

Russ Berg - Int. Pres
Boilermaking
Iron Ship
builders

NOTES

VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT HUMPHREY
NATIONAL SHIPBUILDING CONFERENCE
WASHINGTON, D.C.
NOVEMBER 18, 1965

I am pleased to have the opportunity to meet
with you today.

I am not here with a plan
from here to tell us that the

This conference exemplifies the spirit in America

U.S.
needs
a strong
modern
efficient
robust
maneu-
verable
has a
strong
fleet -
+ your
goal

today: a spirit of partnership and cooperation.

We have witnessed in the last few months the
proof of this spirit.

The first session of the 89th Congress, in ten
short months, made into law the hopes and ideas of
40 years:

-- Programs for better medical care and education.

wants to work with you
to assure both -

need over
ship job

-- Programs for better housing and better cities.

-- Programs for greater social and economic opportunity.

-- Programs for a more prosperous America.

The historic laws passed by this Congress were passed not merely because any one element of our society sought them.

They were passed because ~~a broad consensus exists~~ *the majority of our people supported them* in America.

They were passed because people came together and compromised their differences so that all might benefit.

↳ We have cast aside today in America old antagonisms and hostilities. *- + must do so in the future*

For instance: We can remember the time when there were those who said there must be an inevitable conflict between government and business, business and labor, government and labor. But today the time has long since passed when labels such as "labor boss" or "economic royalist" have any meaning.

Today we are united in a creative partnership to extend the benefits of this nation to all people and places in this nation.

We are united, too, as to the economic goals of our country: Goals of maximum employment, steady economic growth, price stability, and equilibrium in our balance of payments.

Our national partnership for prosperity has brought us 57 months of uninterrupted economic expansion.

Our unemployment rate has been reduced to 4.3 per cent, and the average weekly wage for production workers is 23 per cent higher than it was in December of 1960.

Personal income is running at 545 billion dollars, almost 36 per cent higher than in December, 1960.

Our Gross National Product is now almost 677.5 billion dollars. New orders of durable goods are 56 per cent higher than they were in January, 1961. After-tax corporate profits at the end of the third quarter were running at 44.8 billion dollars.

There is every reason to believe that our prosperity will continue -- if all in our economy practice the lessons of partnership.

We have not reached any economic utopia. We are still faced with grave problems -- problems of the poor, the uneducated, the elderly. And indeed we still have not only depressed areas in this country, but depressed industries.

But America has always been a "can do" nation.

I, for one, am going to follow with great interest this unprecedented conference where management talent from our great shipping companies and the leadership of some of our major unions are meeting to think, to study, and to confer.

I am of course aware of the controversy which has been going on regarding our shipping policy.

↳ But I think all of us will agree -- government, industry, and labor -- that a strong merchant marine is essential to our nation's welfare.

'A Vital National Asset'

The question is: How do we achieve this goal?

Without going into detailed discussion regarding maritime policy, I will say this. No policy is going to be successful unless all join forces in implementing it.

Finally, may I add that the President and I have discussed frequently the need to expand our overseas trade, not only to reduce the balance of payments deficit, but also to open the door to increased prosperity for our American economy. Only about 4 per cent of American businesses enjoy the benefits of world trade. I know there is an overseas market for almost every product made in this great country.

I was therefore pleased to learn that American-Flag Shipping Lines have joined forces through their across-the-world network of trade promotion and marketing offices to help American businesses develop markets overseas.

- 7 -

This is a place where cooperation and common effort are already paying dividends.

I am confident that a spirit of partnership, reason, and hard work, will, in time, help produce for you the result that this spirit has created in our nation today.

#

VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT H. HUMPHREY SPEAKING TO THE NATIONAL SHIP-
BUILDING CONFERENCE

Gramercy Inn, Washington, D. C.

Thursday, November 18, 1965

Thank you very much, Russell Berg, I'm going to be as informal as this dear friend has been with me.

I come here today for several reasons, but one of the main reasons I wanted to come here is because of the gentleman who is the International President of the Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers and Helpers. I believe I'm pretty close--is that all right? (Laughter) And I didn't even have it written out. But Russ Berg has been a personal friend for many, many years, and every word he just said in reference to those days when I was walking the streets of Minneapolis, Minnesota looking for a little political help and support--all of those things were true, and I'm very happy to say to members of industry and management and labor and government that the first support that I had in politics came from one of the finest groups of men and women in the United States, and that was the Minneapolis Central Labor Union of Minneapolis, Minnesota. (Applause)

The only trouble, Russ, is that I don't get a chance to get back there anymore. The boys used to call me in every once in a while and straighten me out. I guess they're waiting now; they figure they'll do a first-class job when they get a chance to get me next time.

This is a very timely conference. I come here to visit with you primarily. I have some notes here--I'm not at all sure that I'm going to use any of them. I quickly glanced over your printed program. I saw the tentative program that had been prepared by your efficient secretarial and administrative staff, and as I walked in the door I noticed a pin which I asked to have one given to me--"U. S. Shipyards, a Vital National Asset." And that's a mighty good theme, and it's particularly an appropriate theme for the time and the hour and the day in which we live. When I awakened this morning--by the way I got up a little extra early because Mrs. Humphrey was on the Today Show today and I just wanted her to be sure I was listening, let's put it that way. The only trouble is that after the Show was all over the producer called and said, "we're going to run her; no sense of having you run anymore, we want an expert." But I was up very early and I was listening to the morning news and of course about every other packet of news tells us about trouble in this world, trouble that our nation faces, trouble that our people face, trouble that freedom faces; and while all of

this trouble is a long ways away, actually at home while we have our problems, they're manageable; abroad sometimes you wonder if we'll ever be able to secure the peace that we so desperately seek and need. But because these problems are a long ways away and yet they're right in upon us because we can't escape them and because we have to face up to these problems as a leader of the Free Word and as a major power and because I think we've learned some lessons from other years--namely, that aggression feeds on aggression and that trouble feeds on trouble--we realize that we have to have some way to get to where the trouble is in order to meet it head on before it comes here, and that tells us the story of the need of seapower.

It is reported in the Press that only recently the French Foreign Minister said to the government of North Vietnam, "you'd better seek peace because you cannot defeat the Americans." Well, we knew that a long time ago, and one of the reasons that the Americans will not be defeated in South Vietnam nor will South Vietnam be defeated is because we are a sea power (applause) and there is no power on the face of this earth that can drive us off that plane along the beaches of South Vietnam and there's none that can drive us out of there either--anyplace. But logistics, supply, is the key to power, and you cannot supply large forces without sea power. So I come here as a member of your government, a member of the President's cabinet, a member of the National Security Council, deeply concerned over the present and long-term wellbeing of our Nation. I know that I speak for a nation that is united as never before, and I know that I speak on behalf of a nation that is the strongest power on the face of this earth, and I know that I speak for you when I say we'd better keep it that way, because if we should fail or falter someone else will have their way and the hope of mankind will be destroyed. We can honestly say that we seek no territory, we seek no conquest, we want no dominion, we don't ask for one inch of anybody else's land or economy; what we seek is world in which people leave their neighbors alone, in which people are permitted to make their own choices as to the kind of a life in society they wish to live in. We seek to live in a world where international law can be respected and where people have a chance to make something out of their lives. It's not a very complicated foreign policy, you know. I have many people come to me, and I get hundreds of letters every day--oh, my do I ever--and I have people say to me, "Oh, what dear government is doing, what our government is doing is terrible, or why don't you explain our foreign policy?" Well, I'll tell you what our foreign policy is. Our foreign policy is that we would like to have every person on the face of the earth have an opportunity to live in peace. We would like them to have an opportunity to rear their children in peace and with the hope that tomorrow will be better than today. We would like to see a world in which people can talk out their problems instead of fight them out. We'd like to see a world in which we can literally beat our

swords into plowshares and man shall make war no more. We have never sought to conquer, and I want you as Americans and leading Americans to take that story wherever you go. We didn't start these troubles; we didn't ask for it, but the role of leadership does not permit you to pretend that there are no difficulties. If we didn't learn from Hitler and Tojo and Mussolini that the appetite of the aggressor knows no limits, if we didn't learn that you can never satisfy them by feeding one little nation into their jaws one at a time, then we've learned nothing. The sacrifices of the past 30 years have been for naught.

Now having said that, I come back to the theme of this conference--the whole matter of maritime policy. This is the most timely of conferences. I am not an expert in maritime policy. Frankly I have a rowboat and a 16-foot cruiser with a 40 horse motor. I love it. It's out at Lake Waverly. If Russ Berg comes out there, I'll give him a free ride. (Laughter) But I do know the importance of sea power. I know the importance of a merchant marine, and I know that while we always ought to want to rely on our friends and we've had and do have strong and faithful allies, I think we also ought to be able to rely on ourselves if need be. (Applause)

Now I've read most of the material that this conference has given its attention to. One of the lessons you learn in public life is to come reasonably well prepared, knowing that you can get into enough trouble even when you try to stay out of it without just looking for trouble. I recognize that you're familiar with certain studies that have been made by interagency committees of this government. I know that you're concerned about those studies, and I want to make it quite clear I'm not here with any plan. I have no task force report in my pocket. I can say to you quite candidly this administration has not as yet determined the long range maritime policy of this government, and that's why this meeting is timely--because you happen to have a President and an Administration that believes in the admonition of the old Prophet Isiah who said, "Come, let us reason together." Now these studies are made for the purpose of centering thought on particular problems. I'm an old legislator. I spent 16 years in the United States Senate. I've introduced more than my fair share of bills, and I wish I could say to you that any one bill that I introduced that was passed was like I introduced it. We always say that if you can end up with your name on it, it's a colossal victory. (Laughter) The process of legislation is the process of bringing in other people's thought, reconciliation of different ideas, adjustments, compromises, and finally getting a majority that will support what you have ultimately designed as a proposal or a policy, but what you need are the beginnings. Somebody sort of has to speak, take the problem in hand and say, now let's talk about it, let's look at it, what are your ideas, and what are your ideas? Now there are ideas that come from people who are students of the problem or problems, and then there are ideas that come from people that are the victims of the problem. And what this country needs is a careful blending of

both economic, theory and economic and political theory, plus economic practicality and political practicality. I used to teach political science. I used to teach American government, and I felt for many years that I ought to write every one of my students a letter of apology because what I knew then and what I know now makes me shudder to think of how much misinformation I gave those students. But I was a fairly good theoretical teacher. I taught courses about the Congress of the United States. I guess they must have abolished that one because when I got down here, it wasn't the same one I was teaching. And I'm frank to tell you that I had to learn too, and if you see a few bumps on me here and there, those bumps were received at Capitol Hill-- that is the graduate course in American Government. So what I'm saying to you is I am not here with a plan. I am not here with a proposal. I am here to tell you that the United States, to tell you what you already know, or to reaffirm what you've already said, that the United States needs, wants, and must have a strong, modern, efficient merchant marine, and all of the policies that go with maintaining such a merchant marine. (Applause) I'm here to tell you what you already know because the history of our nation proves that what I'm about to say is right. For our national security, for international peace, for the hope of freedom, this nation needs and must have available at every minute of its life a strong, modern, up-to-date, well equipped, well manned fleet, United States Navy. (Applause) And in order to have both of these, the merchant marine and the fleet for defense or battle purposes, it means that we must have the facilities within our country and the trained manpower within our country and the management within our country that can provide both. (Applause) I believe this with every single muscle and fiber in my body, or I wouldn't come to this meeting. Frankly I have a terrific day ahead of me. I had to make a choice between coming to this meeting and turning down two United States Senators who wanted me to come to their state today to dedicate a plaza and an auditorium this morning. A little later I must go to Columbus, Ohio, and Russ, tonight I'm going up to St. Paul and they tell me it's a bit chilly. (Berg: So am I) (Laughter) See you there. We'll be talking about making, building icebreakers when we get up there.

Well these are the words I wanted to say to you in the early part of my remarks. I looked over this, as I said, this program, the need for the United States to be an effective sea power--and we are, I'm so proud of this Navy of ours. I've been aboard those ships, and all I say is as citizens--and your voice is heard, believe me--you see to it that no one in this government ever forgets that we need to be a modern, up-to-date, effective sea power. And I'm pleased that you've reviewed the current status of United States sea power. You know more about it than I do. I've ceased to try to believe that I know all of these problems. I don't. But I can learn, and if put to the task with the proper tutors and counselors and advisors, we can all learn.

And then the third section of your program, "Shipbuilding Requirements for Effective National Sea Power." Of course, that gets right down to the nub of the problem. Now you're not just members of the maritime industry even though I'm so very grateful to see our friends of the Trade Unions here, of the shipyards, all people that relate to maritime activities, but you're citizens as I said too, and you were interested these past months in what we've been doing in Congress--I'm not going to run over that record--but I think it's a pretty good record. As long as this country can stay prosperous and strong and I say stay that way, not just have just a sort of a weekend of prosperity and then slip back into a ravine or a ditch. We don't want that and we haven't had it. We're in our 57th consecutive month of continuous economic growth and expansion. And lest anybody just take that for granted as the normal pattern, may I say this has never happened before in all of recorded human history. No country at any time, anywhere in the memory of man has ever known 57 months of continuous economic growth and expansion such as this country has experienced, and there is no reason to believe that it will change. Every single investment counselor, every banker, every corporation director, every trade union leader says that next year will be better than this year. We'll bust through the 700 trillion mark--700 trillion dollar mark. Now that tells us that we have the wherewithall to do the things that this country needs to do and some of the things that we need to do are right here at home, within our cities, the medicare for our elderly, the social security benefits, yes, but more importantly, the education for our youth--or should I say of equal importance--higher education, vocational and technical training that we need, this effort to rid ourselves of this costly abuse known as poverty. We have too many people yet in America that are not carrying their load--or should I say too many people that are being broken by the load they've carried too long, the load of ignorance, the load of illiteracy, the victims of prejudice, of helplessness and hopelessness. We're going to try to do something about those people in our family of Americans. They say that about one-fifth of our population falls into that category. One-fifth, one-sixth, or one-seventh--it's too many. And we're going to try to the best of our ability to find ways and means of getting at the root causes of this poverty. Now it isn't going to be easy because we've been trying this for two or three, four thousand years. But man has been trying to find an answer to cancer for a long time too.

My wife spoke this morning on the subject of mental retardation. We've been trying to find some answers for that too--we haven't yet. But I want to tell you, you do not scold the doctor, you do not tear down the laboratories, you do not call them a lot of wastrels because they spend money on research trying to find the answers. Oh, no, you say, particularly if cancer hits your family or mental retardation hits one of your loved ones, you say, give them more, do more, do more. You come up here to Congress some time and go through those 500 plus members of Congress, 535, and you'll find in every one of them some tragedy in the life of their family, and when that moment of

tragedy is referred to in legislation, they are up there fighting like tigers because they know, they know what it means to suffer that pain and that grief. So we seek answers, and we're finding some too. There's a lot of good news. We're making some breakthroughs in disease. We're making some breakthroughs in the improvement of our social structure. We're beginning now to understand that people ought to be judged on their merit, not on how they spell their last name or what country they come from or what is the color of their skin. What's more important is what's in their head and their heart, and from all I've been able to understand the color of the heart is the same in white, black, red or yellow man, but more importantly we're interested in what is mankind's purpose and what is his willingness to do good things.

Well, this prosperity for America affects you too. The only way that we can really afford the kind of merchant marine and maritime policy this nation must have is to have a strong America, a prosperous America, and I might add that one of the ways to have the prosperous America is to have a good merchant marine. (Applause) I guess as one gets a little older, you get a little more old-fashionedly patriotic. When you're a young buck, you know, you sort of laugh that stuff off. But I can tell you this, that I don't see any reason in the world why every port in the world shouldn't see the American Flag flying on the American ships. (Applause) They won't be able to burn that flag either and tear it down if it's on our ship. This is the voice of America. We spend hundreds of millions of dollars to carry the Voice of America. We spend hundreds of millions of dollars to tell the story of American life and the American purpose. Therefore, I believe that when we get a chance to demonstrate our wares, to show what kind of stuff we're made out of, we ought to do it, and we ought not to go around saying that it's going to bankrupt us or it's going to be something that we can't afford or can't pay for. Now I'm a prudent man, I have to pay my bills--that's one of the problems of being in politics--they always are watching you. If your credit gets a little bad, there's always somebody who is just as happy as can be to remind people about it in the next election. So, and I think Russ Berg would tell you that the Humphrey family had to come up the hard way, so we know what it means to be in debt, what it means to have mortgages, what it means to pay bills, and I've never looked upon public finances much differently than I have private finances. But I have never been unwilling to go into debt privately if I thought that going into debt gave me a chance to make more out of that experience. Very frankly most Americans would be living in tepees and huts if it were not for credit. The long-term housing credit for American homes has permitted the American people to be the best housed people in the world. I don't want to simplify the problem. I simply say this, that if it is needed, if a strong, modern, up-to-date merchant marine is needed for this country, and I think it is--I gather you do or you wouldn't be here--then what we need to do is get together and find out how we're going to do it. Now there have to be some

changes made. Let's be very frank with each other. We've had policies pretty much like, I'll use an example, we've had a lot of agricultural policies that have accumulated for years. I'm going out to Ohio today to speak to the Ohio farm bureau and just to show you that I don't choose up sides, I'm going to Minnesota for the Farmers' Union. And I have the same message for both, and people will know what I've said uptown right here, and I want them to know, and I don't have to go and ask anybody what I can say. But I do want to say this, that back in the Thirties we designed a farm program that was related to the needs of the Thirties, and we also designed some tax policies that were related to the needs as we saw them of the Thirties, and the Forties. We changed those tax policies in the Fifties and Sixties, and if we hadn't, this country wouldn't be nearly as prosperous as it is now. We used to have an idea that when you had a deficit what you did was tax people more. Then we woke up one day and said, look, if you have a big deficit and your expenditures are running high, why don't you tax people a little less and let the economy have this money for the purpose of investment and maybe you'll still get more money to run the government and have more jobs and more investment and more prosperity. And you know, it worked. We're collecting a lot more money in the Federal Treasury today than we ever dreamed of, and yet we have reduced taxes by 19 billions of dollars in terms of the rate upon gross national product as of 1963. It'll be many more billions of dollars if you put on the rate of the gross national product now. What I'm saying is that if there's a will, there's a way. Now I don't know how we're going to piece this maritime policy together. All I know is that we need to get at it now. Every month, every year that we delay in agreeing between Labor, Management and Capital and Government-- every year and every month that we delay you get into more trouble, the government gets into more trouble and somebody gets another idea that the way you answer this whole thing is by just sort of doing away with everything. We know that you cannot operate the American merchant marine and the American Shipbuilding Industry without some assistance from your government. Now the question is how much and what kind, and if you get assistance, how many rules and regulations do you get along with it. And we ought to sit down like a good trade unionist does with your corporation officer and bargain about. The union never got its way, Russell tells me, and management always says they never got their way. I remember when I was Mayor we used to call the boys in the office every once in a while, Russ, and I found out that that was a rather hazardous experience, I'll tell you (Laughter).

So without trying to step around lightly the controversy which has been going on regarding our maritime policy, our shipping policy, I simply say that with Lyndon B. Johnson in the White House, a man who wants to work with you and who has not made a firm policy decision one way or another-- studies have been made and he will welcome your deliberations, and if you'll give me the

result of this conference I will see that he will get those deliberations. (Applause) I think we now agree that a strong merchant marine is essential to our nation's welfare. Now if that's the goal, how do we achieve it? Well, I'll say this, and I repeat it just so the record may be manifestly clear, no policy is going to work, no policy will be adopted--because after all the policy has to go through Congress too--and I want to let you in on a secret. No matter how intelligent we may think we are at these executive levels of government, unless the Congress agrees, you just don't have any policy. That Congress is some place; I spent a lot of time there. It's a great place; you can thank God for it, I want to tell you right now. It does a great job for the American people. No policy is going to be successful unless all join forces in implementing it. Now I conclude by saying this, that I have had the privilege of discussing with our President many times this matter of transportation policy, maritime policy, the needs of our merchant marine and our shipbuilding. I have discussed frequently our need to expand our overseas trade, not only to reduce the balance of payments deficit but also to open the door to increase prosperity for the American economy. We know that presently only about four per cent of the American business firms enjoy the benefits of world trade. We haven't even scratched the surface of world trade, and we know that there's an overseas market for almost every product made in this country. I was therefore very pleased to learn that the American Flag Shipping Lines have joined forces through their cross-the-world network of trade promotion and marketing offices to help American businesses develop markets overseas, and this gets right to what I was saying earlier. No foreign lines are going to do that. It was the American Flag Lines that joined forces and worked hand in hand with our commercial attaches, our business firms overseas to develop markets for American products, and that's only a way to tell you you need some allies in American business. American business needs you and you need them. One thing you learn in politics is, oh, how you need everybody. I just go scurrying around looking for allies all the time. And I really never did feel that the opposition was going to do me too much good during election years. That doesn't mean that I don't like them; as a matter of fact they're delightful people --they're a little misguided, but delightful people. So let me just repeat again, that when American Flag Shipping Lines join forces through their across-the-world network of trade promotion and marketing offices they're helping American business, and every corporation in this country ought to be aware of it and reminded of it. Now I know you may think they all are aware of it, but one thing I have learned in public life is you'd be surprised how quickly people can forget. And sometimes they never even heard about it in the first place. Education is repetition, advertising is repetition. Alvin Barkley used to tell that old story about the fellow who when he went back to Paducah and he met an old friend on the street and he said, "well," he said, "Fred, I bet that you're going to help me in this campaign, aren't you?" And Fred said, "well Alben" he said, "I don't know, I've been thinking that over; I don't know

if I can," and Alben said, "what do you mean you can't, you haven't made up your mind?" He said, "my political life is on the line here in just a couple of months and you're an old friend--20years--family friend." "Yea, I know, but you know a man's got to think it over," old Fred said. And Alben, then Vice President, said, or Senator then I should say, said, "Why, Fred, don't you remember that when your brother, that rather n'eer do well fellow, brother of yours, needed a job, that I went to bat for him, got him to be postmaster?" "Yea, yea, I remember that, that was very nice of an old friend." "Don't you remember," he said, "when your sister came down to Washington and couldn't find any work, I got her a job being clerk in one of those committees with more pay than anybody in Paducah gets?" "Yea, yea, I remember that." He said, "don't you remember when your old uncle died and there was no money for the funeral that I sent out a hundred dollars to help bury the old man?" He said, "yea, I remember that." He said, "my God, after all that you mean to tell me that you're not for me?" He said, "I just can't understand it." The old fellow said, "But what have you done for me lately, Alben, you know?" (Applause)

So I want to warn you, remind people and also remind people that there's a partnership in the economic community that is needed in this country. Some people may feel that it's all to their advantage to just go their own way without any regard to the other man. I don't think that's the case. I leave you therefore with this friendly note. Your government wants to work with you. I've already met with some of your people here yesterday. These were people from the trade unions. I am prepared as one officer in this government to meet at any time, any place, to help work out a more successful, a more acceptable maritime policy. (Applause) I do not run things; as a matter of fact, no one person does, and if they did, it would be time to change it. But each of us has something to do and some little influence. I hope that when this conference concludes its deliberations therefore that you will make available to the appropriate members of Congress and in fact you should make them available to every member of Congress the results of your deliberations, your proposals, your recommendations, that you will make available to the appropriate agencies of the executive branch of the government your resolutions, your deliberations, and your conclusions, that you will make available to the President of the United States your recommendations and observations on maritime policy, and since a Vice President has very little authority in the government, possibly his role is that of seeing to it that this information is read, is studied, is given the most thoughtful consideration. I give you my word that whatever you propose will not be cast aside lightly. It will not be cast aside at all. What I think is needed from this meeting is the kind of working committee that can sit down with the proper representatives in the executive branch of government and the legislative branch and to come to grips with a modern, up-to-date maritime policy. You possibly already have that now. If you do, more power to

you. If it isn't as active as it ought to be, get yourselves some economic and political geritol and get a little more active. And if you need any advice, since you've already paid me--I get a good salary and I try to earn it--if you ever need any council and advice, if I can be of any help, my door is open to anyone here that's in this conference at any time. All you have to do is come calling. (Applause) Thank you very much.



Minnesota Historical Society

Copyright in this digital version belongs to the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, link to, or email content, however, for individual use.

To request permission for commercial or educational use, please contact the Minnesota Historical Society.



www.mnhs.org