FIGHT ON 'WET' SHIPS LAID TO FOREIGNERS

Edmonds, Subsidy Bill Author, Says It Masks Attack on American Marine.

DEMOCRATS ASSAIL LASKER

Gallivan Asks Why the President Arthur Was Not Seized Here.

Special to The New York Times.

WASHINGTON, June 28.—Representative Edmonds of Pennsylvania, author of the Ship Subsidy bill, made the charge today that the agitation against selling liquor on Shipping Board vessels was only propaganda to discredit the movement for an American merchant marine.

Democratic members of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee submitted the minority report on the bill late this afternoon, repeating their charges that the bill instead of benefitting the United States would cost millions to the taxpayers, provide large salaries for private ship owners, confer autocratic powers upon the Shipping Board, involve a loss of $2,800,000,000 in the sale of ships and result in the payment of $500,000,000 to private operators.

Mr. Edmonds, in his attack on the opposition to the bill, quoted President Harding as writing to House Leader Mondell June 21, that there was a "well-screened source of opposition" to the subsidy plan. He proceeded to cite recently published rules of the Suez Canal Company as stating that oil tankers going through the canal must be rated under Lloyd's, the Bureau Veritas, the German Lloyd's, or the British Corporation of Glasgow.

"Conspicuous by its absence from the designated classification societies is the American Bureau of Shipping, which by the merchant marine act of 1920 was made the official classification society of the United States Government," said Representative Edmonds. "The direct effect of this rule is to debar 577,945 gross tons of Government owned American tankers, all tankers belonging to the United States Navy Department and 223,894 tons of privately owned American tankers from the use of the Suez Canal. It should be noted that the British Government itself is the largest single stockholder in the Suez Canal Company and undoubtedly wields great influence in the management and operation of this canal.

"Fortunately for us, we have the control of the Panama Canal and, if necessity arises, our Government can demand fair treatment in the Suez Canal with every hope of success because of that fact. This matter was brought officially to the attention of the State Department by the United States consul at Alexandria, Egypt.

"Officials of some British papers interested in shipping landed in New York a short time ago with the avowed purpose of protecting their home interests from legislation building up an American merchant marine, especially the arrangement allotting fifty per cent. of immigrants to American bottoms. It is peculiar, although there is no method of connecting them with it, that shortly after their arrival in this country there started in a number of newspapers, some of which were under suspicion as being, editorially or otherwise, controlled by English interests, a campaign about the use of liquor upon the high seas in American ships, although this had been done more or less for the past two years without any question being raised and the fact was well known to travelers.

"It is well known that it is not the profit of the bar, but the loss of passengers owing to the lack of liquor, that would constitute the greatest danger to the American merchant marine.

"Immediately following the announcement in these papers a statement was sent out through the country by the great Adolphus Busch, the head of the great Busch brewery in St. Louis, who comes forward to find fault with this outrageous procedure upon American vessels. This man, whose fortune was made out of liquor, whose family I understand have a castle either purchased or built in Germany from the proceeds of the sale of liquor to the American people, and who now acts as if he were the divinely appointed leader for the advancement of prohibition in the Mississippi Valley, undoubtedly remembers in the background the former magnificent merchant fleet of his original home country, Germany. He used the same channels to have this delicious morsel rolled over and over before the American public."

The question of selling liquor on Shipping Board vessels bobbed up in another quarter. Representative Gallivan of Massachusetts, an anti-prohibition leader, demanded that the President Arthur be libelled and her officers arrested because liquor was found on board of her when she entered New York harbor. In neither this case nor that of Mr. Edmonds was the matter mentioned on the floor of the House, but through a statement by Mr. Edmonds and a copy of a telegram sent by Mr. Gallivan.

The demand by Representative Gallivan was contained in this telegram which he sent to Charles H. Brown, Federal Prohibition Director at Newark, the ship having docked at Hoboken:

"Have just heard that the President Arthur, one of the Shipping Board transatlantic liners, was raided yesterday and an immense amount of liquor seized by your force. Have you, in accordance with Section 26 of the Volstead act, taken possession of the President Arthur? Have you arrested the person in charge thereof and do you intend to proceed against the person arrested in a court of competent jurisdiction? Will appreciate a wire reply."

A few hours afterward, Mr. Gallivan received a reply from Mr. Brown reading:

"Ship President Arthur not raided by New Jersey agents; understand customs conducted raid."

In the Democratic minority report, as in former statements by Representatives Davis of Tennessee, Hardy of Texas and Bankhead of Alabama, who, with Representatives Bland of Missouri and Briggs of Texas, signed the report, Chairman Lasker of the Shipping Board was assailed as not only unprepared to give testimony at the hearings but as an extensive advertiser of himself and of the bill. The report quoted one of Mr. Lasker's replies to questions as being this:

"I was the only man who would take this job. The President couldn't get any one else and, as Eva Tanguay says in her song, 'Gee, but it's great to be crazy.'"

The signers of the report added that while Mr. Lasker was engaged in an extensive distribution of his prepared statement read at the hearing it was significant that he omitted the cross-examination of himself.

The New York Times
Published: June 29, 1922
Copyright © The New York Times