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ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF CIVILIAN DEFENSE

1 June 1948

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COLONEL STAMM: Gentlemen, in the recent war the United States was confronted with many problems, but was very fortunate in that we never had to cope with the problem of civilian defense. It seems extremely unlikely that we will be that fortunate again. Because of that, the Industrial College believes that no economic mobilization plan is complete unless it provides for adequate civilian defense. For that reason we have with us this morning, Mr. James M. Landis, who will speak to us on the organization and administration of civilian defense.

During the recent war Mr. Landis was a regional director of civilian defense and later served as Director of Civilian Defense. It was his responsibility to organize and administer an agency which was never required to fulfill its basic functions because we were never bombed. How well our civilian defense would have functioned no one knows. However, during that process a great many principles and policies were developed. We would be extremely remiss in our future planning if we did not take into account the lessons of the past. For that reason I take extreme pleasure in presenting to you Mr. James M. Landis, former Director of Civilian Defense.

MR. LANDIS: I think Colonel Stamm has made one point that is quite correct and that is that in the next war, if we get involved, civil defense will be more important than it has ever been before. Actually before this last war there was little demanded in the way of civil defense. It was only this last war that brought the problem up to the degree of importance that it did possess. Looking ahead, of course one sees that the very nature of the whole problem of civilian defense will change radically because of the introduction of the atomic bomb. It is impossible for me to express any ideas of what those changes will be both in organization and technique, because I don't know much about the atomic bomb. We never had the occasion to consider the nature of defensive tactics, techniques, and organization to meet a weapon of that type. So, while I will have to talk in terms of history rather than attempt to prophesy the nature of an organization for civil defense for the next war, I would like to make a couple of points.

One of them is the importance of an adequate organization for civil defense as a matter of diplomacy. Recently I had occasion to go through with a great deal of care the whole development of the Munich crisis. I don't think one can understand the moves made by Mr. Chamberlain and his associates and Deladier and Hitler without some understanding of the terrific inadequacy of ARP, air raid protection, as it was in those days.

Taking another illustration, those of you who have watched Churchill's memoirs will notice again how the absence of adequate air raid protection

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Now, I don't know how far we have gone in resolving this question of shelters. Some work was done on it during the war. Designs of so-called effective shelters against high explosives were produced and were tested, and I assume they were fairly good for the weapons of that time. But what shelter will mean in the light of evolving weapons is a very important question for adequate research, and research now. One should not wait on these things until the eventuality is upon us.

Another field for research is that of black-out and camouflage. Black-out is a complicated, difficult technique to perfect. It took months and months to effect a successful black-out of the larger municipal areas in this country. The American theory, for example, of black-out was quite different from the continental. It seemed to us that our theory was valid for the kind of attack that we envisaged.

You have to consider your theory of black-out in relation to the problem of attack. For example, in England they dealt constantly with the danger of attack night after night. It was always there. Their chances of warning in advance were not so great as they were here. Our problem here was a sporadic attack with the likelihood of fairly adequate warning. Under those circumstances to keep industry blacked out as it was blacked out in England would have been foolish. It would have reduced the productivity of your society that much without a corresponding gain. The American theory was to black out in the event of a warning, with the theory that warning would come, say, ten minutes or fifteen minutes in advance of an attack and that during that period the condition of complete black-out could be achieved in any desired area. I simply mention that to indicate that research on the theory of black-out is very important from the standpoint of using it as an instrumentality to meet attack.

Camouflage represented a field of research in which so far as civilian defense was concerned practically nothing was done. What was done in that field was done from an Army standpoint and done with Army combat tactics in mind and was not necessarily adaptable at all to the civilian defense picture. For example, the use of camouflage in black-out tactics was experimented with in several instances, but never with enough of an effort to be sure that we could work out the imposition of a false light pattern upon a city and thereby decoy raiders to false targets. That and the problem of the degree to which camouflage is effective in preventing industrial plants from attack are things that, so far as we were aware, had not received the exploration that I think subjects of that nature should receive.

Another field of research that I think is worth mentioning is that of communication. We learned a lot of things about communication, but there are a lot of things still to learn. Warning devices are one. It is not an easy job to produce warning devices for American cities that will adequately signal the coming of an attack, whatever type of signal

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Third, the work is essentially local in character. Your forces don't need mobility. They are community forces, to deal with community problems generally speaking. Mobility is required in certain fields, that is, a certain degree of mobility, such as in the organization of your communities to consolidate fire-fighting apparatus, so that fire-fighting apparatus can move, we will say, from Boston to Springfield or New Haven or wherever it might be needed. Those things have to be worked out, and worked out across state lines as well as across municipality lines. Again your emergency medical services have to have a degree of mobility, so that they can be moved. But you can't move the masses of other services. You can't move your air raid wardens. They stay put until they are bombed out. Your auxiliary policemen are about the same. The fire fighters and all that type of services that we had stay put. Therefore you have to think in terms of local organizations.

As you look at this variety of services that you need, you find that you are dealing with an expansion of city services in the main. They include, however, types of services that the cities don't usually have. Sometimes some voluntary organizations have them, such as the Red Cross.

That very fact poses, I think, a focal problem of local organization. Who is going to run the show locally? Is it going to be somebody attached to the municipality, a commissioner of police, a fire commissioner, or somebody else with experience in municipal administration? Or is it going to be somebody from the outside who doesn't come from the municipal services themselves?

That really was a fighting point in the organization of the services in this country. Some communities followed one plan and other communities followed another. New York City, for example, insisted upon the municipal officials, the police commissioner, the fire commissioner, or whoever it was, generally taking charge of each one of these services. Other cities generally followed a different principle. My own judgment is that the latter principle was probably more successful than the other. The difficulty in dealing with a municipal official is that he is likely not to have much flexibility. He is likely to go down a certain line and be cut to a certain pattern.

It is also, I think, psychologically bad to take the man who is there in office in order to do an unusual job. The difficulty with a man from the outside is that he may not have had the proper administrative experience. He may be untrained in certain tactics that the city official would be trained in. But he does have the advantage of evoking a new order and a new spirit in the community which I think the community officials lack.

There is always that problem of adjustment between the regular and municipal forces which have to be drawn into the civilian defense mechanism and those volunteer forces which are larger in number who have to work

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In that connection I would like to stress one point that I thought was a great lack in our organization in the late war, and that was the lack of contact with top Army personnel. I think the contact has to be on almost as high a level as you can get, say, the Chief of Staff level. On the one occasion where we really were worried about an air attack I fortunately was successful in getting that kind of contact, but it was by accident rather than by design. That was the situation just preceding the Battle of Midway, where fortunately we were informed about the situation so we could make certain preparations on the Pacific Coast which I think would have been helpful if the Battle of Midway had gone the other way, leaving the Pacific Coast open to attack by marauders from Japan. I think that kind of contact is very important.

Now, in the recent war, we knew that it was merely a matter of sporadic isolated attacks. So that kind of constant contact with Operations or the Chief of Staff, or whatever is the effective place in the Army, was not necessary. But I certainly would think that if you are dealing with a threat of really serious attack from the air, constant attacks from the air, as part of the general, over-all plan of the enemy, the contact between the top civilian defense personnel and the appropriate Army level ought to be a very close one.

I can't leave this question of organization without saying one word about the fact that a legal basis for the organization of civilian defense should be laid and laid now. The difficulties that arose in the late war from the lack of any legal basis for the exercise of authority were very serious. It is important, for example, that when you have a warning signal on one side of the Hudson River it will do the same thing and sound the warning signal in the same way on the other side of the Hudson River. Actually they were doing exactly the opposite. Yonkers had one type and across the river in New Jersey they had the signals reversed. This may seem to be a simple problem, but it is very difficult to get these people to act together if they don't want to.

To illustrate some of the difficulties: In California and all up and down the Pacific Coast we issued regulations in our own name. We had no authority whatever to do that, but people obeyed them and people went to jail under those regulations. Gradually those regulations were supplanted by legal ones. But it took time to get simple legal regulations as to how traffic should move, how people should move under conditions of black-out, conditions of air raid, and the like.

It seemed to me that we gradually evolved toward the plan that might be the best along this line. We started off concentrating regional authority in the army service commands, but it was difficult to tell just where the authority of the army service commander was and where the authority of a defense commander extended. I never quite knew. Sometimes I don't think they knew either. But we gradually evolved toward the point where

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want to do anything about collecting fat. They didn't want to be concerned with many of these other activities which were terribly important from the standpoint of war.

Of course you can make terrible mistakes in a thing like that because of the pressure that is coming on any organization that is new in dealing with it. People said, "Perfume will win the war." You know about that. You saw that happen during the war. There is always that kind of thing. But despite those pressures--and there were plenty of them--we got into a physical fitness program. It turned out to be a mess. But the other activities were frightfully important. Some of them were initiated locally, some initiated from Washington, like entertainment and child care. All of those are terribly important from the standpoint of industrial productivity and morale.

Now, I think one makes a mistake if one thinks of civilian defense as limited simply to air raid protection. Civilian defense should be thought of in terms of welding together the resources of volunteer power in this country by such activities as war may really call for. You can avoid so much waste if you handle that problem on a proper organizational basis. There are a hundred tasks to be done by volunteers. There are a hundred different bureaucracies in Washington that have those same tasks to do. If those hundred bureaucracies go to each community in a hundred different ways, you have terrific confusion. They haven't any idea what to do or where to put their efforts. Now, the organization of that properly, the sending of it down one pipe line to a group of people who will say, "Yes, we have to put our effort on this; we have to put our effort on that. Here, you do this," which is the job of a defense council, makes rhyme and reason out of what otherwise to the local community just looks like a terrific mess of bureaucratic demands.

I think also that, inasmuch as the business of air-raid protection is largely a business of standing and waiting patiently, those waiting periods should be capitalized upon by having those volunteers active in some other service. For example, one community, Wheeling, West Virginia, was very well organized. They had air raid wardens posted all over the city. There was not much chance of that place being bombed, but they were terribly enthusiastic air raid wardens. Well, you get a little tired after months of not doing anything; but those people had the sense to turn those air raid warden posts into centers of community activity which would take on anything that was called for in the prosecution of the war. That kind of thing happened all over the United States, and it was worth-while happening.

So I am always glad to see the expansion of civilian defense beyond mere air raid protection to general volunteer activities, because I feel they would mutually react upon each other and work to their mutual advantage. I think that proved to be so. Of course, if the protective services are so active day in and day out that they have to spend all their time

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QUESTION: You said that you would like to have a better legal basis in the future for trying to get uniformity. Would you expand a little on what you think should be the type of legislation? Should it be state or Federal, and how would you go about getting it through?

MR. LANDIS: It should be Federal. I don't think there is any question about that. Maybe it ought to be a combination of all three. We had a so-called model municipal ordinance for defense council action and a model for state action. We were fairly successful in getting a uniform pattern throughout many of the areas by coordinated activities of a lot of different units. But if the problem is to get a lot of people to do one thing uniformly in an area larger than a state, there is only one way to do it and do it quickly and that is through the Federal Government.

The legal basis used in the late war was an Executive order originally designed to move dangerous aliens from coastal areas into the middle of the country. Because it had a certain little phrase in it, we used the order as a basis of an entire code, a traffic code and what-not, for large areas of this country, like the whole east coast and the whole west coast.

That kind of basis, I think, is the wisest basis--the Federal basis--as you just can't be too sure of uniformity of action along another line. I don't think people who have had no experience in this line realize the kind of jealousies that can be created in this country. There is a constant jealousy in this country between states on the one hand and cities on the other. The cities are often politically different from the States. Boston goes Democratic, while the State goes Republican. New York City and Albany are different, and Chicago and Illinois. In the late days Mayor LaGuardia didn't want to go to the state governor in order to reach his former employee, the Director of the Office of Civilian Defense. Neither did Ed Kelly want to go through the governor down at Springfield in order to deal with Chicago's problems. It is not only that kind of jealousy, but collisions of pressures which arise constantly in American political life. We had the same thing between the States on the one hand and the Federal Government on the other. There is only one way to break that down in the last analysis, and that is to use the highest power that you can, which is the Federal power. It may be that you can play around with it a while and hope to get uniformity by state action. That is very desirable if you can get it. If you can't get it, you have to do it by Federal action.

QUESTION: In the next war, if there is one, it appears very likely that we will have a great deal of trouble with subversive activities. How would you relate the campaign or the program to combat subversive activities with the civilian defense program?

MR. LANDIS: The only place where we can relate it--and we did relate it at one point and were careful to relate it at one point alone--is in the plant protection field. We didn't want to have air raid wardens and ordinary

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have an advisory group there representing the mayors, the state governors, and other influences of that type in American life. If my good friend Earl Mallory, who was in the Municipal League, hadn't been very close to our operations, we could easily have run into trouble in thousands of municipalities by some simple slip. The same thing is true with the State governments. We could easily have run into trouble with them. But if you have somebody representing these people closely in the council and you turn to him for advice, that is very helpful. I just wanted to add that as a point that I hadn't mentioned before.

About the coordination in the Federal Government of the political side by an advisory committee, a thing of that nature might work. The experience of the British in this thing is enlightening. They elevated the Office of Civilian Defense to a very high point politically. Sir Herbert Morrison, through his civilian defense activities and because of the importance of civilian defense to England as a whole, became one of the very important men in government. Any call for volunteers would have much power if it emanated from that kind of position. Whether it would have as great power if it came from a position not so close to the President of the United States I don't know. Those are things to be thinking of. Suppose you have to slap down a series of state governors, the closer you are to the President of the United States the bigger your power is under those circumstances to deal with the political influences that can easily arise in that picture and damage it quite a bit.

QUESTION: Would you make a few remarks regarding civilian requirements and industrial requirements?

MR. LANDIS: I know very little about them. I struggled with them, trying to get some supplies for civilian defense, and I never really succeeded in learning the ropes as to how to do it. I think I am out of my depth on that.

QUESTION: This is along the same thought. Have you any suggestion on the question of what the government's policy is on financing the civilian defense activities both in peacetime in preparation for war as well as the government's financial responsibility during wartime?

MR. LANDIS: That, of course, is a very tough problem. I don't think you would have much difficulty in financing the skeleton personnel that you need during peacetime to do the type of thinking and planning and research that I was talking about. Some of that research can be justifiably undertaken by the Army as part of its regular activities anyway. But when you come to equipment, I don't believe you could get through a bill even in this Congress for, say, fifty million dollars in order to provide some equipment that you think might be necessary for civilian defense in case of war. We had a hard enough time getting a hundred million dollars in the middle of the late war, and that is very little equipment when you really analyze it in terms of the needs of this country.

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MR. LANDIS: First of all, you ought to have a plan of organization for civilian defense. A standard type of pattern along that line has to be adopted. It ought to be authoritatively done. When war comes, everybody telegraphs to the President of the United States and says, "What shall I do?" If anybody has any idea down here in Washington as to what should be done, these people will do it, whether it is good or bad. So Washington ought to have the plan, and it ought to make the plan available now.

I think the plan should call for state defense directors, state defense councils, perhaps local defense directors and local defense councils. I see no reason why today the governor of Massachusetts, who has an adjutant general, could not have a state defense director, unpaid but still attached to the staff under him. You don't have to have too many men in those skeletonized staffs in the States and the large municipalities. New York City ought to have a plan today as to what they would do in the event of war, how it would again organize its over-all war services. I think you could talk to the Mayor of New York and say that that should be done, that the Federal Government thinks he ought to do that; and I think you could get a good deal of cooperation from those people. It could be that the Mayor of New York would say, "I will put Bob Moses in control of this thing." He may not have to make that judgment. But at least he would be advised to create a job in which to put somebody in case the situation got tough.

Some of those defense directors in the States were very good people. They did an awful lot of work. We always find people of that kind during the war. In peacetime these same people might do quite a bit of work in defense work, because they have a feeling that this is worth while. You have to be sure that you carry that thought across, that the job is worthy of being done. You have to caution them against doing a boondoggling job or you won't get the response that you should. If you write the job up adequately so people believe in it, I don't think you will have much difficulty now in getting skeleton organizations in the States and the large municipalities.

COLONEL SWAM: Mr. Landis, on behalf of the Commandant I want to thank you very much for a very fine lecture.

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