

# SHIPYARDS HUM AS U. S. PUSHES HUGE PROGRAM

Construction Policies Take Shape in Development of Merchant Marine

## VAST PROBLEMS SOLVED

By WILLIAM ATHERTON DU PUY  
WASHINGTON, Sept. 26.

The smoke of battle has cleared away from the headquarters of the United States Shipping Board and the Emergency Fleet Corporation, where General Goethals and Chairman Denman lately were outmaneuvering and smoke-bombing each other, and it is now possible to state definite governmental policies on wooden and steel ships and take the measure of the advance toward their fabrication.

In the first instance, I was told today at the Shipping Board that few or no wooden ships would be built after the completion of 400 now under contract. This would indicate that General Goethals's counsel had prevailed in the argument as between wooden and steel ships. Still, there is a considerable concession in favor of the Denman idea, for 400 wooden ships of 1000 tons each make no small item in the American marine of the future. Incidentally, it may be stated that the work is well along on many of these vessels, and they will be taking to the water within five months from date.

The second question at issue between General Goethals, of the Emergency Fleet Corporation, and Chairman Denman, of the Shipping Board, was one of authority. General Goethals took the position that he was to proceed with his plans without the advice of the Shipping Board, and Chairman Denman insisted upon passing on the program of the builder of the Panama Canal. In the midst of the bitter controversy that ensued the President asked both to resign and appointed Edward N. Hurley and Rear Admiral Washington Lee Capps as their successors.

### SHIPPING BOARD IN POWER

"The Emergency Fleet Corporation," it is now said and uncontradicted at the Shipping Board, "is a subsidiary of the board. The latter has the direction of the building plan, as well as that of the operation of the ships when they are ready to be put into commission."

So, in the second contention between Denman and Goethals, the former chairman seems to have won the day. As the matter has worked out it was within his province to exercise authority over the work of the builder of ships. Rear Admiral Capps admits that authority, which sits lightly, and is proceeding with the work.

These vast enterprises of the Government in meeting the war situation contain much of incidental news from day to day, but in the mass of it the whole plan and the extent to which it is being accomplished are difficult to follow. I therefore asked at the Shipping Board that I be helped to picture the status of our shipbuilding program as it exists today.

In the first place there is the measure of the job in the light of appropriations from Congress. Early in the game the Emergency Fleet Corporation was formed under the authorization of Congress which provided it with \$50,000,000, protesting at the largeness of the amount. Then, after we were well into the war and the submarines were sinking many ships, a new measure of the situation appeared to Congress and authorization was given for the expenditure of \$150,000,000, or fifteen times the original appropriation. Contracts have been let that will absorb that \$750,000,000, and Congress has provided for an additional billion in legislation now pending but scheduled to pass within a few weeks. So the authorizations for ships is nearing the two-billion mark.

The first \$750,000,000 is now being spent. Next to the 400 wooden ships progressing toward completion, there are eighty composite ships building. These vessels are part wood and part steel and are of 5000 tons each or thereabouts. Some of them will be ready in six months.

### FABRICATED STEEL SHIPS

The third venture in building is in fabricated steel ships. There are 140 of these now contracted for. They are of tonnage ranging from 5000 to 7000. They are the ships that promise to be standard for future construction. They are being built through a system of co-ordinating production that theoretically is a marvel of American industry, but which waits practical demonstration. The vessels are built in parts at different places, numbers of great industrial plants being assigned the manufacture of the sections of the ship that fit best into their capacities. These various parts will be assembled at Hog Island and Bristol on the Delaware River, and at Newark, N. J. When once this piece of organization is in operation each of these assembling plants will be able to turn out a complete ship once every two days. These fabricated ships, the prospective masterpiece of the Shipping Board and the Emergency Fleet Corporation, will begin to get into service in ten months to a year from the present date.

This completes the building plan for which money is already available. The billion that is to come will probably be used largely in these fabricated ships and possibly in a limited number of composite wood and steel ships.

### 300,000 TONS OF SHIPPING SEIZED

Another vast undertaking of the Shipping Board was the commandeering of ships under construction. In all the shipyards between Portland, Me., and Portland, Ore., the Shipping Board has seized the ships that were being built without regard to ownership. It has paid for these ships and has given instructions to their builders as to completion of work. Many of them have since been completed. As they have been ready to enter the trade, the Government has assigned them to duty with the army or navy or has leased them for operation in such a way that it would be most benefited. Only vessels of more than 2500 tons were thus seized, but the total has amounted to a tonnage of 300,000, and the number of ships to something like a hundred.

The next step after commandeering ships under construction is that of requisitioning those already upon the seas and flying the Stars and Stripes. Every American ship is subject to this sort of commandeering at any moment. Its owners are, of course, recompensed. The army may want transports or the navy may want colliers. There may be a call for ten of the former and six of the latter tomorrow. The Shipping Board examines its shipping map. It notes that certain ships are coming to port at certain points today and that certain others have recently docked and unloaded. It seizes the sixteen ships that best suit its purpose and are most available. It turns them immediately over to the service that has called for them.

### GERMAN INEFFICIENCY.

Then there are the German ships that have been interned in American waters. There were about 100 of these, all of which were more or less damaged. The Navy Department is handling the task of repairing these vessels. Many of them are in commission already and others are rapidly approaching entrance into service against the nation that built them. Incidentally, repairing these ships is doing much toward pricking that bubble of German invincibility and efficiency that has been so widely inflated upon during the war. On the Vaterland, or instances of the kind, the unthinkably mistakes and mistakes in the putting together of the

ship. There were, for example, miles of pipe that had been put in, obviously because of faulty plans, and which served no purpose whatever. The crimes against efficiency that were committed in the Vaterland were even in these hurried times of war construction.

The Austrian ships, sixteen in number, are all in American trade at the present time. These were requisitioned, and Austria has already been paid for them.

Another delicate problem with which the Shipping Board has to do is that of the ships of neutral countries that come to American ports. The Government wants those ships diverted from trade that might be of benefit to the enemy and put into that which will be of unquestioned service to the Allies. It has no authority over these ships, but there are privileges which they must have before they may clear from American ports. By denying them these privileges the United States is in a position where it may virtually dictate their course. These being war times no light hand is used in such matters.

There are, for instance, a number of Dutch ships tied up in New York harbor and loaded with grain. Their cargoes were intended for Holland. The Allies, however, have not sufficient assurance that these cargoes will not reach Germany. The United States, therefore, denies the ships export licenses under the food export provisions of recent legislation. They may also be denied bunker coal, without which they may not cross the Atlantic. But they are determined that they will not yield to the demands of the Allies and the grain,

is said to be sprouting in their holds as they collect barnacles at American docks.

SHIPYARD CONGESTION  
The problems of the board are multitudinous. There is the necessity to build many ships and to build them quickly. There is a great shortage of shipyards in the United States and all had many more orders than they could execute. This Government work was thrust upon an already overcrowded industry. Naval construction was already demanding every spare resource. It would have seemed that as huge a building plan would have been beyond the possibilities. America had gone out of business as a maritime nation and was not well provided for shipbuilding. Yet into this situation came a great necessity and America is meeting it.

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