

Remarks
Secretary Brinegar
To the U.S. Coast Guard
Chief Petty Officers Association
Ft. Myer, Virginia
March 28, 1973

I appreciate this tribute--it's great to be a Chief, even an honorary one, provided it's not at Wounded Knee. I especially appreciate the opportunity it affords me to get better acquainted with the Coast Guard's Chief Petty Officers--active, reserve, and retired.

If some of you are retired, it certainly doesn't show. If some of you are in the Reserve, no one would know it. From what I know of your organization, and from all the evidence at hand, I would say the members of the Chief Petty Officers Association are always active--in support of Coast Guard objectives, National goals, and American ideals.

I understand that in addition to your personal involvement in community affairs, you are also preparing to give a significant boost to the Coast Guard recruiting program. That is a highly commendable venture, especially in view of the termination of the draft and the difficulty that may pose in attracting recruits. What you can do to attract high calibre young people to the Coast Guard will be most welcome. I have no doubts of your success. It has long been a tradition, proven by performance, that when there is something difficult to be done, give the job to a Chief.

I spent a few years in the Air Force in World War II. But then I managed to miss the next two wars. But the Coast Guard has never missed a war in our country's history. And that includes Viet Nam. I'm told, as a matter of interest, that The Republic of Viet Nam navy is today made up almost entirely of former Coast Guard cutters.

Coast Guard people respond quickly and capably to a wartime situation because, more than any other service, you people live with emergencies on a daily basis. You are constantly "at war"--doing "battle" with ice, weather and high seas; searching for the lost, rescuing the stricken, apprehending lawbreakers, protecting our shores. Every day my "Alert" bulletins keep me informed of some new adventure and accomplishment.

Before I came to Washington I heard often that very little was right about transportation in our country. I guess a view like that comes from commuting daily on Los Angeles freeways.

But, of course, that's not true. We have excellent transportation facilities throughout America--in fact, in broad terms, the best in the world.

Unquestionably there are "choke points" in the system, and there are some qualities of our transportation systems that are abrasive to society or abusive of the environment. We must work to correct these problems and, in the process, make the various components work more efficiently and fit more effectively together.

Perhaps a word on today's biggest problem--rail--might be of interest.

As one rail problem after another comes to my desk, I am reminded of the supervisor who remarked that he had one employee who never made the same mistake twice. "But," he added, "he seems to have made them all at least once."

And so it seems with rail.

Our Department has just completed and sent to Congress a Report on the Northeast Railroad situation, along with recommendations for putting the railroad industry back on the right financial track. In preparing the report I have, perhaps, learned more in 8 weeks about running a railroad than I really wanted to know. But the railroads represent an important segment of our transportation capacity. They must be preserved as part of our private sector--and made self-sustaining and without Federal takeover or massive subsidy.

That is a significant and vital constraint. President Nixon has proposed a responsible Federal budget for 1974, one that does not require a tax increase. It meets the Nation's needs while guarding against the excessive or needless Government spending that will only add to our problems of inflation.

If President Nixon had not taken the initiative in controlling the budget, the Congressional actions planned or underway would have required an across-the-board personal income tax surcharge of at

least 15 percent, or a Federal deficit of unacceptable proportions. That's 15 percent more in taxes, on active duty or retired pay. President Nixon believes it can be avoided--if Congress can be persuaded to resist the special interests whose programs are affected.

Many government programs, once started, take root and become permanent, even though their benefits may only be temporary--or even non-existent. President Nixon wants to end programs that have outlived their usefulness, and reform programs that are clearly not paying their way. Some activities now conducted at the Federal level can be transferred to the state or local level and implemented more effectively and efficiently. Then, too, President Nixon wants to avoid taking on new responsibilities that could be better handled by the private sector, or at other levels of government.

The Administration's highway program is a case in point. Our proposal would give urban communities a greater voice in the transportation decisions that affect them, and greater flexibility in meeting local transportation needs.

The measures we are seeking in our 1974 highway and public transportation programs are part of the evolving pattern of Federal aid to transportation. When the country was first beginning, Congress authorized and financed a new national pike. Then came the era of the railroads and waterways. Our airport system had its origins in the

Federal projects of the 1930's. And when the automobile emerged as a necessary ingredient in American family life, the Federal highway program came into being. That program has been most successful, and no end to road-building and road-improvement is in sight. But the top priority need today is to unclog our cities and make them liveable--and moveable--again. Extending Highway Trust Fund resources to public transit options helps serve that purpose.

Growing urban congestion is a compelling reason for seeking better balance in the make-up of our transportation system. But it is not the only reason.

If we are to prevail against pollution, use our energy resources more efficiently, reduce highway fatalities and injuries, and deliver better mobility to more Americans--all more or less simultaneously--we must be willing to change some of our habits and learn to deal with our urban problems more intelligently. That's what our Highway Bill is aimed at doing. What we're seeking is a keeping up with the times.

Certainly the Coast Guard has come a long way since a cannon was installed at the Boston lighthouse in 1719 to serve as the first fog signal. Today's 378-foot Sherman is a far cry from the first two-masted cutters which in 1798 had already seen several years service when they were called upon to escort a new frigate on her maiden voyage: the frigate was named the Constitution.

Last year the United States Coast Guard answered 60,000 calls for assistance. The record shows that Coast Guardsmen saved 2,520 lives and \$1.7 billion worth of property. Statistics alone, however, cannot tell the story of the humanitarian services the Coast Guard provided throughout the year, especially during hurricane Agnes. Neither is there any way to adequately measure the accidents prevented or the disasters averted because of Coast Guard vigilance.

The Port and Waterways Safety Act of 1972 brought a new dimension to the Coast Guard responsibilities--one that is to take on increasing importance in the months ahead.

I spent enough years with the oil industry to cultivate a healthy appreciation for the value of petroleum as a national resource, and a strong concern for protection against oil spills. The Coast Guard is performing a vital work in this regard--in establishing vessel traffic systems to reduce the risk of collisions, in monitoring clean-up operations and invoking penalties when spills do occur, and in developing more effective ways to contain spills and minimize pollution.

I have not accepted many speaking invitations since my appointment. (I do not count several "command performances" up on the Hill.) But I wanted to have this chance to be with you today because I am very proud of the Coast Guard, and greatly impressed by the professionalism I find behind every Coast Guard uniform.

You have a rich tradition: 180 years of competent, loyal service in defense of America's waterways and the protection of those who travel them.

I am indeed proud to be your "boss." You're a great group! With you behind me--and all the other outstanding people in the Department of Transportation--I feel--as Mark Twain once said-- "as confident as a Christian with four aces."

Thank you. It has been my pleasure to be with you.