

FUTURE

RELEASE

FOR RELEASE AFTER DELIVERY

Address by The Honorable Louis Johnson
 The Assistant Secretary of War
 Conference of Procurement District
 Executives and the Faculty and
 Students of the Army Industrial College
 Auditorium, Public Health Building,
 Washington, D C
 December 1 , 1938, 9 30 A M

A BATTLE-AXE TO BOTTLENECKS

Executive Officers of the Army's Procurement Districts, Gentlemen of the
 Supply Arms and Services and Students of Industrial Mobilization

You and I are engaged in a common business enterprise. The President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, has appointed me to a job someone has characterized as business manager of the War Department. Military orders have assigned you to the field as my agents, to Washington as my collaborators, or to the Army Industrial College as students of supply preparedness to train you for similar duties. It is our job to achieve for America the successful industrial mobilization of its resources for any emergency. It is our duty mercilessly to apply the battle-axe to any bottlenecks that threaten to retard war-time production of munitions.

I have brought you here together today for a round-table discussion of our problems, for an inventory of our assets and of our liabilities and for a general survey of the work ahead. This is the first meeting of its kind and I am confident that it will bring dividends to you in a better understanding of your jobs and to the American taxpayer in more effective supply preparedness.

I am especially happy to welcome you, the Executives of the Procurement Districts. You are on the firing line of the industrial front. You are the planning agents at the point of execution. You are the connecting link between the War Department and the factories which are to produce the needed munitions. You are the missionaries who must make converts to the cause of industrial mobilization. Upon you rests the responsibility to appraise the industrial forces of the nation and to measure the load they are able to carry. To you both the Army and industry look for expert knowledge and intelligent guidance in all matters pertaining to supply preparedness.

Of your many achievements, I frequently have spoken, both in public and in private.

In the survey of America's capacity to produce munitions of war, you and those who preceded you in this highly important work performed yeoman service. You visited more than twenty thousand industrial plants. You took your shopping list of requirements furnished you by your branch chiefs and found facilities to manufacture practically all of our military needs. You uncovered our most serious bottlenecks and put the spotlight on those items that threatened us with production delays. You kept the Army informed of the latest technological developments in industry.

As a result of your careful pioneering work, we have selected ten thousand plants to which we have given definite war schedules of production I commend you for a fine piece of work. I am satisfied that the most important items required in our war procurement program have been allocated to facilities well able to produce them. 372

May I commend you for another accomplishment. In the awakening of public opinion in America to the significance of industrial mobilization, you have played a very helpful role. In the course of the last seventeen months my duties have carried me to every section of the country where I addressed almost one hundred different audiences on the subject of national defense. Wherever I found an executive of a procurement district on the job, I noted newspaper representatives more responsive to our message, industrial leaders more cooperative toward our needs and the public more interested in supply preparedness than in other parts of the country. Gentlemen, I salute you for a job well done!

Our purpose in getting together today, however, is not merely to sing praises for past performances. I intend to discuss your shortcomings just as freely and just as frankly. There is a big job ahead of us. The demands that I am about to make upon you will test your ability, your ingenuity and your resourcefulness. I am confident that you will fulfill my expectations.

I want all combatant arms and supply services to develop a definite conception at once of the munitions that our country may need for its defense. Whenever appropriations come forth for the procurement of military items, I expect no delay in getting them. If an emergency ever again arises, I do not want production of motors to stop while we try to perfect another Liberty. I do not want the manufacture of Springfields to lag so that we may have to turn to Enfields. I do not want to delay our doughboys while we wait to develop a Browning machine gun. I do not want to compel the Field Artillery to give up three-inch guns of our own familiar design for 75's of foreign construction. I do not want a lapse of fourteen months between the declaration of war and the day that our first division, capable of taking up a full offensive, is placed upon the fighting line. I do not want the experiences of 1917-1918 repeated.

If you in this group are on the job, I am confident that most of our World War failures will be eliminated. If you prepare plans that are sound and adequate, Congress will support us, industry will sustain us, public opinion will back us and the man at the front, in whose interest all our efforts must be made, will bless us and thank us.

I therefore enjoin upon you the necessity for knowing at all times just what items you expect to turn over to mass production in an emergency. Once you have established your list, it becomes incumbent upon you to prepare and have available for immediate use the drawings, the specifications and the manufacturing data needed by those who will be asked to produce those items. Constant shifting and changing of drawings and specifications, you must avoid. After contracts are let, changes in design will not be tolerated. You may be called upon at any time, long before M-day, to furnish industry with the necessary data to go ahead on the production of many critical items. The time to perfect your drawings and specifications, therefore, is right now - today.

Records of the Planning Branch of my office show that about seventy-five percent of the specifications and drawings needed for the information of industry have been completed. When proposals were issued recently for educational orders, I was delighted to find that the necessary drawings and specifications were available at once for the semi-automatic rifle, the gas mask, the searchlight and the other items so far approved. There still are more than twenty-five percent of our items, many of them vital to our cause, for

which specifications and drawings have not yet been finished. A job this
quarters done is far from complete. I therefore direct you to bring all of
your specifications and drawings up to date with all possible dispatch

393

The next bottleneck that I want broken is that of standardization. Because the responsibility in this phase of preparedness is divided, I ask for harmony and cooperation toward its achievement among all those concerned. You of my office, members of the War Department General Staff, line officers and supply officers - all of you must work together toward standardization of equipment. Without standardization, mass production will be impossible.

In the interests of standardization you must strive toward the simplification of military machines and weapons. Some degree of complexity, I realize, is inescapable but we must try to hold it to a minimum. When faced with the alternatives between a complicated, delicately constructed machine of superior performance and one less perfect but more easily adjustable to mass production, we must choose the latter. We may have to accept something that is eighty percent efficient which we can obtain rather than wait for a more perfect item which may be just around the corner. The standard may not be the most efficient that can be visualized but if M-day comes tomorrow, we will have to go to production on that basis.

Keep before you as a constant reminder the purpose you expect to accomplish with a particular weapon or machine. In a certain foreign country designers adhere closely to that principle and strip all non-essentials from their important items of war equipment. For instance, in the single seater fighter airplane of that country they have avoided all complicated instruments, intricate construction and extra weight. They have left out the self-starter. They have made the radio equipment readily removable so that in an emergency it will carry ammunition instead. They even have built the pilot's cockpit to accommodate only small men. In short, having determined that the purpose of the single seater fighter airplane is to maneuver and to shoot, they have eliminated all items of equipment not germane to these purposes.

To sum up, may I say that I shall expect in the very near future to be informed by my Planning Branch that all supply arms and services have determined a standard type for all their important items of supply and have available for immediate use the drawings and specifications and all other data needed for their manufacture.

May I also warn you at this time that despite the best of well laid plans, M-day is more than likely to prove to be something other than what we expected. We must, therefore, keep a certain degree of flexibility in our plans. In computing our requirements for supply, we must be prepared to meet the needs of changing strategic situations, not only at the outset of a campaign but throughout its rapidly changing scenes.

There are a number of other matters of vital importance to the realization of our industrial mobilization program which I would like to take up with you but find my time inadequate to deal with them fully. They will be considered in greater detail in other meetings arranged for you by the Planning Branch. I do want to outline briefly, however, the duties that I expect of district executives in the field.

I want each of you to reappraise your district procurement plan in the light of the most recent economic and industrial trends.

I desire each of you to study again the distribution of the load within your district to insure yourself that, in the light of the latest changes in productive capabilities, your existing industrial organizations are to be used to their fullest and best advantage.

I warn each of you against over-confidence in the ability of your allocated facilities to produce promptly on war schedule the jobs assigned them. We hope that Congress will give us a sufficient stock of munitions to tide us over until industry is ready, but unless the study of the production problem, of the design of equipment and tools, of the plant layout, of the training of workmen and of the tuning up of the whole system for the job is completed in advance, some of your allocated facilities will not be ready on schedule. 394

I expect each of you to comb the lists of allocated and reserved facilities to eliminate concerns for which allocations are not desirable.

I insist that each of you cooperate with procurement planning executives of other services and that all of you act jointly on matters of common interest.

I demand that each of you become familiar not only with the facilities to which duties already have been allocated but with the total industrial resources of your districts. You must thoroughly blanket your assigned areas. We cannot afford to overlook any source that can supply the Army's needs in any emergency. The survey of industry must go on continuously. It must be done thoroughly. You must be familiar with every potential war-producing facility in your district.

Our shopping list for items of war equipment includes seventy-three hundred articles or processes of production. With your help, we have found production facilities in industry for practically all of them. In an emergency, more than ninety-nine and twenty-five one-hundredths percent of our needs, industry, upon short notice, will be able to produce. Our bottleneck, however, is in that other three-fourths of one percent, represented by fifty-five critical items so difficult of production, so different from ordinary peace-time needs that industry will not be able to produce them in mass without some education. There are about two hundred and fifty out of our ten thousand allocated plants that cannot, without further education, perform their allotted war-time tasks in the production of these vital items or processes that have no counterpart in civilian use. I want you to know that we in Washington are familiar with that situation. We intend to present a brief to Congress to justify educational orders for everyone of these items and we sincerely hope that the necessary appropriations will follow.

The need for educational orders, both industry and the War Department have recognized for years. During the last session of Congress, we convinced the country of this need and got our first educational order project. As a result of our first two million dollars, we expect to break the bottlenecks in the production of semi-automatic rifles, recoil mechanisms for three-inch anti-aircraft guns, forgings and machinings for 75 millimeter shells, gas masks and searchlights. We have made a good start.

I want to assure you men in the field that we in the War Department will not be satisfied until we have convinced the Congress and the American people of the necessity for educational orders to industry for the manufacture of every one of our critical fifty-five items.

In conclusion, let me summarize our immediate objectives.

First, the establishment of standard types for all critical items and the completion of the necessary drawings, specifications and manufacturing data ready for immediate use in any emergency,

Second, the completion of our industrial surveys to develop thoroughly the industrial capacity of all procurement districts,

Third, the preparation of allocated plants for their war schedules by means of current orders for production, educational orders and production plans,

395

Fourth, the completion of the organization and the training of the personnel required to expand our peace procurement organizations to war strength

Finally, the early completion of contract forms adequate for all anticipated war conditions and simple enough to be readily understandable both by industry and by the representatives of the War Department.

Supply has taken on a new dignity in war plans and those charged with industrial preparedness must rise to the level of their new responsibility. Armies no longer go into battle to live off the conquered land. They must be sustained from their own supply bases and from their own depots behind the lines. They must be supported by their own farms and by their own factories, by their own industry and by their own labor. It is your job to keep our industrial front strong and solid. The Army has placed its trust in you. I am confident it is well founded.

END