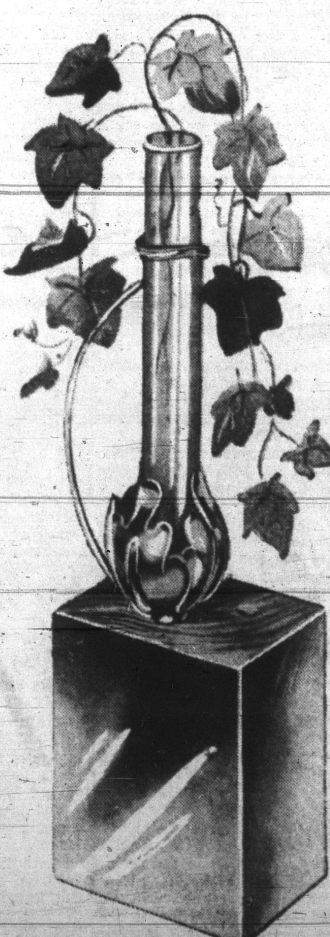


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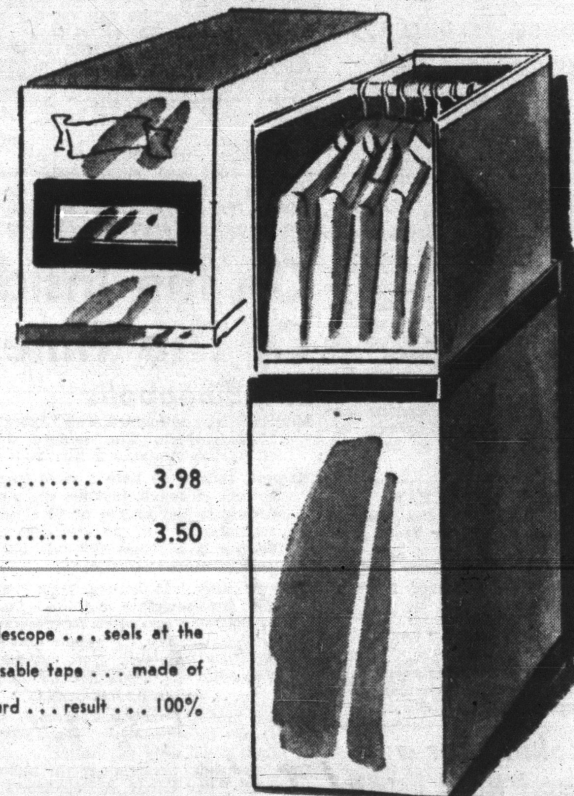
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