

ships and defense

DURING World War I, we built more ships than we had ever built before in so short a period of time. We called them our "Bridge of Ships" and though the Armistice came before they could be put into service, the fact that they were under construction was of major importance to the outcome of that struggle.

Today's program is far greater in magnitude, for we are almost doubling our own Navy's warships to protect the shores of both oceans, in addition to undertaking an enormous expansion of our merchant fleet and that of Great Britain.

Expanding trade with Latin America creates new demands for ships to carry goods to our southern markets and bring back critical and strategic materials.

United States and British orders to American yards for naval vessels, merchant ships, and transportation equipment, as of the end of August 1941, totaled approximately \$11,500,000,000 (appropriations and authorizations since June 1, 1940).

Under construction at the end of October 1941 were 1,900 ships, one of the greatest armadas ever conceived by man. They include everything from superbattleships, bigger and more powerful than any ever built, to motor torpedo boats, barges, tugs, cargo ships for British and United States carriers, and oil tankers.

Most of them are for direct Government orders.

SHIP ORDERS PILE UP

As German submarines and airplane raiders take their toll, the orders for more ships pile up and up, and the United States Government makes known its firm determination to raise production to a maximum to offset the German blockade and keep open Great Britain's lifeline.

The size of the task is increased by an unknown amount of ship-repair work to be done in commercial and Navy ship-

yards, and conversion of older commercial, pleasure, and naval craft into modern defense ships.

New ways and yards have been started on all four coasts—Atlantic, Pacific, Gulf, and Great Lakes, and facilities unused for years are being brought into the big action program.

The job is made more difficult, as to both speed and acquisition of necessary facilities, by the need for naval vessels as well as merchant ships. Whereas in 1917–18 the problem was largely the construction of merchant tonnage, the 1941 need is for warships too. Battlewagons like the huge new *North Carolina* are not produced overnight. Though many cargo ships being built for the Maritime Commission can be constructed in a year or less, and emergency cargo vessels can be completed in 4 to 6 months, a battleship requires 4 years, a cruiser 3 years, and a submarine about 30 months.

These warships, moreover, are tailor-made jobs, and do not come off the assembly line. Each must occupy the ways for a period of time, from the laying of keel to the launching. Each piece of steel must be fitted with great precision.

It will take a great deal of money, much time, and the best we have in engineering and mechanical skills, to produce the twin fleet of carriers and fighters needed by the democracies.

MEN WANTED: TO BUILD SHIPS

In December 1939, 132,000 persons were employed in United States shipyards. In June 1941 this figure was more than doubled, nearly 300,000 workers being employed in the construction and repair of United States Government, British, and private vessels. Private shipyards employed 167,000 of these, and U. S. Navy yards 131,900.

Early in 1941 the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that shipyard employment would have to be expanded—to a total of 530,000—by September 1942.



employment in shipyards

on Construction and Repair
of United States Government,
British, and Private Vessels.

each figure equals
25,000 workers

Black symbols—in Private Shipyards.
Grey symbols—in U. S. Navy Yards.