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ORGANIZATION AND INTEGRATION OF COMMUNICATIONS IN WAR

2 June 1948

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## ORGANIZATION AND INTEGRATION OF COMMUNICATIONS IN WAR

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COLONEL TEMPLE: In economic mobilization communications plays quite a vital and often unseen role. Our speaker this morning will discuss control of communications facilities in war. Colonel Guest.

COLONEL GUEST: The faculty and students of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, when I started to work on control of communications, it was not immediately clear to me how this subject could tie into the problems of industrial mobilization, which you have been studying so assiduously during the past eight months. As I began piecing together the story of control of communications, I found, however, that the subject might be particularly apt to your studies; as a matter of fact, I found that in few aspects of our national life do military requirements more directly conflict with the requirements of industry and other civilian activities than in the field of communications.

This situation arises primarily from the simultaneously pyramiding communications demands of industry and military agencies incident to industrial and military mobilization and secondarily from the necessity for curtailing or suspending communications with other countries and closing down means which are susceptible to interception by an enemy.

The first problem, that is, competition for communication service and facilities, obviously calls for some superior authority to establish priorities and make allocations to industry, the military, and the public. The second problem of curtailing communications involves economic hardship on some commercial enterprises and interruption of private intercourse with other nations. Such authority clearly can be exercised only by the Chief Executive.

I shall attempt to trace the record of the application of control authority in the hope that an examination of the difficulties and shortcomings as well as of the successes experienced may throw light on similar problems with which graduates of this College must cope.

The foundation for the present powers of the President to control communications was laid in a provision of the War Powers Act of 10 August 1917, whereby the President was empowered to regulate interstate and foreign commerce, to assign priorities, to use Armed Forces to prevent the obstruction of interstate and foreign commerce, and to issue any orders he found necessary for the national defense and

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This foresighted action made the authority for control of radio communication immediately available under specified conditions of emergency and made it unnecessary to prepare and process special legislation in time of emergency.

In 1934, the Congress passed the "Communications Act of 1934" which superseded the Radio Act of 1927 and brought all forms of communication, including wire communication, under the jurisdiction of a new "Federal Communications Commission".

The Army and the Navy made a valiant effort to have the radio communication control provisions of the 1927 act expanded to include wire communication. They were successful in the Senate Bill but failed in the House measure, with the result that wire control was not included in the compromise measure.

One might profitably philosophize on this episode. Radio communication--I am not talking about government communications, but commercial communications--was principally external in character. The average citizen was isolated from it by the intermediate, domestic telegraph and telephone systems. They had little direct interest in what measures of control the President might impose on radio facilities. Wire communication was a different matter. Telegraphic communication entered the very heart of community and industrial life while the telephone had a place in the personal and family life of practically every citizen. I venture to predict that this factor of personal contact may well be the determining one in many cases wherein, from a military point of view, the application of drastic controls may otherwise seem desirable.

Three specific powers for control of communications by the President are contained in the Communications Act of 1934: The first is strictly a war power and authorizes the President to establish preferences and priorities to such communications as, in his judgment, may be essential to the national defense and security. Note that this provision is contingent upon the existence of a war and makes possible the establishment of priorities for any private, government or industrial communications as well as for military communications.

The second power also depends upon the existence of a war. It makes unlawful the obstruction or retarding of any interstate or foreign communication and permits the use of Armed Forces of the United States to prevent any such obstruction or retardation.

The third power is an emergency one. It is applicable during war, a threat of war, a state of public peril or disaster, other national emergency, or in order to preserve the neutrality of the United States. The President is empowered to suspend or amend rules and regulations of the Federal

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and Navy Departments on these proposals. The first significant conclusion reached was that the proposed Army-Navy Board would have little chance of enlisting the whole-hearted cooperation of civilian agencies unless, as a matter of practical expediency, they were included in authoritative positions. Consequently, a "Defense Communication Planning Board" was proposed, to consist of the Secretaries of State, War, Navy, Treasury, and the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission. At this early stage you will see that political expediency was impelling. The inclusion of the Secretary of the Treasury was advanced by the Navy Department because of the Coast Guard--whether for two nautical votes or to provide three military votes to two civilian is not of record. Whatever the intent, it failed of its purpose completely. The Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, in charge of Coast Guard affairs, who eventually became the Treasury Department representative on the Defense Communications Board, does not appear to have sponsored any Coast Guard propositions pertaining to communications and consistently sided with his fellow political appointees against the military members when there was a division of opinion. This continuously discomfited the Military members.

There may be a lesson to be learned from this experience. If there is a lesson, it is to make certain of the contributions that prospective members will make to such civil-military organizations and to avoid honorary memberships. Communications are a serious business to the Armed Forces and to the public; control of communications must be entrusted to no organization subject to influences other than the safety and well-being of the people of the United States.

On 21 February 1940, the Joint Board approved the "Study of the Control of Communications" insofar as the "Defense Communications Planning Board" was concerned and authorized the Chief Signal Officer of the Army and the Director of Naval Communications to discuss the proposed Executive order with representatives of the State Department, the Treasury Department, and the Federal Communications Commission. The Joint Board also established the policy--this is important because it still exists--that the Army and Navy should never supersede civil administration in the administration of law and order unless, and until, the national safety is jeopardized. This policy anticipated delegation of Presidential powers to control communications to the Armed Forces only where military operations were involved and left administration of civil activities with the same authorities which administer them in peace. Subsequent experience proved these policies sound.

From February until 24 September 1940, the draft of the Executive order circulated from agency to agency. The most significant changes were in membership. The original cabinet-level membership was reduced to the Assistant Secretary of State in charge of the Division of International Communications, the Chief Signal Officer of the Army, the

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anything referring to the Federal Communications Commission be turned over to the White House. That sounds a little like the Dr. Condon incident, but in this case it involved tons of records. When I explained that to Pa Watson, I was appointed custodian of records by the President and given a vault about the size of this room down in the bowels of the Pentagon. We had to strip the Secretary of War's Office and every office in the War Department of anything of record pertaining to the Federal Communications Commission and put them behind locked doors. Those records made it extremely awkward for the Board of War Communications to function because in the Army we had to operate by ear or by Braille or something. There were no papers. Every time we got a letter from FCC, bang, it had to go down into the vault. In short, at a time when relations between the Military and the industry and the Congress were of the greatest importance and when officials of the military departments were overburdened with preparations for defense, the departments were involved in a vicious political controversy. The military members of the Board had to be constantly on the alert to forestall Board actions originating in the Federal Communications Commission which, while purporting to be in the interests of national defense, might actually be attempts to implement pet projects of the Federal Communications Commission which were beyond its own powers.

I submit that the leadership of agencies, such as the Board, should be responsible only to the President and have no other allied interests or functions.

Now as to operations of the Board. Committees for each phase of communications were formed from appropriate representatives of industry and interested civilian organizations. These committees chose their own chairmen and representatives of the Armed Forces avoided taking leading roles.

At the organization meetings of these committees on 6 January 1941 --you can recall the temper of the country then-- remember this was two years after the Chief Signal Officer initiated his study; that is how long it takes to get things like that going--there was an interesting variety of reactions from the members. Some came with open minds, some were apprehensive and on the defensive while many were frankly skeptical and had a "what's all the fuss about" attitude.

There was a distinct reluctance to produce data on operations which it took months to break down. This attitude must be attributed in great part to participation of the Federal Communications Commission. Most companies were afraid--and rightly so--that any information they produced might be used against them by the regulatory agency. The Armed Forces were not suspect in this connection and it is well to bear this in mind for the future, although the new National Security Resources Board appears to be in a position to engender respect and

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representative of the Federal Communications Commission which assigns frequencies for all nongovernmental purposes. Domination or control of this committee had long been an ambition of the chairman. The order appointing the Defense Communications Board directed that the IRAC should act as a committee of the Board in an advisory capacity. Now, we still don't know what that meant. None of us concerned with the preparation of the order intended interference with functions of the IRAC. However, the Chairman took every opportunity to undercut its authority. This proves that one can never be too careful in phrasing basic documents of this character. The vigilance which we had to exercise in protecting the IRAC brings us again to the point of character of membership.

An individual having an overweening primary preoccupation can thoroughly obstruct the operations of an otherwise impartial agency in which he serves in a casual or extracurricular fashion. An example of this lies in the story of the Armed Forces Broadcast Service.

You are all familiar with the splendid, I think, broadcast service given our forces. The first stations, little ones of about 50 watts, were established at isolated garrisons in Alaska and the Aleutians--1500 to 2500 miles away from any standard broadcasting stations. The IRAC granted frequencies for these stations without question. They saw immediately the need for it. But when the board of War Communications Chairman heard of this operation by the Army, he challenged it in the Board and effectively blocked Board sanction, although the Board had not been asked about it. He raised such a fuss that it became necessary for the Secretary of War to explain the mission to the President and request his approval. All this was in a time of extreme stress for all concerned.

The President requested the Secretary of War and the Chairman to get together to try to reach an agreement. It is one of the bright spots in my life that I was one of the few present at the meeting between Mr. Stimson and the Chairman. This character got up and with impassioned gestures heatedly stated that for the War Department to decide what soldiers were to hear was a violation of the first amendment to the Constitution--a violation of the right of free speech. He maintained that only commercial interests, under the all-wise guidance of the Federal Communications Commission, should be entrusted with the selection of soldiers aural entertainment.

At this point Secretary Stimson--he was a great gentleman--rose up like Jehovah and in majestic, measured tones told off his visitor. His adjectives, of which "demagogue" and "bureaucrat" were the kindest, made our four-letter Anglo-Saxon words used on such occasions seem like baby talk by comparison. This individual was thoroughly outclassed. The Armed Forces Broadcast Stations stayed in operation under Army control.

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WPB. Construction of additional broadcast stations was effectively stopped in spite of strong political pressures.

It not only exercised a negative control in limiting construction to where it was required, but it influenced some positive actions, an outstanding one of which was the construction of a main communications line inside the coastal range on the west coast. The existing facilities at the start of the war were extremely vulnerable in the event of an attack on the west coast.

I would like to summarize the experience in control of communications. First, necessary emergency authority should be immediately available in current statutes. Secondly, an implementing agency should be organized and available when needed; operation as a planning agency prior to a state of war is extremely valuable in view of the length of time required to get organized and producing. Thirdly, responsible officials should not have outside associated responsibilities. Fourthly, voluntary cooperation of industry and businesslike arrangements between the Military and industry can, in most part, accomplish desired measures of control without the use of arbitrary orders.

I thank you.

QUESTION: It has been our thought in preparing for economic mobilization of having a sort of second President as director of economic mobilization and under him a half dozen major divisions, of which one would be the director of utilities and under that a director of communications who would be given all the war powers of the President; that is, delegate to him those war powers authorized under the Communications Act, and, in general, do the work of the Communications Division of WPB during the late war and of the Board of War Communications.

Now, after that long introduction, my question is to ask you to give us your ideas on that setup and to comment as to the advisability of having that particular setup plus a board of war communications or some other method whereby the views of the Chief Signal Officer and his counterparts in the Navy and Air Force could be transmitted to this director of war communications?

COLONEL GUEST: One thing appears right off to me, that you are lumping an awful lot of responsibility in one organization. The telephone industry is very complex. The operating industry, the manufacturing part of it is very complex. The radio industry has great ramifications. You need thoroughly qualified experts to exercise any control and there are few people available who are versatile enough to cover all the angles, such as you propose.

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