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SHIPPING BOARD PLANS FOR FLEET

Expect to Have Largest Merchant Marine in the World.

By T. N. CANDIFER International News Service Staff Correspondent

Washington, Sept. 10.—Whether the United States flag flies over the largest merchant marine in the world, as it once flew over the clipper ship fleets of American commerce, depends on the development of the present Shipping Board's program within the next few months.

Chairman Albert D. Lasker, of the new board, has stated that it will take a full year to determine definitely the result of the present program. The preliminary steps in the program have already been undertaken. They include:

First. A general clean-up of incomplete contracts.

Second. A thorough survey of the entire Shipping Board, to determine just where the organization stands in a business way.

BUSINESS METHODS NEEDED Third. To put the board on the same basis as a successful business.

The general goal toward which these steps are directed is a full-fledged American merchant marine, second to none.

Chairman Lasker has stated that his administration has inherited chaos. They have inherited an organization, in which, owing to war conditions, accounts with the business clients are badly scrambled, a large amount of surplus material is on hand, some of it unusable under present conditions, and, finally, with the second largest tonnage in the world on their hands, they are operating at a loss to the Government.

The first thing the present organization has undertaken has been to close up, that is, settle long standing accounts as rapidly as they can be put in shape, clear away accumulated red tape, adjust the organization to present conditions, and in general start with as clean a slate as possible. This is still going on, and Chairman Lasker expects months to elapse before most of the work is done.

In line with this clean-up, the organization is being thoroughly overhauled and surveyed. This is to determine what assets and liabilities the present board has, a thing which the chairman states has never been done. He states that an enormous amount of work is involved in this alone.

WORKING ORDER NEEDED

The third step, putting the firm in working order, involves all these things and is the immediate goal.

The fundamental thing being undertaken now is to stop the loss to the Government through the board's operations. This is stated to be the keynote to the entire undertaking.

This loss has been laid by board officials to the present system of operating Shipping Board vessels, known as Managing Operators' Agreement No. 4. Under this agreement operators are practically guaranteed 5 per cent of the ships earnings, although the losses in operating might in some cases exceed by thousands of dollars the total income. This is held to be the primary cause of all the present trouble.

Accordingly the first definite plank in the new board's platform has been to agree unanimously that this system must be abolished. This feature of the permanent policy is the only one fully decided as yet, and until it is done it is stated that lesser matters must wait.

TO STOP LOSSES

The board, of course, has determined on other steps besides abolishing the present operating agreements, but they are all involved under the general head of stopping loss of the Government.

Negotiations are under way whereby all surplus material will be disposed of, and some of this work is now under way, including the sale of the wooden ships.

When all this is done the present board hopes they will have the following:

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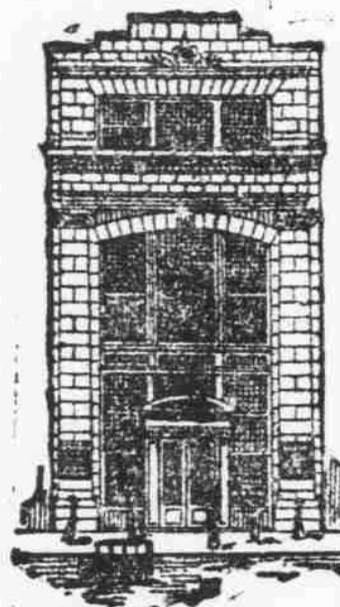
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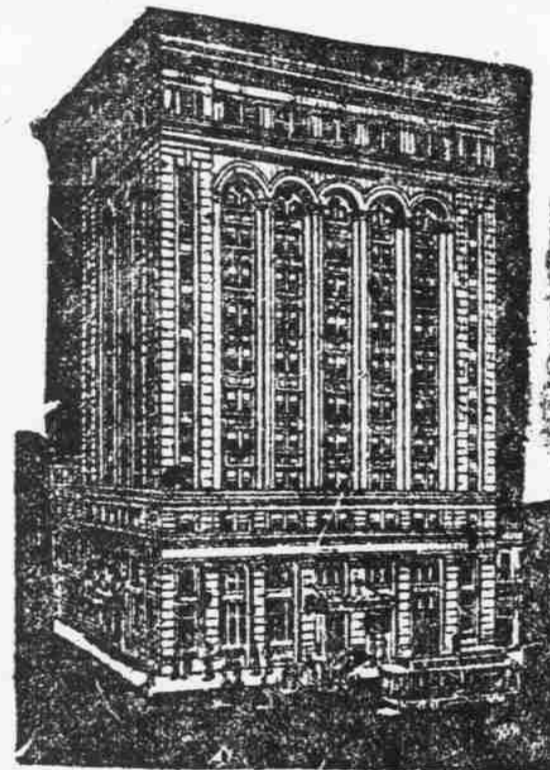
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