June 22, 1950

The Honorable Joseph C. O'Mahoney
Chairman, Subcommittee on Independent Offices
Senate Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

My dear Senator O'Mahoney:

On April 11th I wrote you of my concern about the elimination in the budget estimate of subsistence payments for Merchant Marine cadets. In the past, the Maritime Commission's budget has included an appropriation to provide monthly subsistence payment of $85 to the cadets at the Kings Point Merchant Marine Academy and at the four state academies, in New York, Massachusetts, California, and Maine. This year, however, this item has been dropped from the budget, and it has been proposed, instead, that the Federal Government pay the cost of certain uniforms and textbooks. Therefore, Merchant Marine cadets have been expected to pay for these items out of their subsistence allowance.

A number of persons familiar with the status of cadets in the Merchant Marine academies have informed me that the elimination of subsistence payments will leave a great many cadets with a substantial financial burden, since the cadets now will be required to pay out-of-pocket for such incidental expenses as haircuts, laundry, and other personal expenses.

In view of this situation I recommended in my letter of April 11th that an appropriation amounting to $251,600 be included in that part of the Maritime Commission's budget affecting administrative expenses. This would permit a monthly payment of $85 to Merchant Marine cadets, in addition to the allowance proposed to be provided, and would, in my opinion, make up in a reasonable manner for the loss of the full subsistence that has been granted in the past.
I understand that your Committee at the present time has under consideration various budgetary matters, including subsistence payments for Merchant Marine cadets. I do not believe that the elimination of this item is in the interest of real economy, since it is bound to have an adverse effect on the morale of young men in whom the Government is investing large sums to train as officers of our Merchant Marine. In addition, many of the cadets do not have outside financial assistance and the elimination of the subsistence payments may cause a number of them real financial hardship.

Since writing you I have heard from a number of my constituents on this matter and I am convinced that to drop subsistence payments would be wholly unfair to Merchant Marine cadets. I am hopeful that you and your Committee will see fit to act favorably on my recommendation for a monthly payment of $35. I should emphasize that my request is directed equally to all the Merchant Marine cadets — those in the Kings Point Academy and in the State academies. It is vital that equality of treatment be provided for the cadets at Kings Point and those at the New York State academy at Schuyler, for instance.

Sincerely yours,

cc: Adm. Herbert F. Leary
Mr. Ralph Leavitt