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OPENING ADDRESS

delivered by

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President Naval War College, Newport, R.I.

Before Staff and Classes of 1931

2 July, 1930

It is a pleasure to welcome to the Naval War College its classes of 1931. The entire staff joins with me in the hope that every member of the classes will find the time at the College to be both enjoyable and profitable.

Many officers coming to the College course do so with the feeling they are being let in for a year of hard work not unlike what they experienced in their academy days, and hence look on coming here as "going back to school". However, while anyone who completes the College course is certain to study a great deal, work hard, and learn much, nevertheless the College has little that resembles the ordinary institution of learning. We call it the Naval War College, but in reality this institution is more of a laboratory than a college. Here we study only enough to learn the sound principles on which successful warfare is based, the greater part of the time being devoted to actual operations and experiments carried out in chart maneuvers or on the game board. It is through such war games, conducted in miniature where he can see the whole picture, that the student learns how to apply to actual war situations the principles he has learned through his study.

In addition to affording students the opportunity to perfect themselves in the practical application of the principles of war, this institution is also a research laboratory of a very high type. Here we can try out, test, and weigh almost any idea that has to do with naval war operations. The rules governing our game work are based on the actualities we have found at sea, and

if the rules are correct the results of the game work are just what we may expect in sea operations. For this reason not only can students see their own ideas given a thorough test but also the College is in a better position than any other part of the Navy to reach sound decisions first as to the type and characteristics of the ships we should have and then as to how to organize, employ, and operate those ships in war.

With the War College offering the opportunities it does, it must be evident that taking the course cannot but be of immense value and intense interest to every officer who comes to the class and who desires to succeed in his profession. In fact, the course seems to me to be essential to any officer who may be attached to a high command in war, for it is impossible, except by war operations in miniature, to bring a complete picture of the naval team play in war before the individual, or to train the individual in using his wits against another's in naval operations.

The College, therefore, is not a theoretical institution but is intensely practical. However, the extent to which a student profits from taking the course depends entirely on the student himself. If he comes here only with the idea of getting credit for having taken the course he probably will not make a great deal out of it. On the other hand, if he comes with the idea of getting from the course everything he can that will make him better for the more important jobs in our services he is almost certain to go far.

There are many officers who feel they are completely successful as officers if they attain a certain rank or get certain important assignments. Not all of us weigh in our own minds our personal fitness for the ranks or jobs we aspire to. While most of us will seemingly get along passing well in almost any job during peace time even without the special training that can be had at the College, it might be that in war those of us without that training would find ourselves unprepared to carry through successfully the tasks that are ours. Certainly no officer in this class can desire to go to a job which he may be inadequately prepared to carry through successfully in war, and for that reason each of you here should be glad of this opportunity to prepare thoroughly for war duty in any assignment you desire or that you may be called to during war.

While we all believe that a proper Navy will tend to prevent war, we must not overlook the fact that such a proper Navy is more than mere material. It also must be thoroughly skilled in the conduct of war operations. Too often we think more about the material that is supplied to us by acts of Congress than we do about skill in utilizing that material, for which skill we officers alone are responsible. But no matter how good our material may be, unless we handle it with skill it will get us nowhere. On the other hand, even poor material can be partly compensated for by skillful use. And in connection with this thought your attention is especially called to the fact that with naval armaments

limited and equalized by treaty, skill -- and skill alone -- will be the decisive factor of our naval campaigns in the future.

You who are coming to the class at this time, when naval teams are apparently about to become standardized as regards material strength, are very fortunate. At no other place can we learn as we can here the team play of our standardized Navy to assure its success in war. Hence if at the College we can carry through what we hope to do, those of us here should, at the end of the year, have a better idea than anyone else as how best to use our standardized naval team should war come. Thus we should have a considerable advantage over many of our brothers in service.

That skill in war is the great essential for our Navy must be evident to everyone, but to make it skillful in war much must be done during peace. Too many officers are prone during peace to take things as they find them. They do not devote the thought and energy they should to developing either their service or themselves in peace for that perfection in team play so essential in war. They accept whatever is found in our War, Tactical, and Fleet instructions as final whether or not what is there is good or bad or whether or not new material or new conditions call for changes. That is not a correct attitude to take, since the responsibility for the efficiency of our fighting services rests not on a certain few officers but on each and every one of us. It is the duty of every officer to bear his share of that responsibility and not leave it for someone else. First each must know thor-

oughly the Navy as it is provided for us and understand how that Navy should play its game to succeed. And then each must do what he can to point out any defects it may have in organization or operation, suggest ways to correct those defects, and try in every way to make the Navy supplied us the most perfect and highly skilled naval team in the world.

It isn't so much what an officer gets in the War College course that counts as what he does afterward with what he gets. If he keeps what he gets here under his hat and does nothing with it to improve and perfect the work of our armed forces, his taking the course will lose most of its value. He will probably perform better the work assigned him, but that is not enough. Unless he also endeavors to use his knowledge for the improvement of his service as a whole, he will be failing in his full duty,- and certainly not one of us here will willingly do that.

We therefore hope that the classes, in taking this course, will keep in mind two of the great benefits that can come from it,- first the benefit that will accrue to each one personally from the knowledge and training for war that he will get, and second the benefits that he can give to his service as a whole by using his knowledge and training to make that service better. The good you get from the course will be measured by these two things and especially by the latter, and this applies to all students, whether from the line of the Navy, the Staff Corps, the Army, or the Marine Corps.

As must be expected, the course as carried out has generally to do with fighting operations on the sea, and on its face would seem to be of more moment to student officers belonging to the Navy line than it is to other members of the class. However, a little thought will show there is great benefit for all in the course, for not until each student knows how the Navy will operate and fight in war can that student be in a position to determine how his particular department or branch of the service can best cooperate and coordinate in the work for which the Navy exists. The background for everything connected with the Navy is the fighting the Navy may be called on to do, and not until there is an understanding of that fighting can members of the Navy staff corps properly coordinate the work of their corps to meet the fundamental needs of the Navy, or can members of other services cause those services to cooperate efficiently with the Navy.

That the course will be a bit difficult for students not of the Navy line is probable, and to the end of simplifying matters for such students we place each of them in a room with an experienced Navy line officer, who can advise and help them with the technicalities with which they are not familiar. In addition to the help they get from their room-mates we want such students and in fact all students to feel free at all times to ask help and advice from the staff. We want each one of you to get every possible advantage from the course, and will consider it a privilege to be of assistance to you and to make the taking of the course a

pleasure.

Although the course as laid out will require much work from every student, the College uses no coercion on students to drive them to it. What the student does and what he gets out of the course is up to his own conscience and himself. There is no grading of students and no comparison of individual ability other than must go in on the regular reports of fitness. That you will find the work intensely interesting we have no doubt, but always bear in mind that what you get out of it and what you do with what you get we must leave to you.