



All ships are beautiful. The Red Jacket bears this out and also symbolizes the forge-ahead spirit this story expresses. U. S. Maritime Commission photo.

Let's Be Realistic

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The United States now possesses the largest merchant marine in history. It was built at enormous cost to provide the overseas logistics in a colossal war that it helped to win. Despite its great size, however, it is signally deficient in one important respect. It has become unbalanced in the number of passenger ships that we need for the expansion of travel between the United States and other nations. This shortage of passenger units becomes ominous in the realization that it is the fast, maneuverable liner that must provide the immediate troop lift in event of an emergency.

It was cheering news therefore, both to the entire travel industry and our defense arm, when it was announced a start had been made to correct this dangerous weakness.

Although it is only the start of a realistic shipbuilding program, recent orders for five crack new passenger ships made world news. The announcement was hailed by President Truman, the Maritime Commission, American shipowners, and the public generally as proof of the determination of the Government and industry to rebuild our position on the seas by providing fast, efficient new passenger ships. In describing the contracts awarded for three new round-the-world liners for American President Lines and two for the Mediterranean service of American Export Lines, President Truman also revealed that a very encouraging move had been made toward the construction of a superliner for the North Atlantic service of United States Lines. This great vessel would be the largest passenger liner ever constructed in an American shipyard and there is even talk of a sister ship of equal size.

In addition to the 5 crack passenger ships for which contracts have already been placed, there are plans for 13 more to make up, at least partially, for our war losses,

and to continue the shipbuilding program. Such a program envisions augmenting our existing passenger fleet so that we will have 4 fast ships from the Gulf to the east coast of South America; 2 from the Atlantic coast to the east coast of South America, 2 for West Africa, 3 between New York and Cuba, 2 for the Caribbean, 1 superliner to English Channel ports with the eventual possibility of a sister ship; and 2 passenger-trailer ships between Long Beach and San Francisco.

In order to wrap up this passenger-ship project in a 3-year construction program, Congress must approve sufficient contract authorizations for the Maritime Commission to get the program under way.

These splendid ships will not only be an additional military auxiliary but will inaugurate faster schedules between many foreign countries and the United States. They will be potent instruments in spreading understanding and good will necessary for world peace, one of the great missions of international travel.

There is more evidence now than at any time since V-J Day of a deep concern by the American people in our future as a maritime nation. Great national organizations such as the Army Transportation Association, the American Legion, the United States Chamber of Commerce, and many others have declared themselves allies in the drive for a modern merchant fleet. We need only to move forward with a sound program to achieve our proper position. We have no overpowering ambitions for domination of the seas, but we do seek our rightful place in international maritime affairs and for our fair share of world travel by sea.

We believe that it is fair to ask and to insist that we carry all of our domestic water-borne commerce and a minimum of 50 percent of our overseas exports and imports, and