

Making the World's Best Seamen Out of American Stock

Institute Officials Plan Welfare Work in Every U. S. Port to Maintain High Standards They Have Helped to Develop in New Type of Merchant Mariners

By ROBERT G. SKERRETT.

WE are going to have a fine lot of men for our merchant marine. Those that are qualifying for the service are of a type distinctly superior to their predecessors afloat. Further, we are going to be able to man our ships as fast as we have them ready.

This is cheerful news, and, best of all, it is the authoritative opinion of a number of experts peculiarly well qualified to express themselves convincingly.

The public has been disquieted upon numerous occasions since we started the rebuilding of our fleets of trade lest we fail to secure for our craft types of men that would make the most of the vessels entrusted to their

distinguished their service in the fighting fleet.

Very recently the Department of Commerce, through the Steamboat Inspection Service, issued an amendment to the regulations governing the eligibility of aspirants for positions as licensed officers for ocean and coastwise steam vessels. They are quoted in full because of their direct bearing upon the question of providing enough qualified executives for our steadily increasing merchant marine:

"Any person who has attained the age of 19 years and who has graduated from a regularly established high school or college may, upon the recommendation of the master or masters under whom he has served, be examined for third mate of ocean or coastwise steamships after having served not less than twelve months (as junior of-



THE AUDITORIUM OF THE INSTITUTE, SHOWING THE NEW TYPE OF SAILOR MAN

Fast Growing Trade Fleet Has Promise of Ample Manpower—Naval Reserve Alone Offers Thousands of Well Trained Officers and Sailors From Which to Draw

peculiar conditions which characterize each. But it does mean working out a comprehensive service for seamen. It means efficient handling of complicated problems and their solutions, in which the long experience of the New York Institute has set a splendid example.

"Ultimately, we hope, there will be no port flying the American flag which does not have an institute to which the merchant seamen of any nationality can come, find friends, wise guidance and sympathetic assistance. England has already established missions in many parts of the globe, and with the cooperation between Great Britain and America the world can be encircled so that no port shall exist which will fail in giving seamen the help and the protection of the church."

The problem is not that of obstructive uplift, but rather to give the visiting seafarer a fair chance in a strange setting so that he can maintain his

ships for one reason or another have been uniformly aided agreeably to their needs by the institute. Further, it has not been necessary for them to seek jobs afloat through questionable agencies—the institution's own shipping department has been ever ready to do this work gratis. In the year gone this department signed and shipped 2,097 men and supplied the crews of a part of the complement of 419 vessels. In addition to this it secured temporary employment for 834 applicants.

The educational work of the institute has always been a prime factor, but its record of useful service reached a high water mark in 1918. During that period there were thirty-six first aid lectures, with an attendance of 367; twenty-eight lectures by the Public School Board of Education, with an attendance of 3,162; and, as a special part of its work in behalf of the American merchant marine, the showing of



A CORNER OF THE OFFICERS MESS ROOM WHERE IS SERVED THE SAME FOOD THAT THE SEAMEN GET IN THEIR MORE COMMODIOUS DINING ROOM

keeping. We have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in ships that could be handled properly only by specialists of a sort; and our business world has freighted these craft with thousands of millions of dollars worth of commodities that could reach their destinations only by cunning seamanship and the skill of competent engineers.

Lure of the Sea Is Felt Again.

As has been said, "This state of affairs has created a demand not so much for men with 'weak brains and strong backs' at a low wage, but rather for trained brains at good wages, with the ability to cooperate at every stage of the ocean-going game."

We have been passing through a crisis and for a while things did not look overpromising of the matter of an ample native born personnel for the vessels that our shipyards have been turning out with feverish haste. Today the prospect is extremely encouraging. Henceforth the red blood of our people will meet in the main our needs upon the water, for they have been aroused anew to the lure of the open ocean as were their forebears in the days when the Stars and Stripes were seen everywhere upon the seven seas.

The war has worked wonders for our mercantile marine, and the stresses of service during the period of the U-boat's greivous activities have done a weeding out work by eliminating the weakling, while character building among the men that have survived and who are keen to stick from now on to the bridge, the deck and the engine room of the freighters which are to carry the bulk of our exports afar and to bring back most of those foreign commodities which we deem essential to our domestic comfort and well being.

Any one that may have doubted that Americans would come forward, once it was established that we were to have an array of vessels for foreign commerce, can now be convinced to the contrary. Not only are our officers and seamen being mustered from the shipping of the great lakes but also from men who become for us to pick and choose from the potentially abundant supply of alien applicants. Thus, with a measure of foreign sailormen to round out a ship's company mostly of Americans, we shall be able to maintain a merchant marine to all intent and purpose national in its character.

Life afloat, except in the navy, did not offer much of an inducement until lately to the American save within the

ficer) on the deck department of ocean or coastwise steamships of 2,000 gross tons or over.

"Any person who has completed the intensive training course prescribed by the United States Navy, and who has been commissioned as Ensign in the United States Naval Reserve force may, upon the recommendation of the master or masters, or the naval officer or officers under whom he has served, be examined for third mate of ocean or coastwise steamers after having actually served not less than four months at sea as officer of the watch or as extra watch officer in company with the officer in charge of the bridge.

"Any person who has completed the intensive training course prescribed by the United States Navy, and who has been commissioned as Ensign in the United States Naval Reserve force, may, upon the recommendation of the engineer officer or officers under whom he has served, be examined for third assistant engineer of ocean or coastwise steamships after having actually served at sea not less than four months as junior engineer officer."

By thus shortening the probationary sea service period, this change in the regulations opens channels of employment to thousands of men that did their bit with the fighting fleet, and offers splendid opportunities to young men that are just at the very beginning of a career. Again, in the subordinate duties afloat there are chances for the man who has been less favored educationally but who has in him the determination to make good and to rise. In short, our merchant marine should appeal to those several classes that have done so well both in the National Army and the Naval Reserve force.

Aid From Alien Seafarers.

To a considerable extent during the first year of our participation in the world war it was quite out of the question for us to obtain all of the native born that we desired for our merchant craft. We were tied over a difficult interval by the ready response of friendly neutrals, seafarers of experience, and it is highly likely that we shall have to rely upon a goodly percentage of aliens among our crews in the years to come. This is only logical, so it is said, because the normally mixed setup of our industrial ranks generally.

However, the American ship and our laws for their administration offer attractive fields of labor and this will make it possible for us to pick and choose from the potentially abundant supply of alien applicants. Thus, with a measure of foreign sailormen to round out a ship's company mostly of Americans, we shall be able to maintain a merchant marine to all intent and purpose national in its character.

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SEAMAN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK OCCUPIES A COMMANDING POSITION ON THE BUSTLING EAST RIVER WATERFRONT.

limitations of domestic trade, and this, in turn, has not been of scope enough to keep alive the erstwhile love for sea life. We have thousands of sturdy mariners that have been forced by circumstances to sign on coastwise schooners and to work aboard tugboats, sound steamers and other sheltered water craft that heartily wished for a decent chance aboard an ocean going ship flying the American flag. One example of the inherent longing for more action, a wider field of usefulness, like the proverbial straw, may tend to show the set of a sentimental tide that is likely to mean much to us in the future.

Dr. Mansfield's Survey of Ports.

What New Yorker has not heard of the Seaman's Church Institute of this city and of its able superintendent, the Rev. Dr. Archibald R. Mansfield, who has been its efficient and inspiring executive for the past twenty-four years? Within the last few days, Dr. Mansfield has returned from a far-flung survey of the conditions at our various ports among the seafaring fraternity. Before starting upon his trip, Dr. Mansfield said:

"My idea of a survey means a complete study of the waterfront. It means visiting the Custom House, the consulates, all the docks and piers. It means discovering the locations of all the unions, the firemen's, stewards' and longshoremen's unions. It means going in to see every mission, every sailors' home or reading room—whatever clubhouse or meeting place has been instituted for the use of the seafaring men.

"The character of the piers and the location of the Consular offices would of course determine largely the most desirable situation for a new institute, if one is to be opened. If a city is merely a port of call the seamen naturally require only a kind of clubhouse where they can read, write letters, play games and make friends

during their hours ashore. If it is a port of discharge, the necessity for hotel facilities, for an institute where mail can be sent, luggage stored, rooms and meals provided, is immediately important."

While on his trip, Dr. Mansfield visited the Seaman's Church Institute of San Francisco, which was inspired by the New York establishment and which is headed by an erstwhile assistant superintendent of the New York Institute. Dr. Mansfield was accompanied upon his long journey by the Rev. George W. Davenport, the executive secretary of the Seaman's Church Institute of America, which was organized for national service a little over two years ago. Mr. Davenport says that one of the outstanding impressions of the survey was the great number of Americans who have lately taken to the sea as a vocation. More than that, he had it borne home upon him that the Americans in all of the nautical ratings were decidedly superior in those characteristics by which we judge our fellows in any walk of life.

As he expressed it: "It is incumbent upon us to maintain this higher order of followers of the sea, and we can do this only if we place the nautical stranger in our midst on a par with his social equals in any industrial community. Mariners, especially those of the less well paid ratings, have been at a disadvantage in the past when landing either at a port of call or a port of discharge, because their modest purses could not provide for them decent accommodations commensurate with their needs.

"They were gathered in by creatures bent upon robbing them in one way or another, or they became the objects of well meaning persons imbued with

faciless, uplifting zeal. The latter not unreasonably aroused antagonism in the self-respecting; and all too frequently the very machinery used in this well intentioned work quite failed to give the mariner ashore, in a strange atmosphere, the simple home comforts and amusements that were his of right as an industrial worker who faced so frequently great hardships that the indispensable commodities of the world could be distributed for the good of all.

"The first thing any one of us asks when we reach a town or city away from home is, 'Where shall I put up?' And the next thing is to see that one's luggage gets there and is safely within one's room. The seafarer asks the same question at a strange port or in any foreign harbor where he must leave his ship; and it was to answer this very question in a thoroughly practicable way that the Seaman's Church Institute of New York, the largest and finest of its kind in the world, was called into being. As has been said, the institute is both a hotel and club for seamen and is dedicated to the use of the world's men and boys who make their livelihood on the water. Here they live and have comfort, cleanliness, privacy, protection and a wide variety of entertainment.

Plans New Institutions.

"In order that the splendid work of the institutions both in New York and San Francisco can be continued elsewhere within the United States it is the aim of the Seaman's Church Institute of America to lend its aid in bringing about the building of similar home centers in our maritime districts. That does not mean trying to rear other institutes exactly like the New York structure in every detail. Different ports must adapt their work to the

own decent standards just as any other traveler expects to be able to do. The future of America upon the sea is going to depend much upon the accommodations that its men of the merchant marine find both in home ports and foreign ports; and it is entirely within our power to make certain that they shall have these facilities within our own domains. The measure of this potential helpfulness can be readily grasped if we sketch in a general way some of the outstanding features of the services rendered by the Seaman's Church Institute of New York during the year just gone.

Facilities of the Institute.

By curtailing some of its recreational features, the Institute has today sleeping accommodations for 712 guests in its 420 single rooms and its dormitories. During 1918 it furnished lodgings for 218,872 seafarers, and of these patrons 78,520 were Americans. Large as the building is it quite fails to meet the demands, and nightly hundreds of applicants have had to be turned away in the same twelve months 503,720 meals were served, not to mention \$43,151 sales at the soda fountain. It can be easily grasped why the Institute has to have two great "holds" or compartments down below tide level devoted to the stowage of baggage, when it is realized that 51,679 pieces of baggage were checked there in the year gone.

The tailor shop, where a man can have his clothes repaired, cleaned and pressed, or obtain a complete new outfit of either nautical garb or "city" clothes, made 2,580 suits in 1918, while the laundry record totalled a matter of 4,640 transactions.

Every one knows what it means to get letters when away from home—there is no need to lay stress upon the sentimental and moral effects of those ties with the distant loved ones and friends; and this department of the institute received mail for 69,223 mariners. Not only that, but the institute gave every facility and offered every encouragement to the guests to write home, and in a great number of instances made it its business to get in touch with those whose relatives were anxious about him.

All too often the sailor with money in his pocket has been the deliberate quarry of the unscrupulous and his open handedness and easy going ways have made him a fairly ready prey. Accordingly the institute has encouraged saving; and has studiously safeguarded the mariner's funds through its Seamen's Wages Department, where a man can bank his earnings. In 1918 the visiting seafarers deposited \$721,356.47 and through this branch of the institute's work transmitted to their homes \$64,130.31 to no fewer than 103 cities and countries the world over. This record is strikingly suggestive, because without a protective agency of this character a very large part of the money involved would have been squandered or stolen from the victims of the ruthless U-boat and the man that missed their outward bound

the Navigation and Marine Engineering School is very suggestive. Last year the school had enrolled 1,679 students, and 104 of them received officers' commissions. In training the pupils in the practical phases of navigation the Institute's tender, J. Hooker Hamersley, made seventy-one cruises to the Lower Bay, carrying the white a total of 1,297 aspirant mariners.

Religious and Social Work.

There were given in the twelve months of 1918 forty-four noonday inspirational talks, and these were attended by an aggregate of 5,300. Probably no part of the institution's ministrations is more illuminating through its popularity than the church services. The chapel is now crowded to capacity at all regular services, which reveals the character of the type of sea followers to-day largely making the ships entering this port. The astounding figures are the best evidence of the fruitful activities of the religious and social department of the institute.

	No.	Attended
English services	291	14,334
Scandinavian services	79	3,945
Latvian services	23	1,151
Russian services	2	9
Biblical services	2	9
Bible class meetings	45	2,194
Sing song services	26	1,212
Entertainments	19	20,248
Special summer concerts	41	2,144
Baptism	1	1
Marriages	17	17
Funerals	91	91
Comunion services	137	137
Comfort bags knitted	1,626	1,626
Christmas gifts distributed	1,400	1,400
Package of reading matter distributed	1,907	1,907
Prizes	1,907	1,907
Visited by special funds	137	137
Aided by special funds	137	137
Sent to hospitals	152	152
Sent to hospitals and other institutions	230	230
Visits to hospitals	527	527

As can be grasped without further details, the Seaman's Church Institute of New York is a small town within itself wherein everything essential to the comfort, the well being and the pleasure of the seafaring guest is provided. As an example of coordinated philanthropy it is truly wonderful in all of its departments. It is a type that should be duplicated wherever the commerce of a port warrants and where the demand is not ample enough to justify so complete a center, then a more modest establishment should be instituted.

If our sailormen can count upon accommodations of a kindred character at all of our seaboard cities, and they have a right to expect the same sort of consideration to this end which has been so lavishly given to our soldiers, fighting sailors and marines, then we can be sure that our merchant marine will never lack recruits from the best of our manhood.

From the very nature of things it is not likely that these homing places, clubs, call them what one will, can be self-sustaining. Like the Seaman's Church Institute of this city, they must inevitably depend upon the generous contributions of those able to lend material support. The men of the merchant marine have to be of heroic fibre, and their readiness to sacrifice at all times warrants recognition in their leisure hours ashore.