

mic cooperation among the developing countries, including proposals for exchange of preferences among them. Third, Britain would support commodity agreements to stabilise prices of primary products "at equitable and remunerative levels". Finally, on compensatory finance Heath promised to make specific suggestions before the relevant committees of the Conference.

The Brasseur Plan, put forward by Belgium and generally approved by the Common Market countries, lays greater emphasis on commodity agreements to ensure high prices for the developing countries' exports. It also accepts in principle the need to give tariff preferences to the developing countries, but will like the preferences to be selective, between groups of developed countries and developing countries, e.g., between the E C M and its associated territories.

All the developed countries, except the Soviet Union, of course, have affirmed their faith in the GATT, though many have conceded the need to modify it. The extent of modification considered necessary has varied from country to country, depending upon how drastic its proposals are to help the developing countries. It has also been recognised that it would be necessary to set up some permanent machinery to watch over the implementation of the decisions taken by the Conference. According to Shri Manubhai Shah, who led our delegation to Geneva, these decisions will be embodied in a charter of international trade, the execution of which will be entrusted to a standing committee to be set up by the Conference with a permanent secretariat, which will be financed from U N funds.

It is too early yet to speculate about what the Conference might achieve. The speeches made so far have been in the nature of general statements of intentions. The various committees of the Conference will be the venue of hard bargaining over specific proposals which, to be effective, will have to win the approval of all the important industrial countries. Nevertheless, it can be said that the plenary session has brought forth general proposals, if not definite commitments, from many of them which mark significant advances in western thinking on inter-

national trade. In this generally hopeful context, it would be ironic indeed if, of all countries, the United

Shipping: The Gaps

Car Shipping Correspondent writes :
WHILE the Minister for Shipping was congratulating ship-owners on the occasion of the National Maritime Day on April 9, his Ministry was busy preparing targets for the Fourth Plan. To have come from a meagre 250,000 tons to a modest 1.3 million tons is no spectacular achievement, but it is one that ship-owners can be proud of, especially considering the difficulties of obtaining foreign exchange. The rate of progress achieved during the three years of the Third Plan is particularly impressive. It took ship-owners 14 years from 1947 to 1961 to increase their tonnage from 250,000 to 800,000, and only three years to raise it from 800,000 to 1.3 million. By the end of the Third Plan, it is expected that Indian shipping will have reached the 1.8 million-ton or perhaps even the 2 million-ton mark. This expansion has been possible largely through liberal loans from the Government and the ingenuity of ship-owners in arranging foreign exchange. The momentum that has been gathered now justifies the ambitious target of 4 million tons for the end of the Fourth Plan. Already shipping earns about Rs 40 crores worth of foreign exchange annually and 4 million tons would easily raise this figure to Rs 100 or 110 crores.

This splendid achievement is good reason for celebrating a Maritime Day, but a maritime nation must have efficient and adequate personnel, good maintenance facilities and full employment for its vessels. Shortage of personnel is becoming increasingly acute, especially among the Officer categories. Expensive capital equipment is being handled by untrained officers straight out of colleges and training institutions who are given rapid promotions owing to lack of senior staff. Both "Dufferin," which trains deck-officers, and the Directorate of Marine Engineering have lagged behind in expanding training capacity; the former now takes 80 boys instead of the 60 it took in 1950, and the latter has gone up from about 50 to 100.

Nor is the Technical Department's

attitude to recruitment of sea-going personnel from outside its own institutions very imaginative. In view of the limited capacity of these institutions, the present regulations preventing qualified engineers from taking sea jobs, on the ground that they have inadequate marine experience, are a severe handicap. Most engineers who have obtained a degree have far better theoretical knowledge than marine engineers and the practical work can easily be learnt.

if our training facilities are inadequate, our repair facilities are appalling. Major ports like Madras, Kandla and Cochin have no dry-docks, and in the latter two ports, even ordinary workshop facilities are not available. The entire burden of repairs falls, therefore, on Calcutta and Bombay, both of which have insufficient dry-dock capacity; in the case of Calcutta, the dry-docks are so old that unless urgent action is taken they will be out of commission. It is the old problem of scant attention being paid to the maintenance of capital assets. There is much enthusiasm for building a dry-dock in Haldia, but no one has approached the World Bank for a loan to repair Calcutta's existing facilities. This difficulty is not peculiar to shipping, of course. Insufficient allocation of foreign exchange for raw materials and spares give rise to the same situation in many industries: only, in shipping the lapse involves misuse and waste of foreign-exchange earning assets.

Although technical problems have been given very little attention, this cannot be said about the employment of our tonnage. The Government has taken steps to ensure that as much of its imports as possible is carried in Indian ships. Particular credit should go to the Shipping Co-ordination Committee whose continuous efforts to maintain centralised control of Government cargo is yielding fruitful results. Indian ship-owners now have to approach only this one body, instead of the various Departments, for all Government cargoes. This makes possible better coordination of cargoes and better utilisation of Indian ships.

States were to block the way to a new deal for the trade of developing countries.