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"News and Views by John B. Hughes"

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(EXCERPT)

AUGUST 24, 1943

..... As I mentioned I am speaking from Seattle, Washington this evening. Seattle, as you know, is one of the major production centers of the nation in some of our most vital fighting equipment, and is especially noted as the home of the Boeing Flying Fortress, the battleship of the air, which is turning in such spectacular performance records on all fighting fronts.

I came to Seattle to learn more about the job being done here now and to find out if possible what I could about the manpower problems which seem to be more acute here than in most production centers. This Pacific northwest has not been an industrial center -- its population has been small, as compared with the concentrations of the average manufacturing area, and the citizens of the region have not been conditioned to the industrial techniques of mass production. The city of Seattle has nearly doubled in population during the past two years - many of the newcomers have had industrial experience, but the times have changed - the nation as a whole has reached the approximate peak of industrial employment, and it seems to most observers that this Puget Sound region is now touching the bottom of the barrel of employment. The problem as it is here now, may be duplicated in many other communities of the nation before long. Therefore, if the solution can be found here, it may be of some help to the rest of the nation. If the solution cannot be found in the processes of voluntary employment -- it may then be indicated that the only recourse is conscription of manpower for war production.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that there can be no relaxing in the production schedules of our war industries. Our tempo of strategy has been speeded up on the fighting fronts and thus the production of the machines of war must keep pace. The need for accelerated production is greater now than at any time in the war. In no other way can we take advantage of the tides which have turned in our favour -- the tides which have brought us in sight of the drive to Victory, if not in sight of Victory itself.

Today I have studied only a few of the facts involved in this particular field of the manpower problem. I have seen men and women at work, doing the myriad jobs necessary to the construction of a Flying Fortress. I have seen women who probably couldn't repair a faulty iron cord at home, at their work benches in the Boeing plant they assemble the most intricate electrical installations ever installed in any moving structure -- they connect, test and install the six miles of wiring which becomes the nerve system of the flying battleships.

More women must come from their homes if schedules are going to be met. Surveys of the situation tend to indicate that the employment of women is still the greatest hope of increased personnel in an area where conditions are as they are here. There are certain other factors such as the War Manpower's request to Seattle shipyards to reduce their personnel by 16,000 workers than they now employ. The shipbuilders are likely to disagree with this decision, although I have not yet had time to talk with them about it. The aircraft people don't seem to be very hopeful about getting workers now in the shipyards, and on the subject of transferring workers -- one of the little ironies of life cropped up last week here.

With Boeing and some other industries of this area crying their eyes out for more workers -- turning over every board and looking behind every bush for potential skilled hands -- needing thousands upon thousands ... suddenly Seattle papers appeared with full page advertisements urging workers to come to New Orleans, La., to work for the Higgins aircraft and shipbuilding companies.