International

Here's the Admiral. When he says, "Do it!" things begin to hum

months — about a third of the time normally taken, not much more than half of the time allowed in the "fantastic" emergency schedule. Today the two-ocean Navy which, when projected, was considered a possibility by 1947, is expected to be substantially in existence by 1944.

"We're trying to do twenty-five years' work in three years," Rear Admiral Samuel M. Robinson told me the other day. "But it is going satisfactorily. If we can avoid prolonged labor troubles, I don't see why we can't finish well ahead of schedule."

Boss of the Building Program

HE SPOKE with the crisp incisiveness of an executive, and yet there was a calm imperturbability in his voice and manner, a matter-of-fact attitude which gave no hint of the triumph of this achievement in these days when so many other defense efforts are still struggling to get out of low gear. Yet to a considerable extent, it is his personal triumph. Admiral Robinson is Chief of the Bureau of Ships, boss of the Navy's whole, vast, hectic shipbuilding program, the man personally responsible for spending a billion dollars a year of our money.

Sitting in his outer office, I had been getting an idea of what a nerve-fraying job that must be. It was a day when one of the country's major shipyards had just been tied up by a strike, and the Admiral was holding an emergency conference with the Acting Secretary of the Navy. Meanwhile the telephone rang constantly — most of the calls, I judged, coming from people with urgent requests for appointments. Already the office was crowded with men waiting for the Admiral — shipbuilders, inventors, naval officers, congressmen. A message from a congressional committee set an hour, that afternoon, for the Admiral to appear before it.

His conference over, the Admiral began seeing callers. He was past due for a luncheon appointment when my turn came. But the Admiral, tall, lean and bespectacled, settled into his chair as unflustered and intent as if I had been the first person he had seen all day. He wasted no words though, indulged in no small talk; he is the sort who cuts through immediately to the meat of whatever situation is facing him. Succinctly he summed up for me the essentials of naval shipbuilding: "Facilities, men, management." All three, he pointed out, had been lacking. "So we have had to build the facilities, train the men, spread the management."

"You make it sound as simple as two plus two," I said.

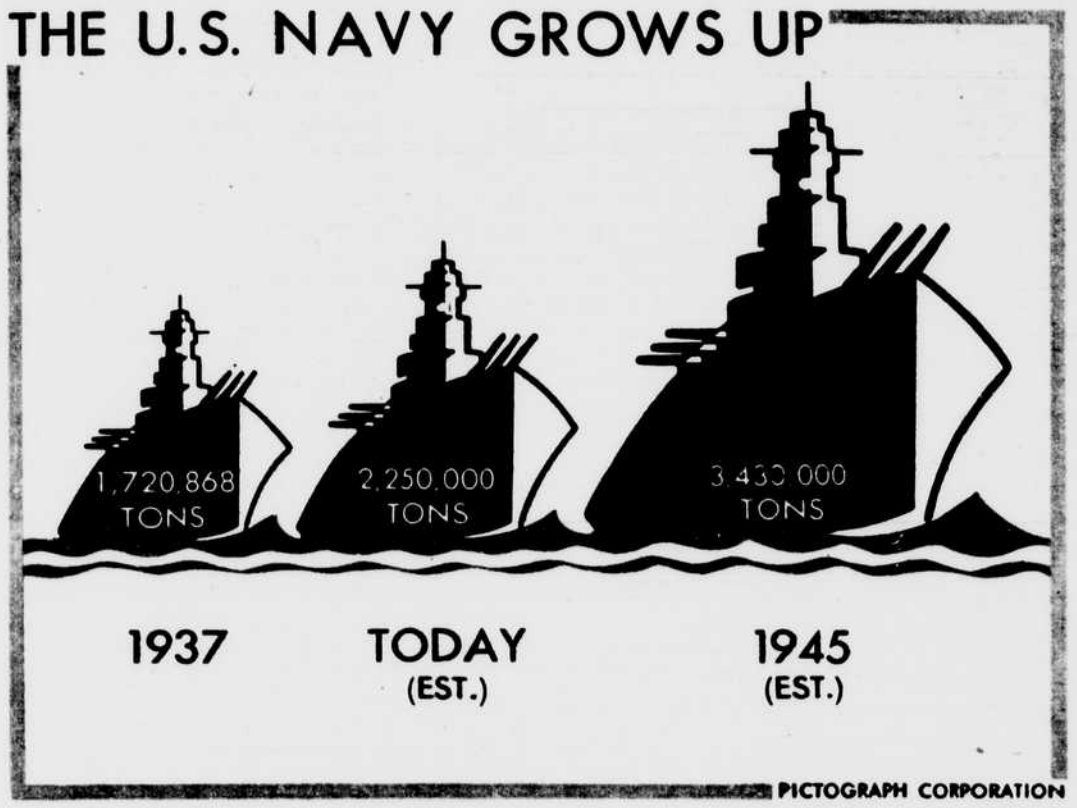
"It isn't," said the Admiral, laconically. "But we're getting it done."

It is because he is the sort of man who does get things done that Admiral Robinson has this job, second in importance only to that of the Chief of Naval Operations. It was Robinson who, as a young naval engineer, was the chief proponent of electric-drive propulsion for naval vessels. He supervised the installation of electric-drive equipment on the first United States naval vessel to adopt it, the U.S.S. Jupiter (later the aircraft carrier Langley). During the First World War, Robinson went overseas with the first American convoy to serve as a technical observer with the British Fleet, then came back to play an important part in the designing of the ships our Navy was building.

Later, as Chief of the Bureau of Engineering in a time when we were not doing much shipbuilding, he promoted and directed research into Diesel engines and other machinery, with the result that the battleships being built today have twice the power of those scrapped after the First World War, though their machinery takes up even less space than did that of the earlier vessels.

The Admiral, a Texan, is the sort of engineer to whom any new development or technical possibility is meat and drink. "I've seen him get all engrossed in a new type of propeller for a small motorboat," one of his associates told me. "But he wouldn't even

(Continued on page 9)



U. S. Navy

IN ACTION: The 35,000-ton battle monster North Carolina, launched ahead of schedule — now "somewhere in the Atlantic"