

Address to be given by the Honorable John E. Fogarty, Member of Congress from the Second Rhode Island Congressional District, over Radio Station WJAR, on Saturday evening, February 17, 1945, at 7:30 P.M.

I wish I had the ability of an "Ernie Pyle" - so that I might paint for you a word picture of the life an enlisted man lives out in the islands of the Pacific. However, the area is so vast - the obstacles being overcome so great - the undertaking itself of such huge proportions, it is my belief even the great Ernie Pyle will find his gifts sorely taxed in trying to tell you what those young men go through day in and day out.

A great deal has already been written about the life of the enlisted man, both in the course of this war and the last one. But no one can possibly know what he must contend with until he has lived and worked with enlisted men.

As you know, I am a member of the House Committee on Naval Affairs. For over two years now, a portion of every day has been taken up with problems arising through the operations of our Navy in the Pacific theatre of war. In addition to the work involved as a Committee Member, there are a great many of my personal friends who are out there - almost all of them enlisted men. Too, there were the letters and wires and phone calls I received from many of you good people, asking for information, advice, help - in trying to solve some of the problems of your own boys who were out there.

Many times I was bitterly disappointed in my efforts to work out a solution to some of these problems. Many of you know there were times when we had to be satisfied with far less than we had hoped to accomplish.

I decided I must see for myself what the conditions were. I resolved to go out there, any way I could get there - except in the comfort of a committee assignment - and learn for myself what I could do to resolve the difficulties which beset my mind.

During the first days of December, the Naval Affairs Committee was planning its tour of the Pacific Theatre of War. I decided then, as I am sure you will agree, I could not learn what I wanted to know, by meeting the top-ranking officers of the Fleets. While I admire the Admirals and members of their staffs - Lord knows too much praise can't

possibly be given them - my interest is in the enlisted man, and I decided there was but one way to understand his problems. That was to live with enlisted men - to eat with them - to work with them - in short, to be one of them.

I took advantage of an opportunity to do just this, knowing full well there would be criticism from a certain quarter - but knowing too that nothing I could ever do would meet with anything but criticism from that quarter. And let me add this - - if the experience I have gained will enable me to help the enlisted men - if but one man is benefited thereby - then a thousand times as much criticism, would be welcome.

Perhaps I entertain a unique conception of the responsibilities which go with the office I have the honor of holding. But I don't think those responsibilities justify my being glued to my chair when there is work to be done. I have learned, since my return home, that I have been charged with false motives. Let me assure you - so long as I am your representative, no fear of such attacks will ever deter me from doing what I deem is my duty in order that I may more ably serve you in Congress. My time in uniform entitles me to nothing but mustering-out pay. That has already gone to Navy Relief.

I have to admit I haven't solved everything. On some things a solution seems as far away as ever. However, I can say with confidence that I have accomplished a great deal. I have obtained experience and information which would never have been mine had I spent the next ten years in my office in Washington. One thing above all else - when I speak to the military authorities about conditions I dislike - it must be admitted that I know what I'm talking about.

I know there is bound to be a certain amount of "griping" as it is termed.

I am conscious of the fact that it is a dangerous thing to appear to be interfering with the military authorities in the prosecution of the war. All this I have taken into consideration. Yet I am certain there is an area within which disagreement is possible - in which differences of opinion can and do exist - even among officers. Within this area some questioning is a good and healthy thing - and I intend to do considerable questioning.

Admitting that many of the so-called "gripes" can be disregarded as the natural result of men living together for long periods of time, under worse than trying conditions, it is my opinion, when a complaint becomes general throughout a large sector of the armed forces, it is time for Superior Officers to investigate the matter, conscientiously, and do something promptly to alleviate the conditions complained of.

I know there are a lot of obstacles in the way. I have heard - over and over again - the much abused phrase - "there's a war on". There are a lot of enlisted men, and it is not easy to accommodate all their needs. However, I have seen some extraordinary measures taken to satisfy the convenience and comfort of officers. So, I insist, some extraordinary measures should be taken - not to accommodate the comfort of enlisted men - but to meet their essential requirements.

I have already expressed myself on the subject of the length of service overseas for enlisted men. I assure you I did not arrive at this decision hastily. My conclusion was reached only after living with the men and seeing them in action. After a man has been on active duty overseas for eighteen months, he should be returned home. Let me tell you why I say that.

In time of actual warfare, it is impossible to consider a man's personal comfort. It is folly to think time can be devoted to carrying on life as near normal as is possible - that the military authorities should consider the enlisted man's personal desires. I know that is so - and my reason for asking that these men be returned is not based on any thought of their comfort at all. It is a matter of efficiency, and of getting the best out of every man who is available for duty.

I talked with a great many men out there. The places where I worked were, I have been assured, fairly representative of all the islands in the forward area. I can tell you, in all honesty, the first thought of these men on waking in the morning is of HOME. The thoughts that linger as they lie in their bunks at night - or as they travel silent patrols - the thought that pursues them through dreams - is HOME. Every man who leaves these shores

takes with him a powerful desire to go back HOME. And despite the valiant efforts of mothers and fathers - of brave wives and children - to paint a rosy picture of life back home - they soon begin to worry. One C.B. from Rhode Island told me about his wife and kids - His wife was doing her best to convince him the kids were well and happy - but he was worried sick because he had read about the terrible winter we were having. One wife in the course of telling her man all the news of home mentioned their little girl had fallen - a minor accident - but the C.B. had worried so about it he was convinced his wife wasn't telling him all the truth - and made me swear I'd go and see her as soon as I got home.

Such men eventually pass the peak of their efficiency and are in danger of becoming a problem. Their own morale deteriorates and what is of greater consequence - they interfere with the maximum efficiency of younger men - men more recently sent into the forward areas.

There are two stock answers to this request - lack of replacements and lack of shipping space. The first could be met, I am positive, by a more efficient use of men in the camps in the United States and in some of the bases far removed from the combat areas.

On the matter of shipping, the problem is difficult, I admit. But it is not insurmountable. Less emphasis on material and equipment for officers' clubs and officers' quarters would release some very valuable space. Less concern with whether to give our merchant ships away or sink them - and more concentration on getting a lot of them out into the Pacific - would provide additional space. There is more on this I could tell you, but, in fairness, I think it should wait upon a conscientious effort to work out a solution. I am confident a solution can be found.

There is altogether too much slavishness in the matter of red tape. There is too much thinking of the men as if they were machines. From a decision which they feel is unjust they have no recourse. What meagre appeal procedure there is - is not explained to them. For all practical purposes such appeals are impossible or fraught with so much danger to the enlisted men - he almost never tries one. Writing to a Member of Congress is the worst sin

in the book. It reminded me of Agrippa who said -- speaking of Saint Paul - "This man might have been set at liberty -- had he not appealed to Caesar". Such things must cease.

I know you will understand many of the things I'd like to tell you must go unsaid. A lot can be done, I am convinced, and I intend to direct myself to the job.

I met some splendid officers in the Navy; men sincerely concerned for the welfare of the men under their Command. They are the type of men who inspire in us that great pride we all feel for our Navy.

The Chaplains are really God's noblemen. There must be a special corner of heaven reserved for them. Their patience and kindness have become bywords, and it is common to hear a Navy man say - "You be the Chaplain", as he pours out his heart to a friend.

There should be more doctors. Most of the Doctors now serving are men of integrity and skill who try valiantly to do all that must be done -- often at the cost of destroying their own health.

The legal assistance program should be expanded at once. Every command should have a competent, sympathetic legal assistance officer to whom an enlisted man could go for advice and help. Steps in this direction have already been taken. This will be a great factor in building and preserving the morale of an enlisted man. No one can appreciate the importance of this kind of assistance until he sees it with his own eyes. Thousands of men breathe easier and feel better after consultation with these men who are equipped to give sound and kindly advice, in all kinds of problems.

I have received hundreds of letters. It will take me a long time to answer them, and I trust you will bear with me. I am deeply grateful for the interest you have shown. I promise you I shall try to carry out the wishes you have conveyed to me and to help achieve the hopes to which you have given expression.

I have seen the tremendous might and power of our Navy. A people who can resurrect and rebuild the bleeding, battered bulk that was left at Pearl Harbor into the most powerful

fighting force on all the seas - surely can accomplish some little things for its ordinary fighting men. The welfare of the enlisted men should be of primary concern to all of us. They are not able to speak - but I serve notice that every day I serve in Congress, I will apply what I have learned so that I may contribute something toward making their lot a little easier.

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