

Speech delivered by Honorable John E. Fogarty, Member of Congress,  
Second Rhode Island Congressional District, at Twin Launching of Vessels,  
at the Walsh-Kaiser Shipyard, Providence, Rhode Island, on Monday,  
September 6, 1943.

Speeches  
file  
copy

It is not only a distinct privilege, but a high honor, for me to be permitted to speak to you this afternoon at the launching of these two great ships - particularly on Labor Day, which means to Labor the day we celebrate. But today, unlike other Labor Days of the past few years, we find ourselves in the midst of a terrible and costly war, and instead of a day of rest for Labor - instead of celebrating "our" day - we find that Labor, not only in this shipyard, but Labor throughout this country, has voluntarily chosen to work today in order to help bring this war to a more speedy and successful conclusion.

These two vessels of war that are being launched today are named after two great Naval heroes of the Royal Navy. Admiral Sir Robert Holland served with distinction in the Royal Navy from 1730 to 1780 - 50 years of glorious service to his country. Admiral Hannam also served with distinction for many years in the Royal Navy.

Just as any man who serves his Country in her hour of peril, these great men gave their all - that their Country's cause would succeed. In commemoration of their valor - there is today - going down to the sea they loved - two ships of war - - two vessels which will carry to their beloved Country's enemies, the war which they sought - - two vessels which are today dedicated to the destruction of the enemies of their native land.

There are men and women among you who built these ships of war. You men and women who stand before me made possible this tribute to two great men. Your names will not live in history. You men and women must live always in the shadow of great men - you must always see your handiwork dedicated to men whose names will grace the pages of history. But I want you to know - and I say this in all sincerity - your work is not going unnoticed - - you are devoting the best you have in you, just as did the men for whom your handiwork is today named, to the victory in battle which your Country seeks - you're giving your all to a nation that is grateful - to a people who will not forget, when the

fury of battle has died away, that you men also served - that you men served in a capacity that seeks no praises - - that you did a job that was necessary - for without your work, all our hopes on the seas and over the seas would all be in vain.

It is you men and women who form the great body of American Labor which goes to make up what we choose to call the "Army of the Home Front". That great Army is every bit as essential to the future safety of America as are the armies of men in the field. That Army is called upon for the same devotion to duty - and the same untiring effort - as our armies overseas.

You know how faithful you have been to your duty - your associates know the untiring efforts you have expended in furthering military production. You are also aware of the sacrifices you have made, in order to speed the day of final victory.

However, there are those who would hold you up to ridicule and would make little of the job you are doing. There are those who are charged with a public responsibility, but, because of their position of importance, would make it appear that your sacrifices are as nothing. The daily press, among these, must sometimes make even you men feel that you are serving to no good purpose.

Who assails Labor thus? What great champions of American freedom find such spontaneous support from the daily press? The same men and editors who have always hated labor - and all that labor stands for - - freedom and independence - equality of privilege as well as responsibility - social security and freedom from fear of the future.

I want you to feel in your hearts that your work is appreciated. There are those who are charged with responsibility for this Nation's welfare who appreciate what you are doing - - they are truly grateful.

If I can but convince you of this - though all the papers in Rhode Island may make you sick at heart - I shall have done my bit.

Without you - and men just like you - there would be no great Navy of which we boast so much - there would be no threat to the long communication lines of our

enemies - there would be no contest to our enemies' claim of superiority on the high seas. Without men just like you - there would be no conquering armies in Europe today; without men just like you, there would not be one stick of furniture - there would not be one tent - one man or one box of pills - on the other side of these submarine infested waters, that we call the high seas.

There is great talk about the job that our Merchant Marine is doing - there is great praise for our battle fleets - there is great praise for our Navy and the Navies of our brave allies - - - I want you to know that there are men who know, and appreciate, that without the men and women in the shipyards, there would be no Merchant Marine - there would be no battle fleets - there would be no Navy.

Selfish, arrogant editors may seek to exploit you. Selfish, arrogant manufacturers and industrialists may try to find personal advantage in the job you are doing. Remember this - - those who are interested in your welfare are those who try to shield you from all these attacks. Those who are truly your friends, are those who are determined that this yard - your yard - shall be the best yard there is in all this great country - editors and manufacturers to the contrary notwithstanding. This yard is dedicated to the purpose of building vessels which will bring the war to our enemies and will bring the day of victory a little bit closer. It is dedicated to but one cause - the winning of the war.

This yard is not a political graveyard - nor is it a happy hunting grounds for editors who seek political advantage in disparaging the job that is being done here.

We shall have the best yard there is in the Eastern part of our Country - you men and women are making that possible; we shall have this shipyard - Please God - long after the editors and manufacturers who would destroy it have been consigned to the valley of forgotten men.

There is plenty of work for this yard - - by Heaven this yard will have that work, despite all the efforts of all the editors in Rhode Island to belittle it. I don't

believe in depressions - I don't believe in scuttling ships - - - I believe in a big Merchant Marine, and I believe in this Shipyard. When I read of the great maritime traditions of Rhode Island - I go cold - to think that that great tradition was allowed to die - - - perhaps I should not say die - I should say hammered to death - - - by self-seeking editors and others who saw in the maritime trade a group of independent thinkers who might threaten their control of the thinking of this little State. I am determined that - so help me God - I shall play some part in the rebirth of that great maritime tradition of Narragansett Bay. If it is given to me to prevent it, this shipyard shall never close down. There is a place for us in the world of tomorrow - there is a place in the world of tomorrow for all of you men and women who made this yard possible. Don't let the breath of life fade out of this great enterprise. Don't get discouraged because some would make it appear this is a dumping ground - a place of repose for "has beens". When you read in the press that there is trouble at the shipyard - work twice as hard. Put this yard over the top - - I promise you, the nation will not forget the job you do.

There have been some minor disputes in this yard between labor and management, as there are in all shipyards. But I hope that in the next week or ten days a real constructive labor management committee will be set up and functioning, and I know when this has been done, there will be no difficulty in straightening out these minor troubles. These committees have been very successful in other yards, and I feel sure they will be successful here.

You men and women win this battle of ships on the sea - - I guarantee you one voice that will never cease to proclaim that you are entitled to all the credit for this great production record. I promise you one voice that will never be discouraged from doing the right as God gives me to see the right - no matter how many papers might be lined up to seek the destruction of this great shipyard.

John E. Fogarty, M. C.,  
Room 1515, House Office Bldg.,  
Washington, D. C.

*Copy given JEF for Journal  
" mailed 9/6/43:  
Labor Press, Worcester  
P. I. Free Press, 2/0 Varnum  
Barber, City Hall, Pawt  
et*