Off-Duty Welfare Services and Facilities for Merchant Seamen

by
Elmo P. HOHMAN
Professor of Economics, Northwestern University

In the Declaration concerning the Aims and Purposes of the International Labour Organisation, which it adopted at Philadelphia in 1944, the International Labour Conference recognised " the solemn obligation of the International Labour Organisation to further among the nations of the world programmes which will achieve . . . provision of adequate . . . facilities for recreation and culture " for the workers. In the case of seafarers, the utilisation of leisure time raises a special problem owing to the very nature of the seaman's calling. As a result, the Governing Body of the International Labour Office decided, in response to a resolution adopted by the I.L.O. Joint Maritime Commission, to set up a tripartite subcommittee of that body consisting of representatives of shipowners, seafarers and governments, for the specific purpose of dealing with the problem of seamen's welfare. This subcommittee is to meet in the near future, and it is with this circumstance in mind that the following article, discussing past achievements and future prospects in this field, is being published.[1]

IN many ways the off-duty needs of merchant seamen are unique, and in most other respects they differ markedly, in degree if not in kind, from those of workers ashore. To anyone familiar with the shipping industry the reasons for these differences are obvious. For others it must suffice at this point to mention a few factors such as the long, irregular and often unpredictable absences from home and family ; the necessity of spending free time, as well as working time, within the cramped confines of a single ship ; the lack of feminine companionship ; the inevitable limitations of recreational and self-development facilities on shipboard, even under the best of circumstances ; the sharp and often nerve-racking contrasts and tensions of shipboard life, shifting from dull routine to sudden emergency, from tedium to tragedy,

[1] See also Elmo P. HOHMAN : " Merchant Seamen's Welfare Services : A Plea for International Action " in *International Labour Review*, Vol. LXXII, No. 5, Nov. 1955, pp. 345-366.

from blistering heat to numbing cold, from apparent security to unexpected danger ; and the emotional hungers and temptations of the first shore leave after days or weeks at sea.

Nature and Growing Urgency of the Problem

These and many other peculiarities of seafaring life have created a long-standing situation in which the seaman's off-duty hours, whether ashore or afloat, are conditioned and controlled by the very nature of his job to an extent virtually unknown in any other major occupation. Where, how and when he spends his non-working hours, to say nothing of his choice of available recreational and other activities, are job-linked questions with job-linked answers. Life on shipboard, and to a considerable extent also on shore leave, especially in a foreign port, simply do not permit the seaman to engage in the hundreds of incidental activities which a factory worker takes for granted, from gardening and shopping to household chores and family discussions.

In consequence, the seafarers' use of leisure time is circumscribed within abnormally narrow boundaries, both physically and psychologically. This has always been true and presumably will continue to be true—albeit with variations—for many of these limitations are inherent in the very nature of the shipping industry ; but within the recent past, and particularly during the last decade, new forces and developments have served both to improve the situation in some respects and to aggravate it in others.

On the credit side must be placed such items as the greatly improved crew accommodation often built into recently constructed vessels, especially on tankers ; the provision of more and better recreational facilities, in terms of both space and equipment, and ranging from record players and games to film libraries ; faster and more regular passages, with proportionately fewer long and unbroken periods at sea ; the development of competitive sports and athletic activities, as well as prizes for literary and artistic achievements ; better club and hotel facilities in port, with various attendant services ; opportunities for guided reading and educational advancement ; and a rising percentage of better-educated, better-trained and better-paid seafarers capable of employing off-duty time more wisely and profitably.

But the debit side of the ledger also calls for attention. In the first place, it is clear that the improvements just listed are by no means widespread, that for many merchant fleets they are still the exception rather than the rule and that even where they are in effect they have often been applied unevenly, with comparatively few crews being able to boast of enjoying all of them simultaneously.

Furthermore, certain items give rise to both debit and credit entries. Faster and more regular voyages, for instance, are likely to be accompanied by quicker turnarounds, with correspondingly reduced shore leaves ; and better-educated seafarers demand better leisure-time facilities, among other things, in default of which they will be reluctant to remain at sea, and thus increase labour turnover and manning difficulties.

This last point, in fact, is rapidly becoming a crucial one, especially among officers and the trained technicians required by the expanding mechanisation and technological ramifications of modern ship construction and operation. Labour turnover in the merchant marine has remained at a very high figure for a long time ; but it is becoming an increasingly wasteful aspect of labour cost during a period when engineers, deck and radio officers, electricians, and other ratings require longer and more expensive training and develop skills for which there is demand ashore as well as at sea. The successful recruitment and retention of such personnel represent imperatives of operating efficiency which are too often lacking, and which will be missed even more grievously with the near future developments of atomic energy propulsion, air-conditioning, direct " roll-on, roll-off " loading and unloading operations and other automatic processes aboard ship.

Personnel competent to handle such complex machinery must be not only trained and recruited but retained ; and this demands better facilities for the interesting and profitable use of leisure time on board and in port. Changes in both machines and men have brought the industry to the point where it can no longer afford the heedless inefficiency of an unduly high labour turnover among technicians ; and these, being better-educated and more discriminating, will insist upon reasonably adequate opportunities for keeping their minds and hands interestingly occupied during off-duty as well as on-duty hours.

In addition to the changing quality of personnel, however, there are also other factors which have resulted in a growing need for more and better off-duty facilities. The world-wide trend toward a shorter work week, while less pronounced and operating more slowly here than in other industries, is nevertheless in evidence, so that shipboard working hours are shrinking and off-duty hours expanding under conditions which make the satisfying use of this increased leisure time challenging and difficult. The same problem in port, which there takes the form of longer periods of shore leave, is somewhat more manageable only because of the more extensive resources available for meeting it.

The tanker fleet presents this situation in its most acute form (though it is also serious on many cargo ships, especially tramps

carrying raw materials and bulk commodities). These vessels characteristically load at raw, barren spots with nothing whatever to justify going ashore ; unload, for safety reasons, at docks far removed from the centres of older and larger ports ; and exhibit such frantic haste in getting back to sea that the few hours of shore leave are always tantalising rather than satisfying. Consequently the crews must spend long weeks and months, with only the shortest possible breaks for shore leave, on the same ship, where they work, eat, sleep, spend their leisure in whatever pursuits they can improvise, and " have their being ".

Thus the broad, basic question of how to develop profitable and satisfying uses for increasing amounts of leisure time, which has been troubling students of industrial relations for some time, is now catching up with the merchant navy. Because of the unusual physical, geographical and psychological characteristics of shipping, too, it will prove more difficult to deal with at sea and on the waterfront than on land, for the challenge will have to be met primarily within and by the industry itself, with much less assistance from home and community resources than is available to the ordinary land-based worker.

Action Taken at Port and National Levels

What, then, has the maritime world accomplished, so far, in setting up welfare services ? When stated in absolute terms, the achievements are by no means trifling or petty ones—though in comparison with actual needs, they leave much to be desired, both quantitatively and qualitatively. An outline of the welfare services now available to seafarers in the major ports and leading maritime nations of the world, necessarily condensed, will further illustrate the background and nature of the problems to be faced.

In the Far East, Japan affords an outstanding example of a network of co-ordinated services which together have much to offer to Japanese seafarers, though most of them are not available to non-Japanese. The Japan Seamen's Relief Association, the Seamen's Welfare Association, the All-Japan Seamen's Union, a government insurance system, municipal authorities and individual shipping companies all provide comprehensive services which seldom overlap. Foreign seamen, on the other hand, are limited for the most part to a smaller list of club facilities operated by certain Western voluntary societies.

These same voluntary organisations, chiefly British and Scandinavian, are responsible, in the main, for whatever seamen's welfare services are available in most of the other ports throughout the

Orient. This is true in Australia and New Zealand and elsewhere in such major ports as Manila, Hong Kong, Colombo, Rangoon and various smaller ones. Usually they operate their clubs or hotels with the advice, financial assistance and volunteer services of local port committees, often headed by resident consuls, though the staffing and policy formation are directed from the organisation headquarters in Europe. In a few ports, such as Singapore, Bangkok or Karachi, independent local committees operate their own facilities with a minimum of outside assistance and no outside direction.

India and Pakistan present a special problem. Here, the recruitment of personnel, predominantly for foreign-owned vessels, is concentrated heavily in the two great ports of Calcutta and Bombay; but the crews hired in Calcutta come, at least partly, from Chittagong and other adjacent sections of East Pakistan, while those signed on in Bombay originate in areas ranging from Goa, for stewards, to the Northwest Province, for firemen. Hindus, Moslems, Christians and other religious, racial and cultural divisions give rise to baffling problems of segregation and classification extending from hiring and supervision by subgroups to separate kitchens for mutually exclusive dietary requirements. Catering to the most elementary needs of crews with such diverse backgrounds is difficult enough on shipboard; but in port the same problems are complicated further by the massive and ever-present pool of unemployed workers which forces many individuals to remain ashore without earnings for six to twelve months between trips.

In response to the obvious needs and pressures arising out of these conditions, and stimulated by the resolutions adopted at the Asian Maritime Conference of the International Labour Organisation at Nuwara Eliya in 1953, the governments of both India and Pakistan created official bodies to consider remedial action. In 1955 the former set up a National Welfare Board for Seafarers, composed of representatives of the Government, shipowners, seafarers, voluntary societies, and port authorities, to advise the Government on all matters relating to the welfare of seamen. This group in turn set up a Tripartite Committee for Welfare in Ports to prepare a report, which was submitted in December 1957 and which recommended, *inter alia*, measures for the improvement, extension or creation of hotels and facilities to promote the family life of seamen; of lodging and recreational facilities patterned upon those of the Merchant Navy Welfare Board in Great Britain; of homes for aged, sick and destitute seamen; of educational, medical aid and hospital accommodation; and wage revisions to secure a " minimum, fair and living wage "

for seafarers. It was also suggested that funds for these activities might come from a tonnage tax of 6 pies per ton on imports and exports, except for medical care which should be paid for jointly by shipowners and the Government.

Aside from these recent recommendations, the Indian Government has organised or sponsored various other activities, especially in the fields of housing, recruitment and medical care, and there are Indian welfare officers in such non-Asian ports as Liverpool, London and New York. Voluntary societies, too, provide hotel or club facilities in Indian ports and, in some instances, similar facilities for Asian seafarers in Western ports.

In comparison with India, Pakistan faces the same basic problems of seamen's welfare and presents much the same pattern of port facilities and practices for dealing with them. The Government is seriously handicapped, however, by the fact that most Pakistani seamen are recruited in Indian ports for service on foreign vessels. The resultant complications in connection with recruiting, placement, unemployment, housing, transmittal of savings, and health and hospitalisation have been only partially solved by negotiation between the two countries.

Subject to these restrictions, Pakistan has also taken various steps to deal with the welfare needs of its seafarers. In 1957 the Government reorganised the Merchant Seamen's Welfare Fund Committee, consisting of representatives of several government departments, and gave it responsibility for planning and implementing seamen's welfare, educational and training activities as well as for co-ordinating the work of voluntary organisations. In addition there is a Director of Seamen's Welfare ; there are also a number of seamen's welfare officers, some of whom are posted abroad, and several port welfare committees, notably at Chittagong and Karachi.

In Africa and Latin America, port welfare work is almost entirely in the hands of voluntary societies. In some Latin American countries, some indications of official interest have been shown in the welfare of seafarers, and in the Union of South Africa, in 1949, a National Advisory Council for the Welfare of Merchant Seamen in Union Ports was set up, under ministerial authority and Treasury approval, to advise the Department of Social Welfare and to oversee the work of port welfare officers and port welfare committees instituted during the Second World War.

In the United States and Canada, practically all facilities are managed by voluntary societies which operate on an autonomous port basis, with few if any formal provisions for co-ordination or integration of activities and the prevention of duplication, overlapping and rivalry.

In the United States, these voluntary organisations are generally organised in the form of independent local societies, but in addition, especially in the larger ports, there are facilities managed by non-American agencies, usually British or Scandinavian, which in some cases supplement but in other instances compete with the local activities. In South America, on the other hand, and in fact throughout the remaining non-European harbours of the world, most welfare facilities, which differ sharply and unpredictably in both quantity and quality, are likely to be sponsored by the non-denominational British Sailors' Society, the Church of England Missions to Seamen, or one of several Scandinavian church-connected organisations.

Completing this pattern of unco-ordinated and unintegrated activities are several scores of club and recreational facilities managed by the Catholic Apostleship of the Sea; a series of thinly scattered miscellaneous operations carried on by precariously financed secular local port committees; and, in sharp contrast, a small but well-organised group of some ten or twelve installations managed along professional lines by the American United Seamen's Service, with headquarters in New York but with all operating facilities outside of the United States.

But with the possible exception of New York, with its huge Seamen's Church Institute and its local representatives of practically every important seamen's welfare organisation in the world, it is in the nations of Northern Europe that provisions for the off-duty time of merchant seafarers have reached their highest levels of development. This is true not only of the methods and policies governing the content and implementation of these provisions but also, and even more so, of the arrangements for securing better co-ordination and integration of existing facilities. It is here, through a realisation of the desirability, if not the absolute necessity, of replacing inadequacies, overlappings, and glaring gaps with planned co-operation and co-ordination, that the greatest advances have been made. The imperative needs of the Second World War, coming soon after the adoption of the Seamen's Welfare in Ports Recommendation, 1936, by the International Labour Conference, were responsible for breaking through a heavy crust of inertia and customary acceptance of things as they were; but in the post-war years the momentum of this break-through has been maintained and in some respects accelerated.

France took the first formal action in 1945, when an Association for the Administration of Maritime Welfare Institutions *(Association pour la gestion des institutions sociales maritimes)* was established under governmental auspices. The chief functions of this Association, which is governed by a tripartite council of 15

members chosen in equal numbers by shipowners, seafarers and government departments, are to maintain liaison arrangements and to assign separate fields of action to various private organisations and funds ; to distribute grants and to correlate public appeals for funds and various forms of income emanating from both private and public sources, and to administer certain seamen's social institutions directly or through special corporations set up for the purpose. It thus acts as a clearing-house or co-ordinating body for the welfare services available to all French seafarers, including fishermen ; and its work is admirably supplemented in another area by the Maritime Welfare Union *(Union Sociale Maritime)*, a private agency set up in 1939 by the French Central Shipowners' Committee *(Comité central des Armateurs de France)*, which now employs some 70 qualified social workers to deal with the increasingly complicated social welfare problems of French seamen and their families.

In the United Kingdom there is a Merchant Navy Welfare Board set up in 1948 as the successor to the wartime Seamen's Welfare Board. This agency, however, is an independent, non-statutory body, made up of 28 members—eight each from shipowners, seafarers and voluntary societies and four from as many government departments. Its chief functions are to co-ordinate the efforts of a series of voluntary organisations and to supplement these efforts by operating its own clubs and hotels if, where and as indicated. Its constitution provides that it must be informed in advance of all proposals to set up new facilities or to extend existing ones, and of any public appeals for funds. Its income is derived not from specific statutory contributions and government grants, as in the Scandinavian countries, but from various sources which include a share of the shipowners' contributions to the National Insurance Fund for non-domiciled seafarers serving on British vessels ; donations from the shipping industry and from miscellaneous groups and individuals ; and grants and loans from maritime philanthropic organisations such as King George's Fund for Sailors and the Merchant Seamen's Comforts Service Trust.

In December 1946, the Norwegian Parliament provided for a Social Welfare Council for the Merchant Marine, together with certain supporting measures ; and in 1948 Sweden and Denmark adopted similar legislation. In these three countries, in consequence, there is a pattern of operations so nearly uniform in its broad outlines that co-operation and co-ordination are easily secured and readily practised. In each country there is an official, government-organised welfare board, made up in varying numbers and proportions of representatives of seafarers, shipowners, government departments and voluntary societies ; and in each case there

are also assured sources of income, consisting mainly of joint contributions by seamen, owners and governments, which are fixed by legislation and collected by designated official agencies. The operating programmes are organised and supervised by full-time personnel hired by the welfare boards, under policies initiated and authorised after consultation with and discussion by the interested parties represented on the boards. In this manner there is constant opportunity for criticism and appraisal of the specific activities of the programmes, with corresponding flexibility in correcting, changing, discontinuing, or experimenting along lines suggested by the actual experiences of the groups represented, with special reference to the seafarers themselves.

This process of continuing evaluation, co-ordination, and integration of functions applies not only to the operations of the official welfare boards and various voluntary agencies within each country but also to the relations between the three nations as a whole, since the three boards maintain close consultative arrangements which include an annual joint meeting. An even closer and much older form of international co-operation is exemplified by the semi-public Association for Scandinavian Seamen's Homes in Foreign Ports, founded in 1901. This society has three independent branches, one in each country; but actual operations are in the hands of a central committee of nine members which is responsible for maintaining joint Scandinavian seamen's homes in various major foreign ports. Capital costs are met equally by the three national branches, but operating expenses are allocated according to the proportionate number of seamen of each nationality using a given facility.

In the Netherlands, there has been an evolution of advisory and co-ordinating bodies which has brought this country into close alignment with the Scandinavian pattern. During the Second World War, Dutch seamen who were cut off from home were provided with certain welfare services by a voluntary organisation which originated in the Netherlands East Indies and by an official central committee which was set up in the United Kingdom. In 1946 the Minister of Social Affairs and Public Health set up an Advisory Committee on the Welfare of Seamen, which was reorganised in 1951 and renamed the Social Committee for Seamen. Both bodies included representatives of seafarers, shipowners, voluntary societies and government departments, and the 1951 Committee of nine members was specifically instructed to " advise the Minister . . . on all subjects enumerated in the Seamen's Welfare in Ports Recommendation, 1936 ".

In addition this group was authorised to offer advice regarding the distribution of available state funds and subsidies; but, since

there was no lasting or assured financial basis for these payments, resort was had eventually to the Scandinavian system of required joint monthly contributions by seafarers, shipowners and the Government. In 1958 a tripartite Foundation for the Welfare of Seamen was established in order to supervise and co-ordinate the operations made possible by these newly required contributions. In this instance, however, the representatives of the voluntary societies, instead of being given places on the board of the Foundation itself, were placed in a separate advisory council whose function it is to assist the Foundation in its deliberations. Thus the Dutch seamen's welfare services, which include varied and substantial facilities both at home and abroad, have now also been placed on a more secure and dependable footing.

The countries reviewed above comprise the leaders in the field of maritime welfare activities ; and, though other areas are by no means barren of accomplishments in catering to seafarers who visit their ports, space does not permit and subject matter does not require a more detailed analysis here. It should be added, nevertheless, that Belgium, through the co-operative efforts of central and municipal authorities and other interested groups, has registered a notable achievement in bringing about the opening of the impressive new international seamen's centre in Antwerp.

Some Significant Recent Trends

Underlying and intertwined with these developments of the past two decades have been numerous new trends, attitudes and lines of activity. Most fundamental of all, perhaps, is the definite conviction, stated explicitly or implicitly by practically every committee and advisory body which has been set up to consider the matter, that seamen's welfare work needs to be systematised, co-ordinated, modernised, strengthened, and placed upon a footing which is both more efficient and businesslike in its outlook and more responsive to the expressed needs and desires of the seamen. This conviction has been accompanied by a clear recognition of the growing inadequacy of the work carried on in the past, largely by voluntary societies which too often had to substitute goodwill for adequate resources and volunteer efforts for professional administration.

The evaluating bodies which reached these twin conclusions, however, usually emphasised the fact that they represented not only a criticism of the older methods but also—and perhaps to a greater degree—a belated realisation of the extent of the needs to be met and of the necessity of calling upon the resources of all interested parties, including shipowners, appropriate government

agencies, and the seafarers themselves. It was felt that both denominational and secular voluntary societies, operating unaided and in the face of much apathy and indifference on the part of the shipping industry and the public, had done and were still doing much valuable work within the limits of their means. But it was also felt, and stated in resolutions and recommendations, that this work was not enough either quantitatively or qualitatively. In addition to the obvious problem of insufficient and undependable sources of income and of the widespread inadequacy of physical equipment and personnel, it was pointed out that there were still many outdated suggestions of philanthropy, charity and moralising paternalism which assumed that seafarers were not quite mature or responsible and therefore needed to be either coddled or kept under a certain amount of guardianship or surveillance; that these attitudes were met in many instances by reactions of scepticism, distrust or dislike; and that the time had come to provide specialised services for seamen on the basis of efficient responses to felt needs, and to replace all traces of philanthropy and paternalism with sympathetic and imaginative, but competent, administration of services financed and planned by the joint contributions and consultations of all interested parties.

In more detailed and practical terms, it was suggested that this new approach might be translated into such specific measures as the substitution of the words "hotels" and "clubs" for "hostels" or "homes" or "institutes", with their implications of guardianship and philanthropy, and that the conduct of these hotels and clubs should proceed along the same lines as any others. This would mean, as is already the case in many of the newer facilities, especially those operated by secular agencies such as the merchant navy welfare boards, that there would be separate single and double rooms rather than dormitories; that there would be provision for, and encouragement of, stays at the hotels by seamen's families; that there would be bars, restaurants and dining-rooms open to the general public, with priority for seamen only when indicated; and that there would be no restrictions upon a seaman's conduct other than those imposed by good taste and common decency upon the guests in any ordinary hotel or club.

Another basic consideration which has been emphasised by all recent investigating groups, virtually without exception, is that of the vital importance of three closely linked, if not inseparable, factors: the co-ordination and integration of existing facilities by some sort of centralised administrative body at both the port and national levels; the provision of regular, dependable and reasonably adequate sources of income, preferably through compulsory contributions by all interested parties; and the installation

of a system of democratic government through the creation of co-ordinating boards or councils made up of voting or advisory representatives of shipowners, seafarers, government departments, voluntary societies, and qualified experts.

Under the heading of operations or activities, rather than broad concepts or policies, the post-war years have also brought a series of new trends or lines of emphasis. Outstanding in this respect, for reasons stated in the opening section of this article, is the extension of off-duty services and facilities from shore to shipboard. This is especially true on Norwegian vessels, which frequently remain away from their home ports for many months or even several years at a time ; this places a heavy premium on the interesting and profitable use of leisure time on board ship.[1] Under the leadership of the Norwegians, therefore, but with similar developments in other fleets as well, considerable ingenuity has been shown in the development of recreational and educational facilities at sea as a supplement to those in port.

It is increasingly common for the crew on each vessel to elect a welfare officer, who may be anybody from the messboy to one of the mates. This person, who is unpaid and unrewarded in any material sense, then becomes the focal point for a growing series of shipboard facilities and activities ranging from film libraries and book chests to amateur dramatic performances, and from sports equipment and competitive games to arts and crafts workshops.

With the increasing acceptance of the central concept that off-duty facilities must be provided at sea as well as in port, and that in fact the two areas form interdependent parts of a logical whole, it has become apparent that there are many promising opportunities to be exploited and developed. Two of the most challenging lie in the fields of competitive sports and athletics and of adult education ; while others, nearly as important, have to do with literary and artistic awards, film libraries, arts and handicrafts, cultural insights, and personal services, including activities adapted to the needs of specialised groups such as Asian seamen in non-Asian ports and other minority groups.

Competitive sports and athletics have proved to be immensely popular in the Scandinavian merchant fleets. There is an annual association football tournament, involving hundreds of individual games between the crews of vessels which happen to be in port at the same time, which produces both national champions and an inter-Scandinavian championship team ; and there are certain

[1] See Fredrik HASLUND : " Welfare of Seamen on Board Ship ", in *International Labour Review*, Vol. LXXIV, No. 5, Nov. 1956, pp. 437-459.

track events, such as running and jumping, in which individual competitors may take supervised tests at any time and be awarded badges of honour if they meet the prescribed standards of performance.

The comparatively large blocks of off-duty time now available on most merchant vessels at sea lend themselves admirably to educational activities. This fact is being capitalised on more and more effectively, particularly under British and Scandinavian auspices, by offering to the individual seafarer a widening variety of means for self-development. These include planned and supervised courses in languages, history, literature and other branches of learning; organised and progressive readings in numerous specialised fields of knowledge; training in technical and professional subjects, especially in such areas as navigation and marine engineering; and, in the United Kingdom, through the College of the Sea of the Seafarers' Education Service, private tutorial guidance (by correspondence with university-trained instructors ashore) which may be carried on in any field and to any desired level, including formal preparation for university entrance examinations. Over and above such organised studies, of course, there are also opportunities for unguided reading, investigation and writing which the individual seaman may carry on in his own way, with or without a definite objective.

Partly to encourage these intellectual activities and partly to provide creative outlets for them, it has become increasingly common in recent years to offer competitive prizes and awards for outstanding literary and artistic achievements. The British Seafarers' Education Service and the American United Seamen's Service, in particular, have displayed imagination and initiative in arranging for annual competitions in essays, short stories, poems, amateur photography, drawings, water-colours, oil paintings and other activities. Entries are open to all members of crews at sea, regardless of rating, and are judged by impartial, professional examiners who award first, second and third prizes which are modest in amount but which often result in publication or exhibition of the work.

Another closely related field, though one in which achievement is more likely to be its own reward because of the comparative lack of formal competition, is that of handicrafts and hobbies. Such activities, in fact, are largely a continuation or revival of a shipboard tradition which goes back to the hand-carved ship models and elaborate rope-knots of the sailing ships and the whalebone " scrimshaw work " of the nineteenth-century whalers. Modernised and multiplied in terms of designs and materials and bolstered by an intricate array of present-day small tools and

power-driven machines, it is a tradition which deserves to be maintained and which yields thoroughgoing satisfactions to the familiar type of seaman who enjoys creative manual work. A moderate outlay in tools and materials for a small handicraft workshop may represent a profitable investment in crew morale.

But the mind requires tools as well as the hand—in this case in the form of library facilities, both for educational purposes, such as books, periodicals and newspapers, and for recreational ends, such as film libraries. Perhaps the oldest and best-known form of shipboard welfare service is constituted by the book chests which have been common property on countless voyages for many years, but which nowadays contain a steadily rising proportion of newly-purchased volumes rather than the castaway donations with which they were filled in earlier times. They are being supplemented more and more, too, by special books purchased in response to individual requests and by current magazines and newspapers, often sent by air mail in order to provide the seafarer with material other than the weeks-old or months-old journalistic fare with which he had to be content in the past.

Film libraries, including both commercial and documentary films, comprise a more recent and more complicated type of service which places a higher premium on the time element and which is calling urgently for some sort of international clearing house for the selection and exchange of films. Prompt and frequent replacement of old films with new ones is highly desirable, and yet the intricacies of sailing schedules and the formalities of customs regulations and other national barriers often make such replacements exceedingly difficult without co-ordinated clearance and guidance.

Still another recent trend is that of providing suggestions and facilities through which seafarers can gain some insight into the culture of the ports and countries which they visit. The first step in this process is to get the seaman on shore leave beyond and away from the waterfront and to bring him into contact with any notable achievements, both past and present, of the area in which he finds himself. This end may be accomplished by organising or providing information about trips to museums, scenic beauty spots, national monuments and historic shrines, and attendance at local events such as meetings of parliamentary bodies, picturesque market-days, national pastimes and theatrical performances. In this way the seafarer has an opportunity to make the most of his occupational mobility and to develop a rewarding interest in the history, geography, industry, politics, architecture, and national customs and folklore of the countries to which his ships take him. In any case, such activities are finding increasing favour with the more intelligent type of modern seafarer.

Finally, there is an increasing tendency, clearly in response to growing needs, to provide personal services for the advice and guidance of seamen in dealing with their difficult personal and family problems. Like so many aspects of their lives, these problems are frequently occupation-linked, and spring largely from the inescapable fact of long and irregular absences from home. In consequence, many seafarers become involved in troublesome and upsetting situations with wives, children, parents, relatives and friends, which run the gamut from petty misunderstandings to divorce proceedings, and which require the guidance and assistance of wise counsellors and experienced advisers. In addition to these family problems and the closely related ones of individual maladjustment and of innumerable financial, insurance, hospitalisation, repatriation and unemployment entanglements, there are others of a racial, religious, national or cultural nature which beset certain minority or segregated groups. The sum total of these personal problems is far greater than that of the personal services for dealing with them ; but at least a start has been made, sometimes through the use of trained and qualified social workers, as in France and through the wartime United Seamen's Service, in a field which is badly in need of further development.

Future Prospects

In surveying this list of significant recent trends it becomes apparent that several are of such outstanding importance as to warrant further brief analysis. Clearly belonging to this category are sports and athletics, education in the broad sense of self-development, and personal services, together with the extension and co-ordination of off-duty welfare facilities, both on board ship and ashore, and the cultivation of seafarers' tourist-sightseeing-study groups—or, for want of a better term, of maritime tourism.

Organised, competitive sports and athletics may be adapted to the needs of seafaring life to a far greater degree than has been realised in the past, not only as wholesome and worthwhile ends in themselves but also as antidotes to the temptations and excesses of waterfront entertainment. They meet the same basic needs and natural and understandable desires which arise upon coming ashore after long periods of shipboard confinement—for excitement, for entertainment, for the explosive release of muscular and emotional tensions, for relaxation, for new horizons and companions, for absorbing new interests, and (by no means the least important) for something to talk about, to live over again during the ensuing weeks of monotony back at sea.

Sports, in addition, offer an excellent avenue to better health, both physical and mental. Crew members who are looking forward to a football match or a track meet in the next port, especially if the ship's standing in a tournament is involved, will naturally try to keep in good physical condition. They will exercise more, sleep more regularly, and be more careful in their eating habits; and later on in port, after vigorous and absorbing participation in the scheduled sports events, they will feel far less desire for the artificial and costly relaxations of waterfront recreation.

The crews of merchant vessels still contain a large proportion of young men, and most young men have an instinctive admiration and genuine respect for physical prowess, for athletic achievement, for the fastest runner or the best jumper. Unquestionably the intelligent exploitation of these interests and attitudes through the medium of organised sports will serve to raise materially the esprit de corps and the efficiency of shipboard life.

One must not, of course, expect too much: even the universal development of sports at sea and in port will not bring about the abolition of the gin-mill and the brothel on the waterfront. But competitive sports and athletics bid fair to weaken and to narrow the appeal of these aspects of seafaring life, by setting up direct, positive and satisfying substitutes, to a far greater degree than has been achieved through the negative, moralising admonitions of the past. Together with other significant improvements—better pay, food and quarters, more interesting off-duty services, more attractive hotel and club facilities, and the increasing concern and activity of various national and international agencies—a well-organised sports programme may well contribute as heavily as any other single factor to the efficiency and the physical and mental health of the seafarer.

Another field which is capable of far-reaching growth in the merchant navy is that of education, in the broader sense of the self-development of the individual. Shipboard life, with its improving crew accommodations and its blocks of free time uninterrupted by the time-consuming distractions of existence ashore, presents an admirable opportunity for the correspondence-school type of instruction in many fields, ranging from a few weeks of semi-routine exercises to several years of intellectual guidance-by-mail between a university tutor and a seafarer. The British Seafarer's Education Service has made an impressive start in this area with its College of the Sea, and has shown conclusively that the educational relationships between college instructors ashore and crew members at sea may become genuinely fruitful and rewarding ones.

In fact, the time would seem to be ripe for a new and challenging kind of maritime workers' education, which will be able to capitalise

on the increasingly high standard of education among crew members and to function at all levels from elementary instruction to advanced university study (with certain obvious exceptions, such as scientific research requiring elaborate physical facilities). Areas of interest which suggest themselves immediately include professional advancement for licensed officers and occupational advancement for unlicensed personnel; organised reading courses in the humanities, languages, and social and natural sciences; specialised reading programmes in narrower segments of learning such as oceanography, modern architecture, or literature; and numerous types of "do-it-yourself" activity, such as amateur photography, book-binding and wood-carving. Naturally, any one of these would appeal only to a limited number of persons, or would have to be arranged for on an individual basis, as is done by the College of the Sea; and all of them together might interest only a small minority of a given crew. But actual experience and specific figures, especially in the British and Scandinavian fleets, indicate that this minority of more sophisticated and better-educated seamen is steadily growing and that it is likely to continue to increase and to repay further cultivation and encouragement.

A third major area of seafaring life which requires more competent handling by better-trained personnel is that of the so-called personal services. A better and more accurately descriptive term would be maritime social work, for what is needed here is professional assistance by trained and qualified social workers—a service which has long been available elsewhere but whose introduction is well overdue in the maritime world. This represents a particularly specialised and challenging branch of welfare work. As indicated above, the peculiar occupational characteristics of the seaman's calling subject him to a whole series of personal and family stresses and strains. Even more than the landsman, he has reached the point where in many cases neither he nor a well-meaning but uninformed amateur adviser can deal adequately with his problems, and where consequently he needs the services of a qualified professional social worker. Current activities of the French Maritime Welfare Union *(Union Sociale Maritime)* and the wartime experiences of the American United Seamen's Service unite in demonstrating that such professional maritime social work is both feasible and rewarding.

It is obvious that all three of these major welfare services, i.e., sports and athletics, workers' education and maritime social work, need to be carried on at sea as well as in port, with careful co-ordination and integration of the two aspects. The relative emphasis will, of course, vary in each instance; in sports and

athletics equal weight may be given to team and tournament events ashore and individual exercises and smaller games at sea, while in education the greater part of the work will have to be done at sea and in maritime social work the emphasis will necessarily be placed upon contacts ashore. But in all cases the activities on board ship and in port should be regarded as integrated segments of a single, unified area of operations.

Finally, attention must be drawn to the potentialities inherent in the field of maritime tourism. The modern tourist has become the cause and the centre of a rapidly-growing major industry. Each year he spends enormous sums of money to visit countless places of interest, including many port cities which the merchant seaman sees repeatedly, free of charge, as part of his job. Given a modicum of information, encouragement and assistance, there is a strong likelihood that the new type of better-educated seafarer will readily respond to the attractions of maritime tourism and that this will eventually become a favourite off-duty pursuit.

Near-Term Requirements

In the light of the foregoing considerations, it seems reasonably clear that for the near future there are certain matters which should be given priority status. First and foremost, of course, is the basic goal of expanding, systematising, co-ordinating and integrating welfare services along the lines indicated. But what, exactly, are the concrete means through which this broad objective is to be achieved ?

It would seem that, in addition to the daily task of operating, improving and extending existing services, the major needs for the immediate future would include the following : widespread organisation of port and national seamen's welfare committees, with a seamen's information centre in every port, these committees and the related advisory councils to function with the participation of representatives of seafarers, shipowners, appropriate government departments and voluntary societies, and of qualified experts ; the creation of formally accepted, regular and dependable sources of income springing mainly from contributions by the interested parties ; and the development of trained, competent, professional administrators who should be given the status and emoluments of a specialised career service.

The structural and functional details of the machinery set up to achieve these immediate objectives will naturally vary widely from one country to another and from port to port, and must be left to the play of local and regional forces and needs. However, stress must be laid on the vital importance of building up at the

earliest possible moment, through international agreement, a world-wide network of national and port facilities conforming to the three major requirements just outlined, and to indicate briefly the special significance of several aspects of these requirements.

The port and national welfare committees, made up of representatives of all interested and qualified parties, should be responsible for co-ordinating, integrating and, where desirable, operating the facilities under their respective jurisdictions, along the lines mapped out during the past decade in British and Scandinavian ports. One of their most useful functions would be to make arrangements in every port for a seamen's information centre, to which all incoming seafarers could be directed for accurate information regarding all facilities and services available in the area. The need for reasonably adequate but, above all, assured and dependable income is obvious if one considers the notable lack of such support for the voluntary societies in the past, when they were bearing the full burden of port welfare work.

Less widely recognised, unfortunately, but equally essential if funds are to be spent wisely and efficiently, is the need for trained, qualified, competent personnel, with a professional outlook, in the operation and administration of off-duty services.

International Co-operation

One final consideration has appeared so often and with such insistence both in official documents and in unofficial writings concerned with seamen's welfare services that it would be inexcusably negligent to make no mention of it here. This is the growing need for international co-ordination of welfare facilities. A brief review of major decisions on the subject taken by the I.L.O. and other international bodies will serve both to illustrate and to amplify this point of view.

Two long but well-defined periods stand out : 1920-36 and 1936-59. The former began with the Genoa (Maritime) Session of the International Labour Conference in 1920, and continued through a series of resolutions, requests, questionnaires and reports emanating from the Fifth Session of the Joint Maritime Commission in 1925 ; the 13th (Maritime) Session of the International Labour Conference in 1929 ; and three International Conferences on the Health and Welfare of Merchant Seamen called by the League of Red Cross Societies and several associated bodies in Oslo in 1926, in Geneva in 1929, and again in Geneva in 1936. During this period, a number of studies on the subject were published by the International Labour Office. Although most of these texts were concerned, in phraseology at least, with both health

and welfare, the emphasis throughout this period was placed on health, with special reference to the treatment and control of venereal disease among merchant seafarers.

In the second period, from 1936 to 1959, on the other hand, the emphasis in I.L.O. and related circles shifted sharply to welfare, but here again a long series of developments can only be summarised in the briefest terms. The Seamen's Welfare in Ports Recommendation, 1936, adopted by the 21st (Maritime) Session of the International Labour Conference, represented both the culmination of the deliberations of the earlier period and the foundation for much of the thinking of the later one. It is a basic document which has been referred to time and again. In particular, its provision which refers to the need for national and international co-ordination of welfare facilities has been echoed, amplified and reiterated in resolutions adopted by the Joint Maritime Commission in 1942, 1947, 1952, and 1955; by the 28th (Maritime) Session of the International Labour Conference in Seattle in 1946 and by the 41st (Maritime) Session of the Conference in Geneva in 1958; by two joint meetings of the three Scandinavian Merchant Navy Welfare Boards in 1953 and 1955; and by a meeting of an International Study Committee on Seamen's Welfare held at Antwerp in 1955.

As an indirect result of these increasingly urgent requests for action, and as a direct result of a resolution adopted by the 18th Session of the Joint Maritime Commission in 1955, the Governing Body of the I.L.O. decided in that year to set up a standing tripartite subcommittee of the Joint Maritime Commission on Seafarers' Welfare. Two years later, in 1957, it was agreed that this body should be composed of five representatives of shipowners and seafarers, and of seven representatives of governments; and in the autumn of 1959 the new committee is to hold its first meeting.

The exact form of any future arrangement for international co-ordination, if and when it appears desirable, will necessarily depend upon the course of deliberations and negotiations still to come, and is obviously unpredictable. Two major possibilities, however, would seem to present themselves: either a broad, loose type of co-operation resulting from mutual agreement and accommodation, or some sort of agency representing the international equivalent of the merchant navy welfare boards now operating in the United Kingdom, the three Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands. The latter plan, if chosen, would presumably involve setting up an organisation which might be known as the International Merchant Navy Welfare Board.

The I.L.O. resolutions already referred to make it clear that the chief function of this body, if created, would be to offer guidance

and direction towards preventing or curtailing both inadequacies and overlapping of welfare services. This end would be achieved by improving the co-ordination of hotel, club-room, sports and recreational facilities in port and of library, film, radio, educational, and handicraft facilities on board ship.

Whether, when, how and to what extent coming developments will conform to the pattern set by the demands and requests of recent years, as expressed in the resolutions listed in preceding paragraphs, remains to be seen. Apart from the obvious humanitarian aspects of the problem, however, one point seems to stand out with clarity and certainty. Unless something really effective is done to deal with the off-duty needs of the better-educated, technically-trained type of merchant seafarer, it will become more and more difficult to attract and to retain competent crews at sea, with a consequent drop in efficiency and a corresponding rise in labour costs.