

STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL THOMAS A. KING, SUPERINTENDENT, UNITED STATES MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, AT THE HEARING IN NEW YORK CITY BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON MERCHANT MARINE OF THE HOUSE MERCHANT MARINE AND FISHERIES COMMITTEE, WITH RESPECT TO H.R. 1556, A BILL "TO AUTHORIZE THE CONVEYANCE OF THE LIBERTY SHIP JOHN W. BROWN TO THE JOHN W. BROWN PRESERVATION PROJECT.

March 11, 1983

Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Thomas A. King, and I am the Superintendent of the United States Merchant Marine Academy. It is a pleasure for me to appear before you this morning to present the support of the Administration for Chairman Biaggi's bill, H.R. 1556, "To authorize the conveyance of the Liberty Ship John W. Brown to the John W. Brown Preservation Project."

The JOHN W. BROWN was constructed by the United States as a so-called Liberty Ship during World War II. Over 2,500 of such vessels were constructed during the period 1941 to 1945. Liberty Ships formed the backbone of United States logistical support for the military, and constituted a vital part of what General Eisenhower called the fourth arm of defense.

After World War II, these Liberty Ships performed a variety of functions. Many were maintained in the National Defense Reserve Fleet, and again saw combat during the Korean and Viet Nam conflicts. Others became Naval auxiliaries. Many functioned for years as commercial merchant vessels transporting break-bulk cargoes around the world. Some finished out their days as part of our artificial reef program.

To my knowledge, Mr. Chairman, only one Liberty Ship saw service as a maritime high school. As you know, in 1946, the JOHN W. BROWN was transferred to the City of New York for educational purposes. Since that time, the JOHN W. BROWN has been used by the New York City Board of Education to teach young people the necessary skills for service at sea. The New York City Board of Education has now decided to cease utilizing the JOHN W. BROWN as a maritime high school, and has returned the vessel to the custody of the Maritime Administration. Absent the proposed legislation, the vessel will be used for the artificial reef program under Public Law 92-402, or sold for scrap.

H.R. 1556 would authorize the Secretary of Transportation to convey, without reimbursement but subject to the conditions set forth in the bill, the vessel JOHN W. BROWN to the John W. Brown Preservation Project, a nonprofit corporation organized under the laws of the State of New York, for use as a merchant marine memorial museum. Without cost to the Federal Government, the proposed legislation would authorize the creation of a permanent living memorial to the valiant men and women who serve in the United States-flag merchant marine. In this regard, the proposed use of the JOHN W. BROWN is not unlike the successful campaign to preserve the Liberty Ship JEREMIAH O' BRIEN as a floating national memorial, now berthed at Pier 3 in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park.

The Department of Transportation supports the enactment of H.R. 1556.

Mr. Chairman. That concludes my prepared statement. I will be pleased to answer any questions you or the Members of the Subcommittee may have.

Thank you.