

APPEAL ON BEHALF OF KING GEORGE'S FUND FOR SAILORS BY
LORD LEATHERS, MINISTER OF WAR TRANSPORT, TO BE BROADCAST
AT 8.40 P.M. TONIGHT.

The King has asked me to give you the following message:-

"On this day of thankful remembrance for the services of the Officers and Men of the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy, I wish to express once again the heartfelt gratitude of the peoples of the Empire to the brave men of the two Navies on whom so much depends and in whom we place our unbounded trust. Never has their spirit been more resolutely displayed than in the passage of the vital convoys; and I wish them Godspeed in their task, and a safe return from the dangers which beset them on their journeys."

The King's words express what we are all thinking today of the men of the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy who, by the stresses of war, have been brought into closer comradeship than ever before.

On our island we are enclosed by the seas; but our people have never regarded the sea as a barrier; for centuries we have looked on it as a highway leading to the ends of the earth. The sea serves to link together, not to separate, the British nations and their allies. But the seas are dangerous today and bring out to the full the cool courage hallowed by tradition and admired by the whole world.

In war, the twin Services often fight as shipmates. Many Merchant Seamen are serving in warships and minesweepers, and naval gunners help to man the Merchant Navy guns. Our war effort and, indeed, the future of humanity are utterly dependent on the skill and strength of both Services in shepherding our supply ships to their destinations. Together they bring the convoys through.

There is a simplicity of spirit about the stories that reach me of bravery and sacrifice at sea - of men who jest in the face of disaster; fling away their chances of safety to help a shipmate; give the clothes off their own shivering bodies to keep life in that of a less fortunate man.

Last October a certain British tanker was attacked by two submarines. Torpedoes ripped the sides of the ship, but two gunners - under the orders of the Second Officer - stayed at their posts. One was from the Royal Navy and the other from the Merchant Service. Every time a U-Boat surfaced their gun drove it below again. Side by side for 5 hours they fought these two submarines. Only when the tanker was broken in two did they take to one of the ship's boats to continue their fight against the sea and rough weather.

These are the men we specially remember today, men "whom fate can never surprise nor death dismay". It is idle for me to praise them, you know their worth, but tonight I want to ask of you a practical act of remembrance.

The Government, quite rightly, makes provision for sailors of both Navies who are injured or lose their possessions in the service of their country, and, if they make the supreme sacrifice, the State meets the needs of their families. But there is so much more that an experienced Society can provide. Children can be helped to a career which might otherwise be beyond their reach; disabled men can be helped to another job; old seamen can be given extra comfort.

If you feel a Day of Remembrance can best end in an act of practical service, please send your contribution to King George's Fund for Sailors. This Fund will see that all you send goes where it is most needed, as a tribute from you to men who are daily risking, and, in many cases, giving, their all that we may live. Please send your contributions, however large or small, to me - Lord Leathers, King George's Fund for Sailors, Trinity House, London, E.C.3.