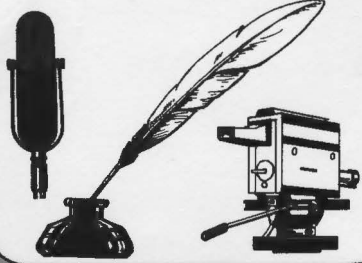


The original documents are located in Box D21, folder “Maritime Trades Department, AFL-CIO Legislative Conference, December 20, 1966” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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CONGRESSMAN
GERALD R. FORD
HOUSE REPUBLICAN LEADER

**NEWS
RELEASE**

ADDRESS BY REP. GERALD R. FORD, (R-MICH.) BEFORE THE MARITIME TRADES DEPT.
AFL-CIO LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE, TUESDAY DEC. 20. (FOR PM'S RELEASE.)

Gentlemen: I am most happy to be privileged to talk with you today. I feel that I am among friends. We fought the Administration together for what was right in 1966. We won despite overwhelming odds, and this kind of an experience builds friendship.

During the last Congress, when the forces I led were pitifully small, I felt pretty helpless in this city of power politics. I am sure that you who were almost drowned in a new Department of Transportation, ^{also} felt like a small fish in a big pond.

Your organization and the Republicans were instrumental in keeping the Maritime Administration out of the new Transportation Department.

The position of Republicans in Congress has changed drastically. We're a much bigger fish than we were--and I hope that the same sort of transformation will come about for the American merchant marine in future years.

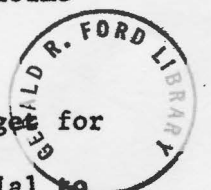
You and I know there is a desperate need for an efficient and capable Merchant fleet to serve this Nation. Because the present Administration has been deaf and blind to that need, it has taken the present crisis in Vietnam to focus adequate attention on the plight of our Merchant Marine.

At the end of World War II, the United States was the most powerful commercial maritime nation the world has ever known. Our merchant fleet numbered nearly 5,000 ships, carried more than 40 per cent of our foreign waterborne cargoes and provided employment for some 80,000 merchant seamen, plus roughly the same number of shipyard workers.

Today the merchant fleet is not only in the doldrums, it has been sinking fast. The privately-owned merchant fleet includes only some 900 vessels. Two-thirds of these are obsolete, inefficient, uncompetitive. These ships carry less than 9 per cent of our foreign cargoes. Job opportunities for both seamen and shipyard workers have slipped to half of their postwar levels.

The Russians, the Japanese, the Scandinavians, and others are outbuilding us and outrading us for the cargoes of the world. This situation is not only disgraceful but dangerous. We can no longer honestly call ourselves a maritime nation.

Yet the Johnson Administration this year drew up a total maritime budget for fiscal 1967 that represented a seven-year low. That was a tragic testimonial to the low value this Administration has placed on its merchant marine.



Are you surprised that the American merchant marine finds itself in dismal straits? Are you surprised that job opportunities in the maritime industry are shrinking under the Johnson Administration?

You may recall that several years ago Secretary of Defense McNamara decided he could reduce the role of ships as a military supply vehicle. He said air transport could be substituted as the primary means of military transportation.

Now, just four years after McNamara's disastrous decision, events have shown that two out of three American soldiers had to be transported to Vietnam by ship, and the overwhelming bulk of all supplies and cargo also had to move by water.

But you also know that in the current Vietnam crisis, the American-flag fleet has been unable to meet the defense and commercial needs of the nation. And the Merchant Marine Act of 1936 demands that we meet those needs.

We have had to reactivate ancient ships from our World War II reserve fleet. This has cost the taxpayers millions of dollars, yet these de-mothballed ships have proved inefficient and unreliable.

We have diverted many of our newer and faster ships to military service, thus making it possible for foreign competitors to grab off our commercial cargoes. Cargoes lost in this way may never be regained--even when we again enjoy peace.

Can you look to the Johnson Administration for help?

There we see the Maritime Administration caught in a struggle between the Maritime Advisory Committee and the Interagency Maritime Task Force. The Committee has called for effective Government action to restore the shipping and shipbuilding industries to proper positions of strength. The Task Force has urged cuts in Federal expenditures and an even smaller merchant fleet than we have now.

What is the position of House Republicans on maritime policy?

In the last Congress we successfully fought the Administration's attempt to place the Maritime Administration in the new Department of Transportation.

The House Republican Policy Committee endorsed the concept of an independent Maritime Administration--with room to grow as an entity free from Commerce Department dominance.

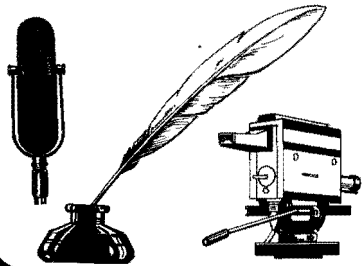
Every Republican on the House Merchant Marine Committee--Mailliard, Pelly, Mosher, Grover, Morton, Keith, Edwards, Watkins and Reinecke--approved the Bonner Bill to give the Maritime Administration new stature under independent status.

Republicans will continue to support an independent Maritime Administration in the 90th Congress. We believe that that agency must have greater strength with which to meet the needs of our Merchant Marine and our Nation.

Page 3.

Republicans reject policies which doom the Merchant Marine to continued stagnation. We must rescue it from the Administration's sea of inefficiency, delay and waste.

I pledge here and now that Republicans will continue to support policies which will revive our merchant marine, rebuild our marine might and keep a rejuvenated merchant fleet strong and growing. Thank you.



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