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MOBILIZING INDUSTRIAL MANPOWER IN WORLD WAR II

5 February 1947

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GENERAL MCKINLEY:

Gentlemen, our speaker this morning is Mr. John J. Corson of The Washington Post. Mr. Corson is a graduate of the University of Virginia. He is a practical economist, the author of "Manpower for Victory." During the war Mr. Corson was the Director of the U.S. Employment Service. His subject this morning is "Mobilizing Industrial Manpower in World War II." It is a great pleasure to introduce Mr. Corson.

MR. CORSON:

Gentlemen, I welcome this opportunity to talk to you this morning about some of the experiences that we had in the last world war. As I look back over those years, it becomes increasingly difficult to recall why we did some of the things that we did. It seems quite unclear, now that two, three, or four years have passed, why some other things were not done earlier. And hence, before many of these happenings are lost in the limbo of dimly remembered events, I would like to discuss the more significant incidents in mobilizing manpower for war with you.

At least six points seem to deserve review. The first of these is that we started this last war with a "hangover" of ideas bred by the depression, when manpower was in abundance. Don't overlook that point. We started this last war with a hangover of ideas bred in a period when we had all the manpower we could use.

Second, during this war period of not more than five years, from the fall of 1940 to the fall of 1944, ten million men and women were added to this country's normal labor force. Over and above all of the employed and unemployed available at the beginning of that period ten million were added. Simultaneously we changed about twenty million from the types of jobs to which they had been accustomed to new and different jobs.

Third, a great many men and women changed occupations. Just as we converted plants, we converted men and women, particularly those in white-collar jobs, to manual jobs.

Fourth, while ten million were added and another twenty million converted, we increased the productivity per worker. When we recognize that many people with little experience--women who had not worked before, students who had never worked, aged men and women who had been out of the labor market and were not the most effective workers were entering jobs. It is surprising that productivity increased, yet it did. The average

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productivity per worker increased.

Fifth, while as a people we produced a vast volume of war materials which we had not had to produce in the past, we simultaneously were able to produce a sufficient volume of civilian goods to maintain approximately the same plane of living that we had enjoyed before the war. That must not be overlooked. We did curtail our living standards in some respects -- gasoline, sugar. But the general plane of living for civilians in this country was kept at approximately the same level as before the war.

Finally, in the sixth place--and this, I think, is particularly important--all this was done, mark you, while exercising a minimum of controls over the freedom of the individual employer or the freedom of the individual worker. Manpower was mobilized and production increased while exercising a minimum of controls over either the employer or over the worker.

Let us look at the figures. They indicate precisely the size of this manpower mobilization job. As we look back now, we are all prone to think that what we did was rather casual and normal; but if we really look into the account, we see that it was a gigantic task that was accomplished.

In April, 1940, approximately 53.8 million men and women made up the labor force of this country. About 7.8 million were unemployed, about 45 million people were employed in industry and about 8 million in agriculture.

Contrast that labor force of 53.8 million in April, 1940, with the labor force in September, 1944. Then the peak of the mobilization was reached. The labor force had grown from 54 million to about 65 million. The Armed Forces had increased from about half a million in 1940 to 11.8 million. Yet in September, 1944, this nation's industries were producing a vastly increased volume of goods with approximately the same number of men and women. The increased number of men and women that made up the total of 65 million had gone into the Armed Forces, not into industrial plants and establishments. Some went into industrial plants. They were more often the elderly or younger, the less well-equipped. Of the manpower usually employed in industrial establishments, many of the most able-bodied and of the most skilled had been taken for the Armed Forces. Unemployment had dried up within that period.

In rough terms these figures indicate the size of this mobilization. If you keep in mind that while we were increasing the total goods produced in this country very greatly, we increased our Armed Forces by eleven million bodies, you will realize the size of the job.

To broaden our perspective let us consider another viewpoint. On

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the one hand, we added to the Armed Forces over 11 million. Secondly, to the munitions industry--and by that term I mean the aircraft, ship-building, ordnance, and related industries--we added about 5 million workers. Thirdly, the Federal Government, particularly the War Department, the Navy Department, the War Production Board, OPA, and the like, added about 1½ million employees. Fourth, the transportation and public utility industries added about half a million. Add those up, approximately 18 million people were added either to the Armed Forces or to industries not required in peacetimes. And still the balance of the labor force produced enough goods to keep the civilian standard of living at prewar levels.

Consider the mobilization required for some of the key war industries. In 1939 there were 160,000 employees in the shipbuilding industry. By 1944 approximately two million people were employed in the shipbuilding industry.

The merchant marine, as late as 1942 employed about 50,000 men. By 1944 that number had quadrupled. We not only had to man the ships produced in this country, but we had ships from Norway and some other countries added to our own merchant marine.

The aircraft industry is another good illustration. In 1939 aircraft plants employed about 75,000 people, by 1944 about two million. In 1939 in the ordnance industry we had about 17,000 people. In 1944 this industry employed 1,800,000 people.

The war industries offered new tasks for which many were not skilled by civilian, peacetime jobs. They had been employed for example, in the lumber, coal mining, steel, and the railroad industries. Now they had to be converted to fill the jobs in these war industries.

Add these facts up and you see that the mobilization of manpower was not a single problem; it was a series of problems. When I first went to the U.S. Employment Service in 1941, one of the key problems of the U.S. Employment Service was "What to do about 'priorities' unemployment?" There were shortages of manpower in some centers of war production like Norfolk, Virginia; but there was equally critical unemployment in centers like New York City. In some of the silk stocking towns like Patterson, New Jersey, which were denied necessary raw materials, and as a consequence they could not continue production. Workers had been laid off and there was substantial unemployment. Drastic unemployment existed at the same time that we had drastic shortages of manpower in critical war centers. In those days, New York City suffered from much unemployment. Mayor LaGuardia set up a committee of leading citizens, which was aided and encouraged by the President of the United States himself, to see what could be done to find employment for New York's unemployed.

So manpower mobilization offered a whole series of problems as

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time went along. It was a series of problems not only with respect to places, but also with respect to industries. There were a number of industries, in those early days, in which there was surplus of manpower. There were other industries, at the same time, that had drastic shortages of manpower.

Finally, as the manpower requirements for the Army were stopped up, a different problem emerged. The aircraft industry, for instance, had succeeded in 1942, in getting enough workers to man its plants. This had been done by literally draining young men from the farms throughout the Middle and far West. Then the Selective Service System came along and drafted those men from the aircraft plants; the aircraft plants had to man all over again.

As a people, we Americans did not really wake up to the fact, in those early years, that this war would require every man and woman to play a part, and to play that part where he could be used best. We didn't realize that until we were well into the war, I would say, well into 1943. Our manpower policies were not formulated with that in mind until that late.

Sources of Manpower- Where did the manpower come from? By September, 1944, there were millions of workers in plants which in 1940 didn't even exist. There were other millions that were employed in plants which had been converted from peacetime use to war production. Where did the workers to fill these plants come from?

There were five sources. The bulk of these workers simply changed jobs. For example, a plant in Hagerstown, Maryland, which was manufacturing tires was converted to making machine guns. That was typical. Many plants were converted from making a peacetime product to making a war product. That is the way a large part of the manpower we needed was gotten. Hundreds of thousands of salesmen, domestic servants, teachers and all the rest were moved from one type of job to another type of job.

The second principal source of manpower consisted in men and women not regularly employed in peacetime. In the peacetime that we are talking about there were a lot of people that were not regularly employed, even in periods of relatively high employment. First, there were the aged. Excuse me for defining the aged as those over 45; unfortunately the only statistics available at the moment deal with those over 45 as aged. The number of people 45 and over that had not been at work during the period prior to the war approximated ten million.

During the period just prior to the war -- if you will permit this personal reference, I was the Director of the Federal Bureau of Old Age Insurance. Then our philosophy was that we should retire aged

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people in order to make more jobs for the younger ones. The war well demonstrated that these people were capable of producing and producing effectively. But we had forced them out in many industries before the war came along. The war forced them back in.

A more important source of manpower even than the aged was women. In 1940 about 13 million women were employed. At the peak of the war mobilization close to 20 million women were employed.

It took many object lessons, considerable experience and a great deal of effort, to get these women into jobs. Many employers were reluctant to hire women for jobs on which they had never had experience with women. Women were reluctant to take jobs; they had to be induced to take a job.

Early in the war a typical campaign was staged in Baltimore to get women to take jobs in the shipyards. They had a parade. A number of government officials were imported to speak. An office was set up down town, called the "Women's War Work Center." It was covered with flags. All that seemed necessary in those days in order to get women who were not accustomed to work and women who economically didn't have to work, to take jobs.

Many women had patriotically sought jobs; but when they did look for them, they were thinking of a job in a nice, well-lighted office in a conveniently located office building. They weren't thinking of working in the cold with a rivet gun. They weren't thinking of an aircraft plant, and they weren't thinking of many other jobs in which women were really needed. As a consequence, much had to be done to induce women to take jobs.

Subsequently, there was the problem of keeping them on those jobs, particularly of keeping housewives at work. Women with husbands, and children to care for had many other demands on their time and the turnover among these women was quite high.

Still another segment of this second source of workers, not usually employed in peacetime, consisted of students. Some of you will recall the much-maligned NYA, the National Youth Administration. During the war it did a different job than the NYA had been created for. The job it did was to recruit young men and women, eighteen to twenty-five years old, a big army of them, particularly from the rural areas, bring them into living centers--in Seattle, Norfolk, Bath, Maine and a score of other places--house them, maintain them, pay them for working in shops while they trained them for essential war jobs. Thus the NYA provided a ready source of labor right at the back door of many key war plants. The NYA played an invaluable role during the early days of the war.

How many of you remember Jeanette Rankin? You really should.

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Jeanette Rankin is a unique historical figure. She is the only member of Congress who ever voted against the declaration of both World War I and World War II. I remember her well. She called on me one morning and she gave me the very "devil". She was incensed that the U.S. Employment Service was seeking out young men and young women, taking them from the farms in Montana, and sending them down into the shipyards and aircraft plants on the West Coast. She was irked that we should dare to do this. She didn't like wars, didn't like this aspect of war. I tried to explain to her that these young people went of their own choice where they were going, and why. But those explanations didn't satisfy her and she complained vehemently.

A fourth segment of this source of manpower not regularly employed during peacetime, offered considerable controversies. That was the foreign worker. By 1942 there was a desperate need for workers on farms and for railroad track labor for the maintenance of the right of way. The farm employers and the railroads urged me to import workers from Mexico and later from the Bahamas. But the law required that no foreign worker could be imported into this country until first it had been determined that there were not sufficient workers in this country to meet our needs.

I was in the unhappy position, as Director of the United States Employment Service of having to certify that there were or were not sufficient workers in this country. I remember again another telephone call from a then Member of Congress from New Mexico, now the Secretary of Agriculture, who gave me the very devil, too, because he wanted Mexican workers imported for work on the cotton farms of New Mexico. The cotton farms of New Mexico were producing a type of cotton that was used for parachutes. He made much of that fact. He didn't say much about the fact that many workers on those farms were then being paid about fifteen cents an hour. When I refused to certify that foreign workers were needed, I was really told by him what he thought of me, of the U.S. Employment Service and of all its staff!

Eventually I did certify, but not until after the wage rates had been raised to something equivalent to the wage rates on farms in adjoining states. We succeeded in a period of months in keeping the workers who normally worked on these farms from going away to Los Angeles, where they could earn much higher wages.

This source of workers, the foreign workers, was, as I say, a particularly controversial one. There was later a time when workers were needed in the copper mines. The Secretary of War, who was then the Under Secretary, took a particularly active part in that. He was particularly anxious to have Mexican miners imported for work in the copper mines. The AFL led the opposition. They didn't want workers brought in. I think both were right and wrong. It was a matter of timing. There did come a time when the only way to get an adequate supply of miners was to bring them in from Mexico for these mines.

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There were never a great many brought in, but the additional number was badly needed.

So much for that second source of workers.

The third source is the unemployed. There were at the beginning of the war, as I have said earlier, over 8 million unemployed. In 1939 we started to dry that source of manpower up. It dried up quickly. There were blocks, however, that were not absorbed very quickly. Employers were not ready to employ all the unemployed white males they could find. They were loath to take women. It took time to absorb them. They were even more loath to hire Negroes. It took a lot of time to overcome that. There were many places throughout the war where we never did use Negroes, despite the fact that they were equally qualified to do the jobs that we needed them on.

Then there was the foreign born. There were numerous grievous cases in which an Italian or German immigrant who had lived in this country for most of his lifetime, whose son was serving in the American Army, perhaps had even been killed at the front, still could not find a job, because they were foreign born.

There remained two other sources. First those who changed the type of jobs that they were engaged in. Second, those who were not regularly employed in peacetime; third, the unemployed; fourth, those workers who left farms and came in to work in industrial establishments. In 1942 and 1943 there was an increasing demand on the farms for expanded agricultural production. There wasn't enough manpower left there. Agriculture was politically strong then, as it always has been. Consequently legislative steps were taken to hold manpower on the farm; but before these steps were taken, probably a million workers had left the farms and gone into industrial establishments.

Finally, a fifth source was made up of men and women who gave up their own businesses, as insurance agents, real estate operators, and store and shop operators and took jobs in war plants or industrial establishments. That was only a small source.

Where did the manpower come from? Together these five sources made up the additional manpower that was used.

But after all these additional bodies had been added, the number of workers available was still not sufficient to man our total war production machine. Hence, it became necessary to stretch out the manpower that was available. Again remember that we started out with a hang-over of ideas bred in a depression; then it was not necessary to stretch out manpower. There was no incentive then to stretch out manpower.

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The first way in which manpower was "stretched out", was by increasing the hours worked. The average weekly hours of work in 1938 for all industries was 38. By the end of 1944 the average work week-- and I emphasize that word "average"--had been raised to about 45.6 hours. Many plants, as you well know, were working far longer hours. But the average for all industries had gotten up to about 45.6. In some industries hours were substantially longer. Lengthening hours increased the manpower available. However, it might have been better to have done that a year or two earlier. It might have slowed up the tough jobs of inducing all these groups that were hard to get into the labor force. But I think it would have been still better to have increased the hours of work at an even earlier stage.

Then we stretched manpower by utilizing it better. I remember well going into the Kaiser shipyards on the Pacific Coast back in the early part of 1942 and seeing some of those boats being built a la Kaiser. They were literally covered with men and women. There were so many men and women on a boat that I wondered how they had elbow room enough to do a decent job. That was the way speed records in producing boats were made. It brought good publicity, but it wasted a lot of manpower.

We still had the idea that manpower was free and easy and that there was no need to conserve it. Why should we not have thought so, when for ten years or more, we had had all the manpower we needed. During the war our industrial practices were founded for a long time on that premise. There came a time, however, when there were no more people to pour into the plants. By the latter part of 1942 we had to find ways of utilizing better every available man.

Some of the war plants that we relied on to produce essential components of war production in 1940, 1941, and 1942 were amazingly inefficient and chaotic. I remember going into a plant in Bath, Maine. It was typical of many others. It was a small machine shop, that before the war had been a garage and probably had not employed more than a half dozen people. In 1942 a thousand people were working there, producing an essential war product. Those people had been poured in there without any order or plan. They were working that way, inefficiently and wastefully not only of dollars but of even more valuable man hours.

When a representative of the Employment Service who was visiting such plants inquired of them what types of workers they had and what their manpower requirements in the future would be, they simply had no idea. It took a long time to aid such plants establish practices which better utilized their labor.

Mobilizing Methods.— We did, however, get enough manpower in the right places to do what was needed. How was that made up? What was it the people in our Government did to accomplish that? Many people were reluctant to leave their jobs and we had to induce them to leave. How

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did we do this?

The major force that mobilized manpower in this last war--high wages. Henry Kaiser realized its effectiveness. He staffed his shipyards with all the men he needed by paying higher wages than anybody else could pay. I remember particularly one aluminum plant somewhere near one of Kaiser's shipyards in Seattle. The beginning wages in the aluminum industry were 75 cents an hour. Kaiser paid \$1.25. The Employment Service scoured the Middle West to get men for the aluminum plant but they remained only a short time. It took them only a little while to learn that Kaiser was paying \$1.25, and away they went. And yet the product of that aluminum plant, as you may well understand, was essential. In summary, high wages were a principal, even if an ineffective and costly way by which we mobilized manpower.

Then we also built up recruitment machinery. In the early part of the war we didn't have much in the way of governmental machinery to bring men to the industrial plants where they were needed. The only machinery available was the United States Employment Service. As it stood then it was made up of 48 separate state employment services. And those concerned with the problems of manpower mobilization in 1940 and 1941 realized that this loosely knit uncoordinated system was not adequate to the needs of war. Hence, in December 1941, the President sent a telegram to the forty-eight governors asking each to turn over the state employment service to the Federal Government. This telegram was nothing more than a politely worded request. There has been ever since an interesting debate as to the legal authority upon which the President acted. No one has ever found out what legal authority he had. But it was done and in the face of the war emergency every Governor did as requested.

By January 1st, 1942, thirty-five thousand employees who had been working as state employees in forty-eight separate state services were converted into a single national employment service. By this step an effort was initiated to build a national employment service capable of getting the workers to move from Norfolk, Virginia, to West Virginia or Chicago or wherever else they were needed.

Most state employment services were weak and inefficient units to start building on. Take for example, the Louisiana state employment service. It was the most atrociously inefficient and mismanaged institution I have ever seen. Literally there were two dozen employees of that service who accepted responsibility to come to work in the morning and stay there throughout the day. They were political appointees and did as they very well pleased. On the other hand, there were effective and well-managed state employment services in Texas, Connecticut, Indiana, and New York.

Before the war many employers regarded the United States.

Employment Service only as a place to find common labor and domestic servants. But when employers could no longer go to the front door and find all the workers they wanted, they had to turn to the local employment offices. As we look back now, it becomes clear that as much as 60 percent of all the workers that went into some key war industries were recruited by the U.S.E.S. It was slow getting started because it had an inefficient base to build on.

Simultaneously there was another major manpower mobilization agency. Its main work was to recruit men for the Armed Forces. The Selective Service System also played a considerable part in recruiting men for industrial establishments. It scared men from the civilian jobs that they held into war jobs where they thought they would be safe. The real job of Selective Service was not to mobilize men and women for the Armed Forces. It was to allocate men and women where they could serve best. That job was not done well. The Selective Service met its calls and met them promptly and efficiently. The Director of the Selective Service System, General Hershey, is one of the most eminent public servants that came out of the war. I have a great respect for the job he did. But the basic job of selecting each man for the job he could do best, in the Army or in industry, was not done well.

Let me cite an example. The United States Copper Company at St. Louis was a large producer of shells. It was nearly forced to close down late in 1942 because of the lack of copper. The shortage of copper then was caused by a lack of copper miners. Where had the copper miners gone? They had been drafted into the Army, or had been permitted to enlist. That illustrates the job that Selective Service didn't do well; they did not do a good job of allocating workers between civilian jobs and the Armed Forces.

I argued with Lewis Hershey that the task of determining whether a particular individual should remain in an industrial job or go in the Army was a technical task, to be determined by people who knew something about industry, the requirements of industry and the skills needed. Theoretically I was correct, but practically I was all wrong. It never would work that way. The average man and woman thought that in determining whether a fellow should go in the Army or stay in a civilian job, the facts whether he had children or aged parents to support were more important than what skills he might have. Local draft boards just couldn't recognize the importance of a man's skill; they could readily count the number of his dependents. But when the time came that die makers, machinists, and skilled people just couldn't be had, the local boards did recognize the essentiality of skills. But it still never weighed as heavily as dependency and these other human factors.

There are two governmental mobilization services that I should mention. The Procurement and Assignment Service did an effective

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job in recruiting doctors for the Armed Forces and simultaneously spreading the remaining doctors so that the needs of the civilian population were pretty well met. That was a pretty effective job.

Then there was the National Roster of Scientific and Professional Personnel. That was essentially an index of chemists, engineers, physicists, and other scientifically trained personnel. It became a very useful index as the war wore along. I remember particularly one employer's call for six civil engineers. We were able to supply them promptly by going to this National Roster which listed hundreds of civil engineers and showed where they were at the moment.

Summary of Governmental Effort. - In summary, it is clear that what the Government did to mobilize manpower for war was not sufficient. It was not sufficient in large part because of the practices followed by some employers. First, many employers; naturally enough, persisted in picking and choosing the best men that they could find. They persisted long after there weren't any best men to be found. They weren't willing to take people that hadn't had experience and train them. They weren't willing to take women. They weren't willing to take Negroes. Eventually they learned that they had to take men in all these groups, but this picking and choosing lasted long after the time when it could be afforded.

Then mobilization was handicapped by what we called "pirating". An employer would go out and scour the hills and farms to staff his plant with enough workers to get along. Then a neighboring employer simply offered better wages and "pirated" those workers away. The first employer then had to recruit workers all over again, or "pirate" his own workers back. It got so that workers would just switch from one employer to another across the street and back and forth, getting higher wages each time, until they got dizzy in the process. In the early part of the war "pirating" wasted precious manpower. And employers themselves realized how much it wasted and finally corrected it.

There were two other by-products of employers' management that wasted manpower. Those were "turn-over" and "absenteeism". Both were the effect of poor management. They were the effect of poor housing conditions and poor living conditions in the areas where these workers had to live. Workers refused to go from West Virginia into Norfolk, Virginia, for example, because they knew what living conditions in Norfolk were like. People had gone there and hadn't been able to find a home. They had to sleep in beds on a second shift. They just wouldn't go there any longer.

Absenteeism was in a considerable part the result of poor management. When workers were treated effectively and handled well, there was little absenteeism. Some workers, who did not have well-established work habits, people that hadn't had to work before the war were frequently absent. Among women and young people absenteeism was high

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even in well-managed plants. In poorly managed plants it was high among all workers.

As a consequence of these several wastes of manpower, the Government's efforts to recruit workers, through the U.S.E.S. and the National Roster, its efforts to train workers were not sufficient to get the manpower that was needed. Consequently, the employers themselves invoked controls upon their own practices. After being harassed by the pirating of workers among themselves for a long time, they would get together and say, "Let us stop stealing each other's workers." They set up what they called a Manpower Committee which would meet periodically, and air complaints that someone was stealing another employers' workers. They cut down pirating. In that way, subsequently local employment office managers, in order to cut down pirating and turn-over and other malpractices, encouraged employers and representatives of the workers to get together. Then, employers, sat on one side of the table, and workers, on the other side and together talked about what could be done to cut down turn-over and absenteeism.

Such agreements spread. They became more and more familiar as the war went on. Eventually, there were agreements for whole industries, particularly lumber and the non-ferrous mineral industries. These were industries characterized by hard, tough, nasty work. In lumbering, the men worked in the woods, away from the cities, where you had no comforts, conveniences or movies. Wages were not high. It was almost impossible to keep workers in the woods, and in other instances in the mines. So employers, the Government, and labor as well reached agreements as to how such industries would be manned. Labor didn't like it, because essentially the agreements simply told all other employers not to hire any man who left a mine or left the woods. It forced on these men the wages and unpleasant working conditions in the mines and the woods. Naturally labor didn't like it, even while they agreed later.

Later in 1943 an executive order was issued to give legal authority to this type of agreement. Executive Order 9279 authorized the Chairman of the War Manpower Commission, which had been established as a coordinating agency, to forbid the employment by any employer of any new employee except in accordance with regulations which the War Manpower Commission might issue. The employer was forbidden essentially to employ any worker that did not have a "statement of availability". "Statements of availability" were issued by every local employment office; and the local employment office was not authorized to give a "statement of availability" when the only reason the individual wanted to move was to accept a job paying higher wages.

Government officials have bragged of our accomplishments in mobilizing civilian manpower without the enactment of national service legislation. The principal governmental power used was this executive order. It was backed up by what in retrospect seems a rather amusing authority. Any employer who hired workers in contravention of orders issued by the War Manpower Commission under the authority of this executive order wouldn't be entitled to deduct the wages of those workers on his income tax statement as expenses of his business.

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A second means of enforcing this executive order, and the regulations issued pursuant to it was to deprive an employer of materials he needed to do business. That means was not effective. The classical example of the use of this means was in the gold mining industry. Gold, of course, was still valuable in wartime, but it was not essential. Miners were badly needed in the copper mines. To transfer miners to the copper mines, it was proposed to close down the gold mines.

The gold mining people resisted bitterly. A number of officials in the War Production Board resisted this proposal too. They didn't believe in this use of the power of allocating materials to accomplish another purpose. As a consequence the proposal was debated for weeks. Eventually the War Production Board did deny all essential materials required by the gold mines.

I would bet a dollar to a "plugged nickel" that this forced few miners from the gold mines to the copper mines. This failure to move illustrates the human and social factors involved. They didn't want to leave their homes. There were many personal reasons why they wouldn't leave. They would not leave even such little places as Cripple Creek, Colorado. When they did leave, they sought the best jobs they could find, and often times these jobs were not in the copper mines.

In retrospect it is the character and administration of these controls that seem important. There were controls. The controls that were actually used evolved, it is significant to note, from informal controls that employers set up for themselves. They were evoked gradually and largely with the consent of those affected. By the latter part of 1944 three principal manpower controls were in effect. First most employers were required to work their employees a minimum of forty-eight hours a week; secondly, employers could hire workers only when they had a "statement of availability" issued by the local employment office; and, thirdly, that they could hire workers only through the United States Employment Service. That sounds relatively simple. But these simple controls did the job.

They were administered in each individual city by what was known as the War Manpower Committee. There you had a committee composed of representatives of management and of labor. They met periodically, and considered case by case. If, for instance, a worker wanted to move from one plant to another so that he wouldn't have to travel a long distance each day, he would make his appeal first to the employment office and from there it would be taken to the War Manpower Committee. Eventually, these local "manpower committees" provided the crux of the functioning of what controls we had. I would venture the

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prediction that whatever we have in a future war, some similar committee will be the means by which people of each community will themselves manage the distribution and allocation of manpower.

Summary.-- Let me summarize quickly the points I have made.

First, I have indicated the magnitude of this mobilization. Looking back we may be inclined to discount what was a very large job. Secondly, I have described the sources from which that manpower came-- the unemployed, aged people that were not customarily working in peacetime, people moved from one type of job to another, people that came off of farms, foreign workers, and prisoners of war. Third, I have depicted how manpower was stretched out, by increasing hours of work, by training, by better utilization. Fourth, I described the problems that arose from employers' practices in hiring and using workers-- pirating, turn-over, and absenteeism. They were major problems during a large part of the war. And finally I have described the controls that were established and how they were administered.

When one now looks back over this wartime experience you do see a vast job that was accomplished. I believe that manpower was mobilized by and large with substantial effectiveness and with little control over employers or workers. I wrote a book once in which I said the enactment of national service legislation was essential. Like every other fellow who writes a book there is one thing I wish I hadn't said. Because looking back, it seems to me we mobilized the manpower needed without a national service act. Unless conditions are such as we cannot now foresee, we will not likely enact a national service act in the future. Having gone through this war and having proven to ourselves as a people that we could mobilize the necessary manpower, we will wonder next time whether we must limit the freedom and the liberties of individuals in a greater degree in order to mobilize the manpower required. In World War II the United States mobilized manpower in a truly democratic fashion with a minimum of control. Thank you.

CAPTAIN WORTHINGTON:

We are open to questions.

A STUDENT:

Doctor, in your book "Manpower for Victory" you stated in no uncertain terms, in speaking of the utilization of manpower, that due to various legislation it was not particularly efficient. I believe you further made the statement that it could rather simply be made efficient. Would you care to go into detail on that statement?

MR. CORSON:

The U.S.E.S. wasn't efficient. It was desperately weak at the

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start. We did what we could to reorganize as quickly as we could. But we never overcame the original obstacle that the U.S.E.S. had been made up of forty-eight state employment services. This country is no longer forty-eight separate little cubicles each with its own separate supply of manpower.

There was an interesting chart drawn during the war to show the source of manpower in an aircraft plant on Long Island. Workers had come from every state in the United States. You don't recruit manpower as recruited from as wide an area as that with forty-eight separate, independent, state services. But all during the war we were handicapped by the fact that Congress and the Governors continued to regard the USES as forty-eight separate state services. Every time we took a step to integrate them the governor of that state and sometimes some of the officials of that employment service would complain to their congressmen and he in turn would hamper us in merging them into a single institution, a national employment service. There is need in this country of a national employment service that will be ready for the next war.

A secondary problem resulting from that was the pressure on the Congress from these governors who wanted to insure the return of the state employment services. I remember one appearance before the House Appropriations Committee. It was a full dress affair. Secretary Patterson, Donald Nelson, Jim Forrestal, then Under Secretary of the Navy, General Hershey and others all testified how important it was that the United States Employment Service should be able to do its mobilization job and how important it was that the appropriations requested be made. But it was all to no effect. The state officials had been to see their congressmen to see that we would not be given any additional money to build an integrated national employment service.

For the next war we will either develop a national employment service to cope with this national problem, because employment is no longer a state problem, or we will experience the same delays and inefficiencies again.

A STUDENT:

You mentioned your three controls that you thought were sufficient. What would have happened if, at the peak of your employment you had had an epidemic similar to the influenza epidemic of 1917 and 1918, where you might have had to take two or three million workers out of the Northeast to the California area or some place like that, just taken them out there and dropped them? Then do you think your three controls would have been sufficient?

MR. CORSON:

That is a good question. I hadn't thought of it in those terms,

so I don't have a ready answer. But, as I think it over, my answer, is this:

If you had had national service legislation, then you could, as you imply by your question, have drafted women from their homes and added two or three million workers promptly. Without national service legislation a couple of million women could have been recruited in the event of such an emergency just through publicity and making known the urgency of the need although the mobilization would have been a little slower perhaps.

It must be recognized that the effectiveness of a national service act is a conjectural problem in public psychology. It is not a problem of economics or the essentiality of labor or the non-essentiality of it. It is a problem in public psychology, and during this past war we could not build psychology up to the point where it would accept a national service act.

A STUDENT:

You might have brought more in if you had insisted on labor moving. You would have been better able to move them in case of an influenza epidemic. You have got to move them if you can't get them to move voluntarily.

MR. CORSON:

You could do it under the present scheme or under the past scheme. You would have done it by closing down some plants and moving those workers into other plants. Bear in mind that in such a catastrophe as you think of you couldn't have recruited workers that weren't being used, because the skilled workers would have to be taken from some plants that they needed for war production.

I remember one town where they built a new plant. They had no labor source there to start with. They had to build up the labor force from old workers that they converted to the new plant. I remember well what happened. This local manpower committee would sit down and say, "You need how many machinists?" The man would say how many he needed. The committee would say, "Henry will send two and Joe will send two."

It would have been that sort of process if we had had such a calamity. We effectively did it through the use of these local committees and their recognition of the essentiality of the need. It might have been done more rapidly and fully if national service legislation had existed, but keep in mind the public psychology that prevailed. In the most critical days of the last war the public psychology never recognized the need of a national service act.

A STUDENT:

Suppose we had had an epidemic. Do you think that public psychology would have accepted a national service act?

MR. CORSON:

Yes. I think it would. That is why I said earlier that if you visualize a set of calamitous circumstances beyond anything that we had in the last war, my thinking might logically be changed.

A STUDENT:

You said that your opinion that a national service act would not be necessary for this country is based on your experience in this last war. There were two things which, fortunately, did not happen in this country. One was that we did not have an epidemic and the second is that we were not bombed. If one of those had happened, would your answer be different?

MR. CORSON:

Both of those would make more possible a national service act. I think a national service act would have been desirable in the last war, but it would only have been desirable if we could have brought public opinion to accept it as desirable. We were not able to do that. Perhaps because we were not bombed, or because we were not faced with such calamitous circumstances as would have brought us to that point.

A STUDENT:

I am interested in your comments on better utilization of manpower. In 1943 and in early 1944 we heard a great deal about industrial engineers. In the Army Ordnance plants and in the aircraft industry we saw them used very effectively. I would like to know in what industries that poor utilization occurred.

MR. CORSON:

I would say it was not in any particular industry, but in most industries. When you talk about 1943 I think it is true that by that time we had come through the worst of it. I was thinking more in terms of the early years and the great waste of manpower as plants were thrown together rapidly. Plants are not organized to produce economically and efficiently when organized hurriedly.

As the war pushed along, we did do much better. The JIT and JMT programs were effective contributions to that better utilization. But there were still a great many plants well along in the war that

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were taking a hundred men to do a job when everyone else was doing the same job with fifty.

There is a naive assumption among us all in this country that private enterprise is necessarily efficient. That is not true. There are many private enterprises that are not efficient. They have never been under the compulsion of being efficient in the use of manpower.

In Great Britain they scraped the bottom of the barrel much closer. As a consequence, they had a group of inspectors, most of whom were foremen who had learned in the shops how to organize and how to work, who went from plant to plant to aid employers in determining the minimum number of workers needed in that plant to do this job. Then they would help that employer conform with such manning table, help him cut down the labor used.

A STUDENT:

Doctor, you spoke of increased productivity per man-hour during the war. You also mentioned that a large segment of industry was transferred from peacetime operation to wartime munitions manufacture. I wondered what yardstick a person could use to measure productivity per man-hour, per day, and so forth when transferred to those munitions.

MR. CORSON:

I spoke of the level of productivity throughout the country. The Bureau of Labor Statistics measure of productivity per worker will indicate that there was a substantial increase, on the average, in the number of units produced per worker. Certainly the productivity of workers increased less in some industries than in others. On the whole there was I believe, a substantial increase in productivity.

In some industries the transfer from a piecework type of operation before the war to a mass production basis, such as the aircraft industry increased the productivity per worker substantially.

A STUDENT:

The fact that they went to mass production in the manufacture of munitions was the reason those statistics stand up like they do. The truth of the matter is that in 1939 the average man was producing approximately as much as he did in 1943.

MR. CORSON:

Increased productivity can be the consequence of either of two factors; perhaps more, but at least two: a) technological advance, that is better ways of making things; and b) greater effort

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or skill of the worker. (Increased productivity experienced during the war is not to be attributed alone to greater effort or skill of the worker).

A STUDENT:

If that is so, my point is quite obvious. It wasn't the man himself or the way it was done particularly. The truth of the matter is that it was mass production. That is what I gathered from what Mr. Fenton said yesterday.

MR. CORSON:

Frank Fenton and I have disagreed about many things in the past. I respect him and the first rate job he did on the National Management-Labor committee throughout the war, yet naturally enough we disagreed on some things.

There are many interesting illustrations of the part that representatives of organized labor played in the manpower job during the war. They represented their constituents and tried to represent them well. But then when the time came, they also took into account the national needs for manpower and did the job pretty well. I came away with considerable respect for the part they played.

A STUDENT:

You spoke about the trouble in getting miners for the copper mines. Would you state what part the Selective Service played in that?

MR. CORSON:

In the first place, the job of determining whether a man should remain in the mines or should go into the Army was a task of determining as to what degree of skill he had and how important that skill was. Could it be replaced? Could you train a fellow to take his place and to do the same job that he was doing?

The members of the draft boards were not particularly well qualified for that sort of determination. My father-in-law, a retail merchant, sat on a draft board, he couldn't tell the difference between a machinist and a chemist, if you like. Most draft board members were not skilled for that sort of technical determination. I don't think such decisions as they made should be based alone on data as to whether the individual has children or has an aged parent to support. Miners did get in the Army--too often and too many of them.

In the second place, there were many instances where men were permitted to enlist who never should have been permitted to enlist. Men virtually needed for the production of essential war items were

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permitted to enlist and go in the Army because their patriotic fervor made them want to wear a uniform.

A STUDENT:

We have found that everyone who comes here to speak is inclined to think that all skilled personnel should stay in production, when we all know we must have a large number in the Armed Forces and will need more of them the next time. We have to train these people in industry that we are going to use in the Armed Forces. You don't think we should in our selective service make it mandatory that every skilled person be deferred, do you?

MR. CORSON:

You can't train during a war all the skilled labor that is needed in private industry. If you follow your reasoning, it is a logical conclusion that the Army needs every skilled person. That would mean that industry would have to train all the skilled labor needed. You can't do that and produce essential war items. So there must be some process of allocation. Certainly the Armed Forces will need many skilled persons the next time; I agree. But industry will also need skilled workers and the number that exist must be allocated between the Army and industry.

A STUDENT:

I would like to have you give me a good definition of the term "key personnel."

MR. CORSON:

During the war there existed a "Critical Occupations Committee". It included representatives of the Selective Service, the Army, the Navy, the USES, and quite a few other agencies. They had to determine who were "key people."

I remember one instance where a boy scout master out on the Pacific Coast let out a howl you could hear for a mile because some local employer had been told the job of a boy scout executive was not essential. He said his job was part of the process of waging war. Everybody who appeared from the community supported him. They said you had to maintain the civilian services.

As we progressed during the war there were many difficult cases. Was a public relations man for a movie theater essential? In time of war it is essential to keep up the morale of the people, and that you had to have people who know how to make these war films.

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We never developed effective criteria for determining what tasks were essential. It was like a lot of problems. We went along, we discussed them and did the best we could. It was like living with your wife. You just went along and did the best you could.

A STUDENT:

In connection with the controls you mentioned didn't you make some use of personnel ceilings; and if so, would you say what you did? Then in addition I want to ask for your opinion with respect to prisoners of war. If you hadn't had them at the time when the labor supply became critically short, do you think we would have had to go to more severe controls on manpower?

MR. CORSON:

I will answer the last question first. I really don't think the prisoners of war added much to our labor supply. There were quite a few of them before the war was over, but they were a limited source of labor, not freely used.

I don't know as much about that problem as some of the people who may be here this afternoon, Mr. Collis Stocking, I am sure, could tell you more about it than I could. I had moved out of the Employment Service before prisoners of war came along. But that is my opinion for what it is worth.

Coming back to the first question, whether we used personnel ceilings: Yes, we did use personnel ceilings. We attempted to set ceilings as to the amount of manpower that should be needed for the job that was being done.

They were not set precisely or well. They were set by these management-labor committees. The United States Employment Service did the hard work of going into the plants and trying to determine what was really needed. But then representatives of management and labor in that community would sit down and finally decide what the ceilings would be.

Essentially what happened was that a group of men sat around the table and said: "We haven't enough to go around. We have got to cut about ten percent. If we each release ten percent, we can get enough to man this new plant." Somebody would say, "I just can't get along with any less. I have got to have more workers than I have." They would argue it out and eventually they would come out with something--"I will give up so many. Joe will get so many less." It was decided as roughly as that.

I am sure some of my colleagues would say it was done better

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than I implied. It is a matter of degree. But I think it worked out about the way I have pictured it.

A STUDENT:

In projecting the manpower pool into the future we found that we had a larger and larger percentage in the upper age brackets. First I would like to have your opinion as to the top level of age, if there is one of if you have one. It was tentatively set at 65. Also I would like to have your opinion as to what age in your over-age definition of people migration of labor would stop.

MR. CORSON:

I can't answer either question precisely. I certainly wouldn't set any upper limit. I don't believe anyone can say what is the maximum age at which any man can do an effective job. During the war there were instances of men who had been retired as worn out who came back and did an effective job. There is no idea more fallacious than that every man reaches the end of his usefulness at 65. Some workers at 45 are just as old as others at 75. I don't think you can draw an arbitrary line and say that at this age each man or woman becomes aged.

On the other hand, there is an age limit---I would guess, in the thirties--beyond which few people do migrate. You just don't get most people to move after they passed 30-40 years of age.

CAPTAIN WORTHINGTON:

We are very much indebted to you, Doctor.

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