

Now, the VOA Special English program Words and Their Stories.

Every machine is held together by its nuts and bolts. Without them, the machine would fall apart. That is also true of an organization. Its nuts and bolts are its basic, necessary elements. They are the parts that make the organization work.

In government, industry, diplomacy -- in most anything -- those who understand the nuts and bolts are the most important. Success depends more on them than on almost anyone else.

In government, the president or prime minister may plan and shape programs and policies. But, it takes much more work to get them approved and to make them successful.

There is a mass of detailed work to be done -- the nuts and bolts. This is often put into the hands of specialists. The top leaders are always well-known, but not those who work with the nuts and bolts.

This is equally true in the day-to-day operation of Congress. The majority leader of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of

Representatives -- together with the chairmen of committees -- keep the business of Congress moving.

Behind every Senator and Congressman, however, are assistants. These people do all the detailed work to prepare congressmen to vote wisely on each issue.

In diplomacy, the chief ministers are unquestionably important in negotiations. But there are lesser officials who do the basic work and preparations on the different issues to be negotiated.

A recent book tells of a British prime minister who decided to send an ambassador to Washington to learn if details could be worked out for joint action on an issue. The talks in Washington, the minister said, would be "of nut and bolts." He meant, of course, the talks would concern all the necessary elements to make joint action successful.

In a military operation, strategy decisions are important. But much more time is spent on the nuts and bolts -- generally called logistics -- of how to transport and supply an army. It has been said that Napoleon was successful because he knew the field

position of every one of his guns. He gave careful attention to the nuts and bolts of his operations.

The extreme importance of nuts and bolts was expressed by the Elizabethan poet, George Herbert. He wrote:

For want of a nail, the shoe is lost.
For want of a shoe, the horse is lost.
For want of a horse, the rider is lost.

Benjamin Franklin carried these lines even further. He wrote:

For want of a rider, the battle was lost.
For want of a battle, the kingdom was lost.
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.

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