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INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL DEFERMENTS

15 April 1948

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GENERAL DISCUSSION

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15 April 1948

COLONEL VANAMAN: Gentlemen, once again we welcome to the lecture platform an old friend of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. During the war General Hershey performed in an outstanding manner a very, very difficult task, as we all know. He not only planned the Selective Service system, but he operated it.

General Hershey was in a very difficult position. He was out there in No Man's Land between the civilians and the military, and how he ever survived the Battle of Washington is really a mystery. It probably is because of his rare good judgment, his tact, and his good common, or rather, his uncommon sense.

General Hershey, we greet you and hope that we will have from you some recommendations for the good of our study in selective service and especially in deferment. I know that we are going to hear an outstanding talk, and we are especially anxious to have some recommendations to guide us in the future. General Hershey.

GENERAL HERSHEY: Colonel Vanaman, Captain Worthington, and gentlemen: The fifteenth of March has passed and most of you will remember it not because of the President's speech on the seventeenth, but because of certain communciations that you are accustomed to receive on that date from the Bureau of Internal Revenue. It has been always a great question who should send in these little statements to the Bureau; and certainly we have all been in favor of making it less and less necessary for us to answer them at all, or, if we did, with very small amounts. In other words, the problem of taxations is very easy from the standpoint of whom to excuse from taxation. The only difficulty is to get any money. The subject I am supposed to talk about has many things in common with that. The question of deferment would be very simple if it were not for one or two things. One thing is that it unfortunately comes up at a time when you must produce some men, and, secondly, when you must deal by and with human beings.

Now, I think sometimes in the complexity of this situation and in the pressure of our jobs we lose sight of what we are trying to do. It is rather trite to say that fundamentally we are trying to survive individually to the end that we probably may survive collectively. Surviving collectively and dying individually is probably not possible, and many of you would not favor it even if it were. Therefore when we start out to survive, we are under the compulsion of surviving at a time when someone is actively trying to prevent us from surviving. Unfortunately, the cutting edge of the knife has to have characteristics that will cut. Otherwise you do defeat the enemy.

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reasons for deferment quite often are developments that have occurred in the last year or in the last decade or the last century, at least they have not become embedded; and some of the terms we use are not old terms. Some of them are ones that even currently there is no agreement on.

There are some things on which there is reasonable agreement. The meaning of the words "minister," "preacher," and "clergy," by and large are generally accepted. But there are many variations, since some of you may have some trouble thinking of a Jehovah's Witness as a preacher because he hands you a pamphlet on the street. I am not here to criticize or defend any sect, but some of you here will have trouble thinking of him as a preacher. The public has trouble differentiating between what is a scientist and what is not. It is not a term that has any common denominator. To some people it means a man who has perhaps a BS, a MA, a PhD, or some scientific experience. Edison, of course, had none of those degrees, but he still did reasonably well in certain scientific efforts. To identify this scientist is difficult. Yet what do we mean when we talk about scientists if we can't identify one?

You can go into many other fields--machinist, tool maker, and what-not--and find the same difficulty. At one time, when it was my privilege to come before this body a decade or two ago, a tool maker was such that we always bowed at least once or twice before we mentioned the word in these halls. And yet when war came, they distributed his job in many places among three or four individuals and accomplished the same end without as much knowledge or skill in any one person. We were a little rough on the tool maker.

I happened to be attached to the Artillery for thirty years, and what happened to tool makers is very much like what happened to the artilleryman when we told people how he figured some of his calculations. Then other people got to figuring, and the first thing you knew, an artilleryman could no longer make a caste out of his system of calculations and keep it a secret and hand it down from father to son. So it is with many of these things with which we deal.

The identification of doctors of medicine in this country is reasonably simple, because in all states people must be qualified to practice, or they don't practice, and they permit no one to practice who is not a doctor. In deciding whether he may practice or not it makes no difference what he knows. On the other hand, if he is permitted to practice, he is a doctor, and there also it makes no difference what he knows. So I think that identification is one of the things with which we struggle.

The next thing we struggle with is the fact that we always start, or always have started, from a situation in which we did not have enough men in the Armed Forces; neither did we have enough equipment of any kind with which to outfit them. In such a situation you are at once up against the

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are just certain places where you cannot exert the force that you have to, perhaps, in order to win. However, I am getting into the field of strategy, which I don't pretend to know anything about.

Now the next thing, of course, is your requirements. Perhaps in 1940, 1941, and 1942 the Armed Forces knew their requirements. I doubt it. If they did, they didn't have the courage to tell much about them to anybody above a whisper. I caught the devil in New Jersey in 1942 because I was bold or stupid enough to say, "We may face the prospect of mobilizing 10 million men." It was "Hush" everywhere. We mobilized 16.5 million.

In 1940, 1941, 1942, and 1943 industry was just as lavish in its idea of what eventually it was going to require. Industry was asleep, and it was because 10 or 15 million people had been squalling at its gates for years trying to get hired. Industry had the philosophy that you couldn't possibly ever run out of men, because they were going on the guess that 32 million of the total population were housewives and that you could lure a good percentage of them into industry. Somebody has to stay in the home and take care of the 35 million that are under 14 years of age. Some of these are so small that they have to be taken care of. Some of them are so large they have to be taken care of.

In the late war we had a situation somewhat different from our English friends. The English very early had occupational deferments to a much greater extent than we did. Why? Because they paid little attention to dependency. Theoretically, one of the things you can do immediately is to pay no attention to dependency. I say "theoretically." You had better study the history of the United States before you go too far on that. When you are cutting out clothes, one of the things you had better do is to look to the cloth, the lining, and the buttons before making the pattern. What you have to get is rather important, but what public opinion will stand for is one of your problems.

I don't know why the public likes fathers so well, even the man who is married without being a father. But it is true that it does, and it is a factor that we have to think about. Part of that is unfortunate from your standpoint and part of it is most fortunate indeed.

I would like to say one thing about that, because I think there is a lot more bologna that better grades of meat that has been spread around on the manpower question. We have forgotten the fact that we had some 14 or 15 million for a whole year or two that were deferred for dependency, and that that gave us a stabilized work force which other countries did not have because people with dependents were inducted. Make no mistakes about that. If there is any employer present now, he will stand up and say that it is easier to get a man deferred in his shop if he has a dependent than if he had to defend him as being a necessary man whom he couldn't replace. So one of the things that stabilized our work force, one of the things that

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The distance a man is from the factory is a vital consideration to that man. He is telling himself that he is important; his manager, his foreman, and his superintendent are telling him the same thing; his wife is telling him; and we always have plenty of people in Washington telling him. His employers have people here who are saying, "It is a shame to take a man with all that skill" and "Just think of those hands and all those skills doing nothing but pull a trigger" even when pulling a trigger saves him as well as his country. But just the same, it is unfortunate to take that man. It is the most natural thing in the world to feel that way. I am not criticizing, but that is a fact. It is a thing you are up against. If he is back here where he can get someone to get on the Washington scene or the State Capital scene or some industrial scene and begin to say that the factory is going to close if he is taken away, it is pretty hard to get him.

Here is a rather strange thing: I had a chance to live through a couple of ages of this, and I never knew husbands were so important to wives until I began to read the requests for deferment. I never knew children looked to their fathers for so many things. I never knew that employers had such love even for labor unions as they evinced during that time. But when it came to reemployment, there was quite a change in the attitude about how important a man was. Of course, the war was over by that time; I realize that. But there were people who had been practically vice-presidents whose jobs had completely disappeared when we talked to their employers about reemploying them.

Tall tales about golfing scores or how many miles you can get to a gallon of gasoline are nothing in the way of making people liars like making out a 42-A, which was the request for occupational deferment. Be that as it may. We did at one time have deferred in industry about four million of our people, including those engaged in the things that go to support our national life. We had somewhat over two million sons of the soil back from the Army toiling from sunrise until late at night so that we in Europe and other parts of this world might eat. Those were the ones who were brought back under the so-called Tydings Amendment; and I understand that is part of my subject this morning.

Now, there is no question about the fact that you have to have men in industry and on the farms. That question, though, is just as important for the fellow who is fighting. It is the same kind of choice as whether you want to be defended on the football field by the very best players or the mediocre ones.

Of course, on the other hand, you don't like to send men into a football game without a helmet or without knee guards, but in our case we sometimes have to make a choice between sending in a fellow without a helmet and not sending anyone. Under the circumstances you will probably send in someone regardless of how he is armed. We always have. But we are

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period the most persons who were moving. I think I won with three. We swung over three ships. I suppose there were at least eight hundred men down there. Of course it was the swing shift. It was two or three o'clock in the morning. We were desperate for manpower; and it disturbed me and impressed me with the conviction that we must get more men moving in order to accomplish more. I don't want to belittle our production. I think it was marvelous. I am entirely optimistic about the wonderful job we did. I am always optimistic about what we can do if we try again, that is, if we get ready and then try again. After two months of the hysteria that followed the President's speech at the beginning of the late war people said to me, "Aren't you excited at all?" I said, "I am always excited; but now that the people are getting excited, I am beginning to feel a little better. It is their complacency that frightens me." So I have no feeling except pride. But with all the things we did we still could have kept a few more of these people moving.

Leadership is one thing that can help to keep these workers moving. How to get leadership I don't know. But it is true that somehow or other I have faith in planning for that, because it was not my privilege to be connected with the planning organization. Perhaps it would be untrue to say that nothing happened but what was anticipated, but to a great extent, that was true. The tragedy was that we could anticipate things and couldn't do anything about them at all, because we could not convince a great many people of the necessity to do anything about them. You had to convince a great many people, and not necessarily because they were bossing you, but probably quite the contrary. You were running in a yard with a lot of people in it, trying to keep from running into them or being run into by them.

It is very difficult to get an organization together rapidly during war. You can get so much organization and then everybody is waiting around for orders. Somehow you have to split the difference between control and forward movement. One of the ways to avoid too much control is to do some educating beforehand. That is why it is so essential, I feel--my feeling about that is in the past; most of the things in my "future" have gone by--but here is hope. You people can do something about the future, because you are planning now, at a period when you have enough time to think. When you come to operate, you won't have time to think. But if you have something in your mind when you start operating, you won't have to think. You can act. If you don't think now, it will be too late when the time for action comes.

When we had some 22 million in the population between 18 and 37, we put upwards of 15 or 16 million in the Armed Forces, and had at one time 15 million of the population deferred for dependency but still participating in the war effort. We eventually had four million who were left behind and who, other things being equal, should have gone. They were left behind because they were doing things that we thought had to be done. That doesn't include the more than two million on the farms.

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One of the difficulties that I found in 1942 was that the very top people in what later became the WPB still couldn't be convinced that there was going to be any shortage, except among the people that had great skills. I am going to say this--perhaps you are not going to agree with it though I hope you do--my observation in looking through the window was that among the troops that you needed, but didn't have enough of, was the kind of fellow that was in immediate contact with the enemy, who was good enough to be there and live, and let you live, by his actions.

In industry we found that with all the talk of skill, the hardest thing to get was the fellow that would sweat and stink and work in a foundry. He was what is ordinarily called common labor, although by the time the war had gone on a bit, the common laborer had gotten up to where he was at least a journeyman. That was for pay and deferment purposes. It complicated restoring him to the job, because it was easier to change a man's rating than it was to try to get anybody to permit you to raise his pay. So we didn't have any common labor left. But it was true that that fellow was hardest to get.

The president of a very large steel company told me he would gladly trade me engineers for workmen, not necessarily one for one; but he wished he could get some people strong enough, big enough, and dumb enough not only to do the work he had to do, but lacking enough sense to leave and go where the man could assemble airplanes in an air-cooled and air-conditioned place working with attractive girls, and none of them doing enough to get the creases out of their trousers, getting several cents an hour more than in the foundry. He had to get a fairly dumb fellow to retain him.

There are a lot of common things that have to be done in the world. I was an old broken-down guard on about a fourth-rate college basketball team in the days when we didn't play like they do now, when the guard was supposed to knock down the first guy that came down the field when the play changed. When something like that happened, the coach excused the guard for his other deficiencies. I played that type of guard. As such, I always thought the forwards got all the credit in the papers for shooting the goals. I wondered who was knocking these other guys toward the goals, but I didn't say anything. It is by the same token that in industry you always get the emphasis on the end product. You pay more attention initially to getting somebody to take two things that have already been made and join them together than you do to the guy who is digging the material out of the earth. But you had better have the digger digging, because, if he doesn't dig, you will soon reach the time when there isn't anything to join.

Knowing what you have and knowing what you need everywhere will help a lot. But don't overlook many apparently unrelated other things. Don't go out and stop all the laundries running on the theory that they are not

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and therefore they were just simply baggage on the national truck that was trying to survive. We have these people and you have to use your share of them. There are some you can't use; but you are less of a leader if you can't use them because leadership is one of the ways you make little out of almost nothing.

We must make up our minds as soon as we can about this division of manpower. Time is passing. I hesitate to talk about organization. You must determine the number of people you are going to put in the Services, how much of a drain the National Economy can stand, and how they are to be inducted. Even if your plan is lousy, you must stick to it; because one of the things that upsets people very much is when someone starts East and then goes West and finally ends up still going East after he has been over all the points of the compass. Of course, in the late war I was said to be the one person who couldn't make up his mind what he wanted. But when you tell me you need 30,000 one month and 300,000 the next month and then none the third month, anyone in my place would have a little trouble trying to adjust his life. I have even seen the time when the President of the United States wrote to a speaker who was down here the other day and said to me, "Deferments are far too great. We have got to have men." That was the twenty-third day of February. We put about a million and a half men in I-A. In the next six weeks we didn't induct many, because we were busy with preinduction examinations. It was lucky we didn't, because we got a letter on the thirtieth of April saying, "Can't you stop all inductions? We are over strength." How did he get that way? I don't know. I wasn't there. I know there were only about 18 or 20 thousand that went in between the time there was a desperate need for men and the time there was no need for men.

I realize a lot of people were scattered all over the world and it was a desperate time. The fathers and mothers have a desperate time too, figuring on the things they have to meet. As long as they are behind you, you can go anywhere. When they are no longer behind you, you can't go anywhere.

So let us plan. And when we plan, let us have the intestinal fortitude in Boston and the guts in Chicago to say that a poor plan well carried out, especially by men who are not particularly brilliant--and most of us are not--is better than these brilliant plans you think up overnight and discard as soon as you can sleep over them. It does give a little confidence to people to go the wrong way consistently rather than to be changing their course continually. I think that we ought to have an organization-- and I hope the National Security Resources Board is such an organization-- that will devise something on a broad basis.

One of the worst things that ever happened is this kind of thing: There was a general, a very lovable old man, who commanded my division in World War I. There was only one thing he failed in in that division. He

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country is limited. I thank God for that too. I am afraid you are going to have to devise a system that can be run by almost anybody. That is why I still say you are going to have to let the people in the communities do it. I will say this too: If you can know what you want well ahead of time, if you can get your phraseology definite so that when you say "preacher," you know what you are talking about and when you say "scientist" or "tool maker" you know what you mean, you will get along all right. You don't want to get too many people that are important, because when too many are important, no one is. That is the law of life.

Second, search every man who begins to talk about where he can render his greatest service. Remember that way down deep in the human being lies something which causes the man who knows how to do it to generally tend to prefer an inner spring mattress to a common one or to sleeping on the ground. Therefore, human beings try to rationalize--I think that is a good word to use--their position this way: "I shouldn't go, because I am needed badly here." I don't mean to say that he is not needed where he is, but search him well, because every man who rushes to you while you are running some of these procurement systems is coming only to get--and this is all he asks of you--an easy way for him to serve in this war. Unfortunately, the boys who are getting nearer to the enemy don't have it easy. All of us have to make sacrifices; all of us have to do things that can't be done inferior people. We have to have vision, energy, drive, and leadership at home just the same as you have to have it in that patrol up in front. Believe me, most of these foremen were paid pretty well compared to the patrol leader's pay, even though the latter had to save the lives of those few soldiers he had with him.

What you will want to know in answer to your questions is far more important than anything I may tell you.

QUESTION: My question is on deferment. It became necessary during during the war to reduce the physical standards for inductees. What would you say about fixing some definite physical standards and not changing them?

GENERAL HERSHEY: I think it is highly desirable from our standpoint, but I think it would be impossible. In the first place, take the situation right now. If Congress passes this bill, right away the Armed Forces will want two or three hundred thousand men and the standards are going to be high. On the other hand, when the Armed Forces want 13, 14, or 15 million, they cannot retain such high standards. As numbers increase, physical standards must be lowered. I don't blame you for wanting the best men first. You can't sell now the fellow who is acceptable when the bottom of the barrel is in sight. Human beings aren't that way. Fish that came in on Thursday would not be acceptable on Saturday when you want to eat fish on Sunday.

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I am sympathetic to the farmers. We must live with them, and the reason is because a lot of people won't work on a farm. You can't mix a lot of people in one farmhouse, because a lot of times they have to live very close together, just as closely as the situation where the boy on the farm has to sleep with the hired man. That gets into some complications. It isn't so easy to handle as other kinds of labor.

Even so, we can live without so many speeches; and if the time ever comes again, I would like to see my country keep the farm deferment problem out of the political arena, keep it out of the farm bloc, keep it from getting to the point where they think they have to develop farm deferments because they are supporters of a farm bloc. That is exactly what happened. It was not a military question. It was an economic question; it was a political question. It was unfortunate. A lot of men were deferred on the farm who shouldn't have been deferred. A lot of them were siphoned from that central wheat area to the west coast. It would have been better, had they had been left on the farm, but then I don't know where the industrialists would have found their workers. Just the same, robbing somebody else because you need things is not too good. Because Boeing needed workers in Seattle, there was no necessity of robbing the prairie country. Of course, a lot of these boys were glad to move into some town where they could go to picture shows and enjoy urban life.

QUESTION: In consideration of unification under the National Defense Act, do you think that Selective Service in a future emergency should have a separate draft call for each service, or should we turn all the draftees over to the military to allocate to the services?

GENERAL HERSHEY: You should turn them over to the military and let the military allocate them. There should have been a previous arrangement between the military services by which they could have been allotted. All the services have a common cause, and I hope they will have common standards and common discharge policies. One of the hardest things to sell is a boy who has been turned out of one of the services. You know if a kid gets some candy and he saves out all the peppermints because he doesn't like them, it is hard to get some of the other kids to eat the peppermints. That is what we are up against in the Armed Forces.

I want to go one step further. I hope that whoever has to get the men for us next time can deal with one War Department or one Department of the Army. I am not going so far as to hope that perhaps the whole thing might be together. But I know one industrialist who was told by a GI that there were going to be men dying on the beaches unsupported if the Army didn't get more men out of his plant; while another gentleman, who was the Under Secretary of War, was telling this industrialist that if those men were taken out of his plant, the plant would have to close and were going to lose the war. I wish those in authority would make up their minds. I don't care what conclusions they come to, but there is this fact

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because I don't know whether you are going to push people around by national service or push them around by high wages. We must have some kind of over-all control. However, you must not let the philosophy that you can fight a war without having anybody in the Army or Navy or Air Force permeate your thinking.

QUESTION: The next question has to do with occupational deferments. During the war, in 1944, they abandoned the system of replacement schedules. On our field trip last week we found great favor for them. I wonder what suggested substitute you would use for that next time.

GENERAL HERSHEY: One reason we abandoned the replacement schedule was that we thought some of the things it would accomplish had already been accomplished. Of course, the people whom you saw were in favor of it because it tended to prevent their workers from going into the service. Generally when they got a fellow deferred, they said, "If he was important when we had so few workers, isn't he more important now when we have even fewer?"

One of the things that some of us had against the replacement schedule was the fact that it tended to place in administrative offices the power of determining who should go, and took it out of the hands of the tribunal which the Congress established to it--the local board.

On the other hand, it was largely a sales job from the standpoint of state directors. I don't know whether I would say that it would be wise to reinstate replacement schedules, but there are some things that happen whenever you start a street car running. We found workers on replacement schedules who had been dead a month. We found men who had left certain employment months before and were still being requested by the companies because the personnel divisions of the companies were so inadequate that they couldn't keep track of the workers they had. They were asking for workers that had been gone a long time. It destroyed my confidence in what they said they needed when they swore by every oath they knew that a man was necessary even though he hadn't been there for nine months. That kind of breaks you down. This is not criticism, because those things happened. Didn't I hear about someone in one of our services who had been gone a month this spring and was still living on an island in a harbor that I shan't speak of? It happens in the best-regulated families. Whose kids' ears aren't dirty once in a while?

Some people tried to use Selective Service for other purposes. I don't say we didn't have coordination, but it is difficult to try to maintain the morale of this country by threatening to draft people who don't behave themselves. You should not let too many other things confuse the issue and begin to discipline recalcitrant employers by withdrawing their deferred men when the difficulty was perhaps between procurement agencies.

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I do believe you must have something that approaches national service. You can't have agencies and this and that and get everything disposed of in the wrong way too early. You have to study this mobilization question. You just can't have people out recruiting folks in places where there is a labor shortage. You can't have people going out stealing from their own subcontractors and not knowing it. It was done repeatedly,

COLONEL VANAMAN: General Hershey, we asked you to give us some good recommendations; but, as is your usual custom, you have done a better job than you were asked to do. We have received some superior recommendations, both directly and indirectly. For the Industrial College I want to thank you very, very much for a most interesting and thought-provoking talk.

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