Franklin D. Roosevelt — "The Great Communicator"
The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945
Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

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1918 January 14

Harvard University
Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harvard, '04, and now Assistant Secretary of the Navy spoke on the broad topic "The United States Navy" last evening at Harvard University. He commented particularly on the types of craft now in use and described their special fields.

In describing the work of the Navy Department before Feb. 1, he said that it did not lack money for ships in the appropriation bills, but rather money to pay men to man these ships, to fit out shipbuilding yards, and to purchase supplies. Since Feb. 1 the Government was hampered by slow decisions on types of ships to build, but once the work had gotten under way, it had progressed rapidly.

He discussed the control of the seas, both on and below the surface. The battle for the supremacy of the undersea is still being fought, as the German submarines have increased their cruising radium enormously since the beginning of the war. At present these are using a mounted gun a great deal more than the torpedo as the former is cheaper and can be carried in far larger numbers.

Had the German U-boats been able to continue their sinkings at their early rate, he said, they could have practically destroyed British shipping inside of 18 months and compelled peace.

"At present" he continued "the Allies have not one-tenth the number of patrolling vessels necessary for the absolute safety of their merchant ships against the undersea craft. Destroyers have been found to be the best-fitted for combating them. It is interesting to know that there was an immediate falling off of sinkings in the sectors assigned to the American destroyers."
"To supplement these the 110 foot patrol boat has been built. While these are not always the most comfortable boats in the world to live on, they have already proven their sea-going qualities. The larger yachts have been unable to stand up under the rough weather off the southern coast of England and Scotland, but these small craft, although hurriedly built of wood have done excellent work.

"They usually travel in twos or threes, but there is comparatively little fear of them being sent to the bottom by a U-boat, as they are too shallow to be struck by a torpedo."

CAREFUL ABOUT DEPTH CHARGES

Mr. Roosevelt was very cautious in speaking about the new depth charge. "This was originally a 50-pound charge," he said "but the weight has been increased and with it a more than corresponding area of destruction. The increase has been so great that the speed of the ship dropping the depth charge over her stern on the U-boat below must be _ knots an hour or there is considerable danger that the surface ships will suffer some of the damage themselves.

"We don't know what the 110-footers will do. They can only make 17 knots. "The United States is obliged to rely on the British fleet to maintain supremacy on the surface of the seas. This the later has never lost since the beginning of the war despite all German reports to the contrary. It has been the habit of the German ships to come out of the Kiel Canal whenever the British ships have been obliged to put back to the north of Scotland to provision.

BRITISH FLEET EFFICIENCY

"At one time when the fleet had gone into port news came that the Germans were out again. Despite the fact that over 2000 sailors were given liberty
only two hours before, the British fleet was away toward the North Sea in just 22 minutes from the time the news arrived. That was British efficiency.

"Our merchant marine is not going to be put out of commission by the U-boat guns. Proper convoying arrangements have been made. More than 1000 merchant ships have been armed with guns for defense. Many of the guns used are those of the five and six inch type taken from the older battleships.

In closing, Mr. Roosevelt said "One thing is very clear: the college graduates make better officers than the undergraduates. I cannot help but feeling that it is the duty of every undergraduate not only to himself but to his country to obtain all the education possible so that he may become a better citizen not only in time of war but during the rest of the years that he has to live. It will call for a moral sacrifice but a sacrifice which is well worthwhile and which will repay the Nation."
May 23, 1950.

Franklin D. Roosevelt's Speech, "Our Armed Power on the Sea" at Harvard U., Cambridge, Mass., 5 p.m., Jan. 14, 1918,
as reported in the Boston Globe, Jan. 15, 1918.

[Published in Harvard Alumni Bulletin, XX, 3/2 (Feb. 7, 1918), 348 in Group 1.]

RLJ
Our Soldiers Insured for $12,000,000,000

Nearly All Have $100,000 Policies

The appended summary of the work of the War Risk Board is based on a recent study by Lawrence Field, President of the National Assocation of Life Underwriters.

The act creating this insurance as a separate and distinct provision for those in active military service:

1. Military services and compulsory service.
2. Compensation for death and disability.
3. Civilian life insurance, claiming that, in addition to the benefits provided under the first two headings, those who desire may purchase additional life and disability insurance.
4. The insurance to be issued on the non-renewable term plan.

The act provided that any person engaged in military service would be insured automatically against death and permanent disability for the sum of $10,000. The effect of this act was that, in addition to the benefits provided under the first two headings, those who desire may purchase additional life and disability insurance.

At the time of the enactment of this act those representatives of the Government who were particularly instrumental in promoting the measure believed that with the passage of time there would be a tremendous demand for this insurance, but it was early discovered that the demand had to be entirely that protection is sold and not bought.

While attempting to ascertain the exact amount of insurance sold, the Government has been unable to obtain complete data. The figures available indicate that the number of policies sold is still small.

The insurance is offered at a cost to the insured of about $2.50 per $1,000, and the cost is low in comparison with the benefits obtained.

For example, the Government offers insurance to all applicants (up to $10,000) for $25 per $1,000. The policy is payable at the death of the insured or at the end of the term.

The Government policy also furnishes disability insurance in addition to life insurance. The rates for four ages are:

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<th>Age</th>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Life Insurance</th>
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While the cost of the policy may seem high it must be remembered that it is an insurance policy and that it is not a gift.

The preliminary campaigns to induce the soldiers to take out insurance were not entirely successful, and on Dec. 20 the Secretary of the Treasury announced to the American people a group of practical insurance men that this was the earnest desire of the Secretary of the Treasury and others in charge of the administration of this measure that the benefits of this insurance should be clearly and forcefully presented to all soldiers and sailors in the service, and to the public that the insurance for the sake of this insurance.

The responsibility for this campaign was vested in a smaller group, known as the Soldiers' and Sailors' Campaign Council, and they spent about ten days investigating what had been done, how it had been done, and in planning a pulling campaign to be conducted with more or less uniformity at all military and naval stations, and this campaign was launched Jan. 13. Up to that time there had been received at the Bureau of War 3,000 applications for a total of $3,000,000, or an average of $1,000 per person.

The records indicate that the work done was highly successful, and at the close of the campaign, Feb. 12, there had been received at the bureau 1,000,000 applications for a total of $3,000,000, or an average of $1,000 per person.

In many of the units of the various camps every man has purchased the full ten thousand, there are eight camps in which 99 per cent. of the men are insured by the Government, and on Feb. 20 more than 99 per cent. of all the men in the service had availed themselves of this privilege. The average policy on the lives of our soldiers was $9,000.

War Activities of the United States Navy

Address by Franklin D. Roosevelt
Assistant Secretary of the Navy

Franklin D. Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, in a recent address to the Harvard Alumni, Association, spoke some new light on the work of the United States Navy in European waters. He said in part:

There are two distinct phases of naval warfare, the first being the submarine defense and second the submarine attack. We met a few destroyers in April, 1917, and kept sending more during the following months. These destroyers operated in certain areas on the other side, and charts showed the sinkings by submarines proved an immediate falling off in the number of sinkings in these areas. The difficulty is that the ocean is too large to cover as a whole with submarines. As a matter of fact, sinkings are still going on in very great numbers. Those who are almost wholly confined to a small area within a short distance of the shore, would you add the Allies would be able to control this area, but we have not enough amount of equipment necessary to patrol all the waters close to shore, let alone further out. The reason submarines go close to shore is because there they find a concentration of ships, as well as to protect the merchant ships on their way from one place to another. It is quite a mistaken notion to think...
WAR ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY

Mr. Hurley's Report of Progress

The shipbuilding program adopted by the United States in an urgent war measure encountered many obstacles, including those due to the worst winter in the recorded history of the Eastern United States. The spring of 1943, however, has found definite results accomplished in many new shipyards that have been brought into existence since the United States entered the war.

Figures issued by the Shipping Board on March 9 showed that in February seventeen vessels of 150,700 tons were completed and put into service. The total was nearly twice that of January, admittedly a bad month, when only nine vessels, with a tonnage of 21,512, were delivered. Launchings more than kept pace with deliveries; sixteen ships of 183,500 tons were put into the water in January, and fifteen of 77,000 tons in February. Of the vessels completed in February, fifteen were cargo carriers, one was a tanker, and one a collier.

Standing up the situation on March 6, Edward N. Hurley, Chairman of the Shipping Board, said that there were ten 100,000-ton, 700 ways and 600,000 tons, completed to the production of 1,600 ships. A Seattle shipyard had already broken all world's records by launching a 80,000-ton steel ship in sixty-four days, and yards on the Atlantic Coast were preparing to beat the Pacific record.

At the Hog Island yard of the American International Shipbuilding Corporation the first steel was laid on Feb. 15, six days ahead of schedule time, and on Feb. 28, the date set for the second steel, they were ready for ten additional ships. A fuller account of the Hog Island shipyard, the largest in the world, will be found under a separate heading.

So ready is the British fleet that it is said that on one occasion they had 250 more ships in commission than the number of men they had available to work on them; men then were called the German fleet was out and might be cut off, and within twenty-two minutes the British fleet was ready and on the way to the scene of action.

As to surface control no one is worried. The British, with the assistance of the Americans, have successfully battled the Germans in the North Sea. It is a pity to have to hold them off defensive terms only. There are many who believe in the dictum that a defensive policy on the sea leads to defeat, and the role of the British battleship fleet has been considered by many to be purely defensive. However, authorities like Mahan and others have always maintained that an offensive can consist of two methods of war; first, to seek the enemy and destroy him in his own "rat hole"; the second, to drive the enemy out of his "rat hole" that the rat cannot come out. That is practically what has happened. The Germans have also been strung out at any time to come out with their battleship fleet, and very often they do come out for a very short distance. The stories we read from Berlin that the Germans came out for three days, etc., are true, but they have always kept conveniently close to their hiding place.

On March 1 it was reported that vessels were to come from the plant of the Federal Shipbuilding Corporation at Kearny, N. J., six weeks ahead of the time fixed in the contract with the Government. Instead of finishing one ship every month the yard had reached a stage where it could finish one ship every two months. The Federal Shipbuilding Corporation was incorporated in July, 1917, by the United States Steel Corporation.

At that time the 175 acres occupied by the yard went under six feet of water every time the tide came in. Now they have been built up nine feet, and twelve miles of railroad track have been laid. Five thousand men will be employed when shipbuilding is in full swing.

In a much more advanced position in every respect is the new shipyard of the Mechanic Shipbuilding Corporation at Bristol, Penn., the second of the huge shipyards that are being filled up for the construction of ships. There the new shipyards are being built for the construction of standard-sized merchant ships. In respect to the number of vessels it is the smallest of the three, for while there are to be fifty ways for new merchant ships at Hog Island and twenty-eight ways at the yard at Newport News, at the Bristol plant there are only twelve. The Bristol plant, however, is to build the largest ships of the three, freighters of 60,000 tons deadweight capacity, 73,000-ton vessels, and 8,000-ton ships ready to be built at Hog Island, and 8,000-ton vessels at Newport News.

The shipyard of the Submarine Boat Corporation at Newport News, with twenty-eight shipways, has thirteen knees laid of the fifty ship of 6000 tons which it is under contract to build before it begins work on another contract of 100 vessels of the same size.

The important question of housing the armies of workers was settled on March