Keeping America First in the Air

EXTENSION OF REMARKS OF HON. CLIFTON A. WOODRUM OF VIRGINIA IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES Saturday, March 24, 1945

ADDRESS BY MR. JOHN F. VICTORY SECRETARY OF THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR AERONAUTICS

Mr. WOODRUM of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, on Friday, March 23, at noon, before a notable audience, composed of members of the National Press Club, officers and members of the armed services, and Government officials, there was delivered an address which I think will be of great interest to Members of Congress and all others who are interested in aviation and its future. Mr. John F. Victory, secretary of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, was the speaker and his subject Keeping America First in the Air.

It was a great pleasure and privilege to hear this splendid address and I take much satisfaction in knowing that as a member of the Appropriations Committee of the House, I have sponsored for many years now the Appropriations for the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, which made possible his achievements. The House Select Committee on Post-War Military Policy, of which I am chairman, has just concluded interesting hearings on scientific research and development in the post-war period. This committee will be interested in Mr. Victory's address. The address follows:

Mr. President, members of the National Press Club, distinguished guests, and friends, the honor of being invited to address this distinguished organization is especially appreciated because to me it evidences your interest in keeping America first in the air. Your curiosity about the work of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (N. A. C. A.), which I have the honor to represent, is encouraging.

The overwhelming influence of German air power during the first year of the war in Europe awakened the American people to the danger of having to pay taxes to the Axis. With the invasion of France and the Low Countries the President sounded the burglar alarm with his call for 100,000 airplanes, and American industry responded with the miracle of aircraft production. No single measure has had more far-reaching effect in changing the whole course of the war.

Subsequently, in the battle of Britain there was a demonstration of the relative value of superior numbers on the German side, versus superior performance by Britain's aircraft. That test made it clear that the airplanes that America was destined to produce in great quantity must have superior performance. The dollar cost of the aircraft program was alone expected to require several billions of the expansion of the work of the N. A. C. A. in order to assure a sound return upon the investment. But in time of war money loses its significance alongside the imperative military requirements for superior airplanes.

Although the Congress, too, can seemingly work miracles in its field, it cannot legislate superior performance into an American airplane. But it can set science to work. It did so, and that is where the N. A. C. A. comes into the picture.

There is no natural law known that today fixes a limit upon either the speed or the size of aircraft. All types of American airplanes in production today, and many foreign types, make use of fundamental design data from the laboratories of the N. A. C. A. Let me emphasize, however, that in the development of America's air power the N. A. C. A. has been only one member of the firm, a silent partner, so to speak, of the military services and of the aircraft industry. The overall result is the result of the organized effort of millions of Americans involving many organizations, governmental and private, including large and small and manufacturing establishments directly concerning with aeronautics, but many supporting agencies and industries. Developments in aeronautics have been extremely rare, for which any single organization or individual, in or out of the Government, deserves all the credit.

The airplane and the tank were introduced in World War I, but it remained for the present war to develop their dominant role. In like manner, we may expect that new weapons recently introduced in this war may be but the forerunners of a whole new line of weapons that may dominate the future.

Aviation is entering an era of revolutionary change resulting largely from the development of new methods of propulsion. Entirely new fields of research must be explored. The new propulsive systems open up entirely new high speed possibilities which need to be studied and evaluated.

At the close of World War No. 1, the top speed of a typically good pursuit airplane was about 180 miles per hour; its ceiling, 2,100 feet; and, its maximum endurance 1 hour and 40 minutes. Scientific research gradually penetrated the veil of the unknown as it existed at the time and made possible in a single generation the remarkable improvements in aircraft performance which are now well-known to you. We are just piercing the veil in the field of gas turbine and jet propulsion development and can at this time confidently forecast that this field will provide the great unknown fields of guided missiles and supersonic aircraft.

Other nations may be succeeding better than we know. Present American developments as yet undisclosed would, alone, change the character of modern warfare. It is staggering to contemplate the full potentialities of present reasonable probabilities as they may be developed in the future. Continuous scientific research is the best insurance that America shall not again fall behind. Neglect of research, even for one generation, may jeopardize freedom in the next.

It appears certain that never again will a nation considering aggression give us a year or more to prepare our offensive. We may expect that no nation considering aggression will attack America in the future, or provoke it into war, without having the capacity to hurt us at home, and to do so promptly and in great strength. What with self-propelled rocket bombs, and supersonic aircraft already looming on the horizon, it does not require much imagination to see, in the shape of things to come, no security against sudden attack by new scientific weapons, unless our defense is such as to discourage attack.

The favorable box score in aerial combat in this war, which has averaged upward of 4 to 1 in our favor, is, no doubt, due in large part to the careful selection, and to the fine fighting qualities and superb training and leadership of our airmen, but it also reflects superior performance of American aircraft.

The National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics was established by Congress 39 years ago "to supervise and direct the scientific study of the problems of flight with a view to their practical solution." It is a committee of 15 appointed by the President and serving as such without compensation. The membership includes General Arnold and General Eisenhower, the Air Force Commanding General; Mr. William L. Shirer, president of the Smithsonian, and 6 technically qualified experts from private life.

Out of N. A. C. A. research has developed the engineering basis for a rapidly advancing technology. Consequently, America has, when the war started, a healthy nucleus of a strong, competitive aircraft industry. Had it not been so, we might now be studying Germany's learning how to do business with Hitler.

The country can be grateful to the Congress that had the vision 30 years ago to establish the N. A. C. A. as a separate agency to advance aeronautical science, although that Congress was quite cautious about how it appropriated the taxpayers' money. It started the N. A. C. A. with an appropriation of $5,000 a year for 5 years, or so much
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A. C. has identified the problem of keeping America first in the world. This would mean a speed at our latitude of about 1,200 miles an hour.

In time of war the N. A. C. operates as a secret agency of America's government. As a result, the public's interest in the progress of the N. A. C. is often neglected. The research that the N. A. C. is engaged in for the benefit of the American people should be encouraged and supported. The N. A. C. has not only been successful in its research program, but has also made a significant contribution to the world's knowledge of aerodynamics and flight.

In conclusion, the N. A. C. is a vital and essential agency of the government. Its research is of utmost importance to the future of America and to the world. The N. A. C. should be supported and encouraged in its efforts to make the world a better place through its research and development in the field of aerodynamics and flight.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

[Your Organization]