

STATEMENT

of the

HONORABLE LES AuCOIN, CHAIRMAN

AD HOC SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE

on

MARITIME EDUCATION AND TRAINING

on the floor of the

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WITH RESPECT TO H.R. 5451

THE MARITIME EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACT OF 1980

Monday, June 30, 1980

Mr. Speaker. There have been longstanding problems associated with the Federal role in maritime education and training. Our U.S.-flag merchant vessels can be no better than the professional men and women who operate them.

The Federal government operates the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. It also provides assistance to the six state maritime academies. Students at these academies are trained to become licensed officers in the U.S.-flag merchant marine. The Federal government also provides supplementary training and other assistance in the training of such personnel. The authority for these programs is currently set forth in various statutes passed piecemeal, with little attention to maritime education in an overall sense. As a consequence there have been problems with maritime education in the United States. One of the most persistent criticisms is that the recipients of this Federal education aid have no legal obligation to go to sea and perform the duties for which they

have been trained at the expense of the taxpayers.

It was for reasons of this kind that the gentleman from New York, Mr. Murphy, the chairman of the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, appointed a Special Subcommittee in 1976 under the Chairmanship of Congressman Studds of Massachusetts to study these problems and make recommendations. Over a two-year period, the Studds Committee made an exhaustive study and issued a landmark report. I am very pleased to continue this work in the 96th Congress as the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Select Subcommittee on Maritime Education and Training.

Mr. Speaker, the bill before the House today is the culmination of almost four years effort, and is the most comprehensive legislation concerning maritime education and training ever reported by the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee. H.R. 5451 enjoys the full support of both the Majority and Minority Members of the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee.

The bill would recodify the existing provisions of law concerning maritime education and training that are currently set forth in the Merchant Marine Act of 1936, the Maritime Academy Act of 1958, the Civilian Nautical School Act, and numerous other provisions of law scattered through Title 46 of the United States Code. Additionally, certain new improvements have been made that are based upon our four-year hearing record. Finally, the entire recodification has been set forth in the Merchant Marine Act of 1936 as a new title -- Title XIII.

Mr. Speaker, I will only comment briefly on what I consider to be the major improvements that this bill will produce.

For the first time, the recipients of Federal assistance at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy and the state maritime academies will generally incur legal obligations for the support they have received. These obligations include the following:

First, to fulfill the requirements for a merchant marine officer's license, and to maintain this license for at least six years. The purpose of these schools is to train merchant marine officers, and the bill will ensure that the graduates obtain and maintain such a license.

Second, to serve the United States as an officer in the U.S.-flag merchant marine or as a commissioned officer on active duty in an armed force of the United States. This requirement will ensure that the graduates of these schools go to sea at a time when there is a shortage of such officers. In recognition of the different amounts of government assistance involved, graduates of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy will serve for at least five years, whereas the graduates of the state maritime academies will serve for at least three years.

Finally, to apply for midshipman status in the U.S. Naval Reserve, and upon graduation to apply for a commission in the U.S. Naval Reserve, or other armed force reserve, and to remain in such reserve for at least six years.

Other improvements in the bill include recognition of the recently instituted Merchant Marine Reserve, United States Naval Reserve; tighter structuring of noncompetitive admissions at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy; provision for regional maritime academies; and the establishment of a separate category for the inspection of training vessels.

Mr. Speaker. The development of legislation before the House as H.R. 5451 has been a joint effort of both the Majority and Minority Members of the Committee. It is a sound piece of legislation, and I urge the House to support H.R. 5451.

Mr. Speaker. There are Members on both sides of the aisle who wish to speak in support of H.R. 5451, and I am pleased to yield () minutes to the gentleman from