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MANPOWER PROBLEMS IN A WAR COMMUNITY

10 February 1949

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10 February 1943

MR. PCLUMOFF: General Holman, members of the faculty, students of the Industrial College; This morning we will consider the manpower problem from the community aspect, particularly from that of Baltimore. We are most fortunate this morning in having with us the individual who is responsible for the direction of the vocational educational program in Baltimore. Consequently, he has acquired a great deal of valuable experience in one of the most important phases of manpower mobilization, that is, the training of workers for war industries. He has taught vocational education teachers Training Courses at the University of Maryland, Pennsylvania State College, Colorado State College, and Johns Hopkins University. I would now like to introduce to you Dr. Charles W. Sylvester, Assistant Superintendent of Schools in Baltimore.

DR. SYLVESTER: Thank you. General Holman, gentlemen of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, and guests: That introduction is quite to the point. It seems that some things have been well recalled. It is a real privilege to appear before you this morning.

I have been concerned with many problems of manpower over the years, including two world war periods. For nearly half a century, I have been a student, observer, and worker in agriculture, in business, the trades and industries, education and civic endeavors. I, therefore, do have some knowledge of manpower problems and their implications.

I have on this occasion reduced to writing what I want to follow rather closely. I want to cover the subject, and I don't want to be misunderstood. I am taking the platform at this time with the background of the Economic Mobilization Course of which I was a member for two weeks in December. We greatly admired the manner in which that program was conducted by four officers--two of them from the Navy, I believe, and two from the Army. It was a great occasion for us in Baltimore and one which was thoroughly appreciated.

Manpower is one of the most important factors in war as well as in time of peace. It is indispensable, yet it is not more important than other factors in economic and military mobilization. Manpower alone does not guarantee our national security, nor does it become fully effective in the military or industrial forces without proper relationship to all factors of military and economic mobilization. While quantity and quality of manpower affect the total requirements of a war community, it is perfectly obvious that the classification, vocational conditioning, equitable distribution, and proper assignment to war and civilian task needs is the key to the most effective results.

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There were many manpower problems in wartime Baltimore during World War II. This was also true in World War I. Some of the problems were similar in each war period, perhaps not so serious in World War II, but just as troublesome. The lessons of World War I were not heeded fully. Manpower needs should have been met more promptly and more adequately in the last war. Authority to mobilize manpower was never fully mandatory. Conditions did improve greatly as the war progressed, but it is generally agreed that considerable time was lost in making ready for war. There were shortages of manpower, improper assignment to occupations, questionable uses in many instances, labor hoarding by some employers, soldiering and often loafing on the job or evading work by various and devious methods. Shortages of materials, naturally, contributed to low production, but it is quite possible that slow-down practices or controlled output were also responsible for delays in supplying war equipment at least in the early days of the war.

A factor of significant importance to the Armed Forces, which was by-passed, condoned, or only partially effected by the war communities, involved the proper selection and complete conditioning of manpower for all essential and less essential occupations. Education for all youth is still in the discussion stage. Much progress in education was made during the period between the two World Wars and since World War II, but so far as a large number of youth are concerned, the progress has meant little.

Too many youth leave school too early. At least half of Baltimore's school population withdraw from school before they reach the tenth grade. Many of this large group drop out at each lower grade level before the tenth grade. They, therefore, have a very limited education and little, if any, preparation for work. Of those who enter the tenth grade, only half graduate from high school. The problem of providing suitable, attractive, and practical education for youth, with sufficient holding power and recognized value, in school is staggering. The problem must be met if manpower in the days ahead is to be of the proper quality.

Illiteracy in our great land is extensive. Too large a percentage of the country's population is unable to read and write. In the last analysis any illiteracy is too much. Illiteracy affects every community either because of poor educational facilities, which causes most of the illiteracy, or by transfer from such communities to others which are normally free from illiteracy. That happens to be our case. More of it has come in than has, I think, occurred at our hands. Health and physical education programs are inadequate to the building of strong, healthy bodies of all the people. These conditions create basic manpower problems which are insurmountable to military needs and critical in manpower mobilization for industrial and civilian requirements.

Vocational education played an important part in the training of men and women for the war industries and also quite extensively for various branches of the Armed Forces in World War II. This story of the impact of manpower mobilization in wartime Baltimore grows largely out of experiences acquired during and preceding the Program of Vocational Training for War Production Industries. Contacts and relationships with the many wartime agencies, observations of manpower conditions, and the actual cooperation with management and labor in the war production industries provided a variety of facts and information about manpower problems.

In Baltimore the Vocational Schools anticipated the National Defense Training Program by developing a specific trade training course in cooperation with the aeronautical industry in July 1939, to prepare workers in airplane metal work, including layout, drilling, and riveting.

There was not only a great need for trained workers, but there were many young men who had graduated from high school out of employment. It was felt that these jobs and the young men should be brought together. This was accomplished through the cooperative efforts of the aeronautical industry and the Department of Education. The shops were set up in the Edison Vocational High School. The course opened on 5 July 1939. During the summer there were 167 high school graduates enrolled, 164 of whom completed the intensive program of training and were subsequently placed at work in the building of airplanes. At least 400 young men were trained and placed through this program before the Defense Program got under way. This was a small beginning of a partial solution to the manpower problem.

Leaders in industry, representatives of labor and government officials, early in 1940, became aware of the serious shortage of trained workers for the trades and occupations essential in a program of national defense. The need for training new workers and the upgrading of men already employed was very apparent to the Baltimore Division of Vocational Education and the United States Office of Education. As a result of many conferences of vocational educators, representing the American Vocational Association, with the cooperation of representatives of the Office of Education, tentative plans were prepared indicating the types of training which could be given by the vocational schools in America. A study of facilities throughout America was made by the United States Office of Education and plans were worked out to provide an extensive National Defense Program. Maryland and Baltimore were represented in nearly all of these deliberations.

There was great interest everywhere in America for such a program of training as well as a willingness on the part of vocational educators to make their contribution to the manpower problem in this emergency. In Baltimore I prepared with my associates a plan for the city under

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date of 17 June 1940, setting forth what we were able to provide in the way of schools, equipment and trained, experienced personnel to conduct classes so essential to National Defense. The plan involved the use of 74 shops and laboratories in 16 schools where we had suitable equipment with which to make this beginning. Sixteen specific courses which had been proposed for the National Defense Training Program were provided. Furthermore, Baltimore offered to provide other facilities as the need for other types of training arose.

On 1 July 1940, the President and the United States Congress requested the Vocational schools of the Nation to help train workers for the war industries. The Program of Vocational Training for War Production Workers, which was conducted in compliance with this request, was a vital factor in the war effort. During the five years ending 31 May 1945, over seven million men and women were trained in the vocational schools of America in new skills, new operations and even for new occupations. This was in addition to some four million trained through the colleges and universities for the higher types of employment. During this period nearly 100,000 men and women pursued pre-employment and supplementary classes under this program in Baltimore.

In addition to this program, gentlemen, there had been previously all-day, part-time, and evening-school courses in which several million youth and adults had been trained. Baltimore, of course, continued this program as it was continued throughout America. The graduates of the all-day schools who did not immediately enter the Armed Forces secured employment easily in critical war occupations. The men and women who took vocational evening courses acquired additional knowledge and new skills which resulted in more efficient work and promotions for many to positions of greater responsibility.

In Baltimore we accepted the call of the Government to this service. We organized new classes quickly and entered upon this program within eight days after the legislation made it possible. Thousands of new workers who had never worked before were trained. Other thousands of workers were upgraded through supplementary courses. It was proved through this endeavor that Vocational Schools, with suitable equipment and supplies, and qualified teachers could do an effective job of training in an emergency as they had proved in peacetime. The public schools were pleased to do their part in this respect and to send workers into industry qualified to begin production work. This program, therefore made possible the use of space and war production tools and equipment in industry for production rather than for training.

Manpower shortages in wartime Baltimore were greatly relieved through migration during the period of World War II. With relief, however, came many difficulties. Manpower--good, bad and indifferent--arrived by devious routes early in the emergency and continued for the

turation of the war. Some were invited by growing industries, others were recruited by the United States Employment Service to meet increasing needs, good wages were an attraction to many, and a great hoard just came without prospect of employment. Migration was a necessity, but the delay in setting up proper controls caused undue hardships, confusion, crime and considerable disorder.

The housing situation was critical even in the early days of the war period. It grew worse with increased migration. Families lived together and often entire families of six to ten existed in one or two rooms. All available structures in our city--possible of conversion--were turned into homes, often of the tenement or substandard variety, but just within sanitary requirements of the city and county. In other words, they did not quite violate our housing regulations. Shanty shacks, summer cottages, and attics were in demand. Automobile trailers of every type and variety were used in large numbers. Several of the industries provided small and large organized trailer camps where some modern conveniences were furnished. New housing was planned quickly and rushed to completion as rapidly as possible in many sections of the city and its vicinity. This brought relief gradually to overcrowded and poor living accommodations. Street car, railroad, and bus transportation was taxed beyond normal capacity. Car pooling was resorted to on a large scale, as it was everywhere, I presume. Private transportation was curtailed to a considerable extent due to gasoline and tire rationing. Difficulty of travel to places of employment was a serious problem in the manpower situation.

Migration brought with it an increase in the school population. Schools in many sections of the community were filled to overflowing. Fortunately, but unfortunately in many respects, there was some relief from overcrowding with the withdrawals of many children from school for work, which was rather easy to secure. There were about 700 children between 14 and 16 years of age on work permits before the war. This number grew by leaps and bounds until as many as 17,000 were in that category. These children, many of whom had very little education and less training for vocations, did alleviate the manpower shortage. They filled vacancies which were caused by men entering the Armed Forces and the war industries.

Juvenile delinquency during the war emergency was probably not much greater than in many previous years. The only exception that could be recognized was with girls. This was due largely to the great number of servicemen in Baltimore almost continuously. There was some relief from delinquency because the teen-age youth were employed in large numbers. Poor living conditions were responsible for some of the delinquency, but it is felt that employment opportunities did more than offset any delinquency arising from living conditions.

Although there was little encouragement from the war production industries, the women of Baltimore indicated considerable interest in training for the defense industries, as was shown by a registration of approximately 3,000 during the first year. They considered training to be the best means of securing employment in war industries. The opportunity for employment during the first six months of the year was very limited, but there was an increasing number of requests for trained women workers by the end of the year.

Their number increased rapidly during the next four years. Women proved their adaptability for many of the occupations in the war industries. As a matter of fact, the work which they did in some occupations was superior to the work which formerly had been done by men. As employment conditions grew more acute with the supply of non workers dwindling, it was necessary to fill their places with trained women. The women of Baltimore were made conscious of their need and importance in the building of the various items of war equipment. Nearly all women soon realized the seriousness of the situation. The next war, and God forbid, will likely be total war and every woman will be required to take her place in essential employment. Large numbers took advantage of training in the war production classes. During such periods of training they found the kind of industrial work for which they were best fitted. They were given careful, complete, basic training by experienced, sympathetic teachers.

Through training, women overcame timidity and fear in the handling of tools and in the operation of machines. That was quite an obstacle in the beginning. They obtained a reasonable understanding of industrial processes, methods of production, operations and materials in their areas of employment. Furthermore, they received, in addition to shop work, adequate training in blueprint reading and some of the things supplemental to the job. Women will be indispensable as a major factor in the total manpower needs of a community in any future emergency.

Problems were acute with respect to the use of negroes in the war industries in the early period of the war. Resistance to their employment was in evidence everywhere. They just were not wanted. Later a few were employed after completion of programs of training. Training proved to be essential and made way for a continuous increase in employment opportunities.

The proposed plan of training for national defense in Baltimore, which was issued on 17 June 1940, included the use of training facilities for negroes in three well-equipped schools. It provided that locally, although the regulations at the time were:

"There must be reasonable assurance that upon completion of the training, persons enrolled in these courses will be employable in jobs which are essential to national defense and for which training is being given."

So in reality we could not even give training in those early days.

In addition to contacting every industry essential to national defense, the State Employment Service--the agency responsible for the placement of all trainees--cooperated with the Department of Education by making a careful study of the need for skilled and semiskilled negro trade workers. The task of fitting these folks into the war industries was difficult. It was impossible to find any places where they could be employed; consequently, it was impossible to offer defense training courses for negroes during the first part of the program.

There was a desire, however, on the part of the schools to be of assistance to negroes if there was even a remote chance for employment. One course in basic auto mechanics for the purpose of training assembly workers was given when it was learned that a probability of opportunity for employment did exist. Because of a lack of interest, or possibly the questionable opportunity for employment, there was such a continuous withdrawal of trainees that it was impossible to keep the class filled.

The second Appropriation Act passed by Congress in October 1940, broadened the scope of the Defense Training Program. It provided:

"No trainee under the foregoing appropriation shall be discriminated against because of sex, race or color; and where separate schools are required by law for separate population groups, to the extent needed for trainees of such groups, equitable provisions shall be made for facilities and training of like quality."

In accordance with the new Act, and as directed by the United States Office of Education, courses similar to those conducted for the white students were provided for the negroes. They continued to enroll until the peak year of 1942-1943, when over 7,000 men and women were enrolled in the various classes. The next year the number dropped to 4,082 and for the last year of training the number was only 2,735. In the meantime they were going in small numbers into industry. We couldn't understand why we hadn't been able to get across to this rather large group of our population--26 percent in our city--that this was one means of their entering these occupations in peacetime.

The employment of negroes, we feel, must be encouraged. They will be a "must" in any future emergency, but they must be capable in order to be of real value. Those who work in the skilled trades will be valuable in war industries. An extensive program of vocational training is a "must" for the youth of today so that we will be ready should any emergency come again.

The War Production Training Program to be effective and complete requires the support and cooperation of local industries. Several of the war production industries in Baltimore cooperated with the training representatives from the beginning in carrying on the War Production Training Program. Their interest and support grew as the program developed. They were very helpful in providing many machines and pieces of equipment, small tools, materials and supplies, and in planning courses to meet their specific needs. They willingly provided skilled workers for many teaching positions. During the last two years, a few firms employed men and women, placed them on their pay rolls, and sent them to public vocational schools for training. This was all-out cooperation. The degree of interest and cooperation was high in many instances. There also was much lack of cooperation, as a number of the war industries showed little or no interest in the War Production Training Program.

In spite of all the difficulties, a definite contribution was made to the war effort. Surveys which were made during the last three years of the program indicated that a large percentage of the trainees, after several months of training, were still employed in the jobs for which they had been trained by the War Production Training Program.

A manpower problem was worked out at the request of the U. S. Army, whereby a special electrical course for men, selected by the U. S. Army was conducted at the Edison Vocational High School in 1941. Groups of 50 trainees received training for 30 hours per week for periods of 13 weeks. More than 400 men completed this special course during the two years of its operation. The entire expense of this course was borne by the U. S. Army and the public school system. At the end of two years, the project was completed and these men were assigned to various places in the country as training officers for this work. We had a fine commendation from Brigadier General W. R. Shultz, Ordnance Department, Chief of Military Training Division, telling us that the training program had been a real contribution.

Typical of manpower development was a special vocational training program conducted for one year at the request of the United States Signal Corps. It is not necessary for me to take time to go into that, but I simply want to point out that this whole manpower problem from our standpoint was very vital and could be very well helped through our own Department of Education for the war industries and also for these many special requests which came to us from the Armed Forces.

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Perhaps the most important factor in the War Training Program was the availability of highly qualified instructors, from the standpoint of education and trade experience. Gentlemen, I say to you, the intervening years between World War I and World War II provided a development which was a God-send during this emergency. We had trained a large number of teachers throughout America. We had teachers from industry and from business who knew their jobs and they were capable of taking in others with trade experience and helping them to become teachers rather rapidly. We furnished supervision. That was our job, and that is the reason we were able to accomplish as much as we did.

As trained and experienced instructors who were masters of their trade were absolutely necessary for proper instruction, it was necessary to select instructors carefully for the War Production Training Program. The program was very successful because it was conducted by qualified personnel.

While vocational training was made as thorough and as extensive as possible in the vocational schools, there was and always will be a need for a continuous program of training for men and women after entering employment. It is not possible for vocational schools to turn out finished and thoroughly qualified workers. The job of training by business and industry is still ahead, no matter what is accomplished in the schools, colleges and universities to train for trade occupations in America.

The Training-within-Industry Program was an effective service, but it was intensive and short and needed to be extended. In order that they might be fully qualified for their jobs, workers were urged to take advantage of the many supplementary training courses offered on the job within working hours. Many of these courses were conducted by our teachers from the public schools. This service was expanded during the war.

Many manpower problems occurred in connection with the training of men and women for the war industries. The lack of coordination of the various training agencies, the lack of understanding and confidence in training programs, the fear over the possible loss of workers, the competition between training agencies and the desire for self-aggrandizement of some training directors were detrimental to the training effort; I say that quite sincerely.

More persons would have been trained by us had it been possible to recruit a greater number of men and women for such training. There was great competition to get workers behind the doors of war industries so that some other industry might not get them. These are some of the things, I think, we should keep in mind for the future.

Many of the war production industries developed both pre-employment and supplementary classes within their industries for workers on their pay rolls. I believe that basic training might well have been given, including the weeding out of misfits, outside of the war industries and then how these industries continue that job after the selection through the basic training had been made.

The Training-within-Industry Program by government agencies reached a large number of workers who felt that no further training was needed. Some of these workers did 10 hours of training and that was tops so far as they were concerned. We know it was only the beginning.

The United States Employment Service had difficulty because its employers were intent on placing people in industries without training. I talked with them many times, but they thought that was where they would get their credit. They were not concerned with having workers go through basic courses before placement. Consequently, there was much improper placement.

Only a few of the industries were willing to pay trainees while in training in the war production classes. Where this was possible, the training, of course, was most effective.

While the enrollment in the supplementary classes was rather large, the long work hours deterred many workers from taking such training.

Gentlemen, there were many reasons why the war production industries developed their own training programs on a rather large scale. In some industries the director was bent on building as large a program as he could, thinking, of course, he would be fixed for the future there. It didn't often work out quite that way. What we need in a war community such as Baltimore, is more united cooperation in a great job of this kind.

Out of the past experiences should come more complete plans for the future wartime and peacetime needs. New procedures and new methods of meeting problems in a future mobilization will be needed. Recommendations and suggestions for more efficient manpower mobilization are presented for future consideration.

1. Migration into a war community should be properly controlled and regulated in accordance with needs and the availability of ready employment, housing, schools, and self-preservation.

2. Stockpiling of trade, mechanical, and industrial skills--our human resources--is as important as huge stock piles of materials, enormous finances, and vast industrial resources. All material things without human resources is little guarantee of production of war

quipment. We believe that more attention can be given to the acquiring of skills and knowledge these days and for all days ahead so that there will be less difficulty as young people may be called into the Armed Forces or war industries. We know that they need to be trained technically for almost every job in the Armed Forces. We know, of course, in the war industries that is true. We, in the schools of America, need to expand our facilities and develop our training plans to meet peacetime needs. We believe if we meet peacetime needs adequately, we will be much more prepared for what may come in the future.

3. Adequate civilian defense will require manpower of many kinds. It is believed that youth, adults of the upper ages, and handicapped persons should be conditioned for these jobs.

4. Draft boards will be called upon--and I believe they did an excellent job in the past emergency so far as my contact and knowledge is concerned--to be more thorough and scientific in their relationship to manpower mobilization. It will be necessary to tighten deferment practices. There were deferments for some persons whom I think might as well have gone into the Armed Forces. They might have been taken out of war industries. Some should have remained perhaps who were taken out. This was because of a lack of a full understanding on the part of the persons responsible. It will be necessary to tighten deferment practices although absolute needs in war industries and civilian activities must be handled efficiently. The training of workers for the war industries and the Armed Forces in the future will be a "must."

5. The facilities of public schools, universities, and colleges should be called into service as training agencies at the beginning of any emergency. Schools run for profit should be used only as a last resort. All basic training can well be given in public institutions and under the direction of educational forces. This is the primary training and the selection process. Neither funds nor space should be used in the war industries for this beginning training. I believe industrial facilities should be used for production. But after the beginning training which may take place outside of such war industries, there will be need for continued training on the part of those industries for all time.

6. Experience in the past war indicates that women can be used in large numbers and most efficiently for war production. Whenever possible, they must be called for emergency service in the future.

7. Negroes have proved their worth and must be used to the fullest extent in any future emergency or in total war.

6. The old, the young, and the handicapped must be trained for jobs most suitable for them and within their work capacity. I report to you that the physically handicapped in America have gone forward in a great manner during the past 15 or 20 years. Marvelous kinds of work have been carried on by these handicapped people. I have had some contact with that. Emphasis must be placed on the training of these groups, particularly for civilian jobs, but we believe there is much that can be done by them in war industries.

9. Manpower controls--extensive and perhaps drastic--must be applied in any future emergency. There must be an equitable distribution of manpower. Hoarding must be eliminated entirely and assignment to employment for each and every individual must be in line with his particular ability. I am saying "must" but what I mean to say is that it should be done to the highest possible degree.

10. The work of the employment services must be scrutinized in great detail. Such service must establish the ability of persons for specific kinds of work. They are doing that now. They have made great strides and I think they will do a much better job as time goes on.

11. Now is the time to extend public education to meet the needs of all people. Equitable opportunity must be provided. Illiteracy can and should be eliminated everywhere. Physical education must be more extensive and more effective in order that our people may be made physically fit.

12. Vocational education to meet the needs of the people of America must be advanced and extended during peacetime. Training of larger numbers in the skills required for civilian occupations will do much to condition men and women of America should an emergency arise. Never again should we fail in this objective.

13. Vocational school facilities including buildings and equipment should be made available where shortages now exist. We had to rent buildings during World War II. We did everything possible to put on a strong program during the war. That is what we would do again, but we can do some of the things now and be ready for the future. More facilities will alleviate any serious situation. In any other emergency, materials and equipment can and should be made available by our industries. It should be no longer necessary to use only new materials for training purposes.

14. In wartime Baltimore there were great quantities of scrap steel needed and available for welding but it couldn't be used because of wartime restrictions. We bought good material and cut it up for welding practice because of a lack of cooperation. This was waste that is difficult to explain.

15. In order that there may be coordination and understanding of all manpower problems, training should be considered for top management as well as for all other workers.

16. Attention must be given to the complete elimination of juvenile delinquency. This will require better and more attractive school programs, more effective control of teen-age youth, and also of members of the Armed Forces on leave. Juvenile delinquency is a problem now, gentlemen, and we are trying to do what we can to reach these youths and to show them that an extensive education is worth while. The change of the law in Maryland from the compulsory age of 14 to 16, effective as of the first day of July, will put us on the spot in providing suitable courses for this group. Some of these youths realize that the education they have had in the past has meant little to them. Now we are challenged to provide them with types of education which they feel are worth while.

17. Educators, both general and vocational, can be used in the future on the local and national levels with greater effectiveness than in the past war days. Because of their close contact with young people and the critical need of having top-notch educational programs, it is essential that education be represented on most war and emergency agencies. There should be closer cooperation between all agencies in any future emergency.

Thank you, gentlemen.

QUESTION: Dr. Sylvester, my question is on laws. What I have in mind is the fact that before the last war a number of states had laws which would not allow children of, say, 14 or 16, to work, and there were other laws which would prohibit various things to take place, which we knew took place during the war. That brings up another fact; that is, a lot of industries had to carry lawyers on their pay rolls in order to keep out of trouble. So I would appreciate it if you would digress here to comment as to what problems were encountered in state and city laws.

DR. SYLVESTER: There were no doubt many violations. We believe that the compulsory school age of 14 is too low. Whether or not that needed to be changed in the emergency is questionable, but we had many problems because of the huge increase in numbers going to work. It is true some of these children under 16 years of age did get into industries which had been closed to them, and industries had to be careful about the ages that children would give. They had to ascertain the facts. We were called upon time and time again to certify to the ages of youngsters.

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We have a State Bureau of Labor Statistics which has a big job. It is to control situations of that kind. It did very well with 700 at work on permits but with 17,000 it didn't have the force with which to give a very close follow-up. I don't know, of course, that any law will ever correct that situation. It is a question of how well the law can be enforced and how much cooperation can be obtained in the enforcement. There were firms perfectly willing to take these under-age children if they could get away with it. Maybe the emergency justified some of that. I don't know whether I have answered the question or not. Perhaps I haven't, but it is a problem and always will be. You have the same kind of problem on this question of age with respect to under-age youth going into the night clubs, bars, and the like. We believe however, that those younger people should be put into the less essential jobs, which will relieve people for essential jobs when an emergency comes.

QUESTION: Well, I have a parallel question to that. Do you know of any cases in the city area of Baltimore where a firm got into a lot of trouble over the fact that it violated the law?

DR. SYVESTER: I really do not know of any. There were some minor cases but I don't think they got into any serious trouble about it.

QUESTION: Could you comment on the effectiveness of the program carried out after the war, releasing surplus machine tools?

DR. SYVESTER: Yes, sir, I can. Some sections, and we will include Baltimore, were very well treated in that respect. We had to go after the tools. They just didn't care of their own accord, and often the first fellow who got to the place of the surplus equipment was the one who got the equipment. We had two or three men sent on the road because we soon found that the universities and colleges were getting much material that way. We used our equipment very, very hard during the war days and what we received came in time of need. It was confined rather largely to machine tools and metal-working equipment. Some of this included quite a variety of radio and electronics equipment; that type of equipment goes out of date every day, and much of it could not be put to training use.

We fared fairly well, but not nearly so well as some other places. One of the very serious things with respect to that was that there were ways by which some dealers could get in ahead and acquire equipment. In other words, when we were offered equipment at 95 percent off, there just wasn't any equipment. But we could go down on Camden Street and see what looked like the same equipment—that we couldn't buy—at 95 percent off, but which we could purchase there at approximately the full price. In other words, there were ways of getting in and getting war surplus equipment. We think some of the service boys, who had the

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opportunity to buy in the first instance, occasionally took an adviser along. We understand that this adviser was often the dealer who was going to get the equipment later. There was much equipment, it seems to me, that could well have gone into educational institutions that was lost through that process.

QUESTION: The rest of my question has to do with the trend in the type of people taking vocational training. I would like to know what proportion of colored to white are taking the advanced vocational training in the public schools in Baltimore and how many illiterates, approximately, in the private schools that are imported can become skilled workers?

DR. SYLVESTER: I can answer that with respect to our own schools. I can say to you, as I have said on many occasions, that there are some schools at present being operated with huge revenues coming in that take anybody that can struggle through the door. Many of the so-called "fly-by-night" schools are detrimental to the welfare of our veterans. Our tuition is just half that of the private schools because we want only enough money to pay the training bills. We are trying to select those who can profit by certain kinds of courses. The veteran under Public Law 346 has a right to enter any kind of training he desires. All we are trying to give them is the kind of information, kinds of skills, which will be valuable or useful and we will not admit or keep in class anybody who cannot be properly classified.

On the question of illiteracy, all can be given education and training. It is not television; and probably not radio. We must consider each case separately and give some training which each can use. Negroes often don't equal white students. As a matter of fact, you have about as many poor white students as you have good colored students. There are difficulties encountered now with respect to the regular vocational schools. We admit no students to our vocational schools who have not gone through the process of aptitude testing and appraisals of every kind. If they are unable to enter into what is now the vocational high school, they are assigned to the general vocational school. We are trying to be fair with those people and to place them in educational courses where they will succeed and get them ready for the job which we know from experience they will enter. It is their life's needs that we consider.

Had it been possible to get the Veteran's Administration to give a little more attention to advisement for all of the veterans, they would have been better off in regard to training. In other words, under Public Law 16, GI's went through that process and they were given real advice as to what they should take in the way of training. Public Law 346 is not like that; a veteran can take anything he desires--anywhere, any time.

QUESTION

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QUESTION: One point I want clarified, even in your school for veterans, you have 700 colored and 200 white veterans?

DR. SYLVESTER: Yes, that is about right.

QUESTION: What is the proportion of colored to whites taking advanced vocational training in the Sparrows Point area, for example?

DR. SYLVESTER: No, they are not taking the same kind of training in many instances. We have that proportion now, but I will say to you quite frankly that the ratio has continued to change from time to time. White trainees who have gone through training have been able to get employment. It is not the same situation today with regard to colored people in training. We have a great variety of training. We have 200 in tailoring and many of them are going into repair and cleaning jobs. We have established now in cooperation with the industry a garment cleaning course because colored workers can be used when they are ready for employment. But some of the work does not require a high degree of skill. We are going to give trainees everything they can take. That may not answer your question, but it is a difficult one to answer.

QUESTION: Would you comment on how the labor unions fit into this picture of training labor for wartime industry, and then by seeing that proper people get into the proper jobs.

DR. SYLVESTER: Well, with regard to labor unions, many of them have been very cooperative with us in our vocational program. I will just give you an instance that happened recently. Never would I believe that, in Baltimore, the bricklayers would be willing to support pre-employment courses. They are friends of mine, but they told me in the beginning that they didn't want any part of it. They now say, "Get some pre-employment classes going so we can get some good apprentices." They have recognized the pre-employment course for veterans in bricklaying by their interest and aid in the program. They are on the committees and work with us. They are supporting our classes which have an enrollment of about 30 or 40 students at a time.

The union has opposed one private school which has 300 trainees. It doesn't need them. Our program is an instance where we have cooperation. We have cooperation with the electrical union, the steel fitters and plumbers, carpenters and cabinet makers and others. We believe in Baltimore that the unions were very fair to our training program for war industries. In other words, there was no opposition then, and we believe these good conditions are carrying over into peacetime. We have more support now than we ever have had before.

Naturally, gentlemen, the unions are not anxious to have several times as many workers as they will need in any particular kind of work. We in the schools support that attitude. We are trying to set up a variety of courses and to limit the number enrolled in each course, so that there will be an opportunity for employment of all graduates. If we can work with unions, with employer organizations, to that extent, we believe we have accomplished something. Just three or four nights ago, we had closing exercises for oil burner maintenance mechanics where we have the backing of the industry. There were 14 of them. That program has been so effective that it is continuing with increased numbers. There will come a time when we won't want to increase the program beyond a certain point. You will say, "How do you do that? How can you exclude applicants?" We say, "The facilities will accommodate so many, and when they are full, you can't admit any more." That is one good way to control over enrollment. We think the unions have been very fair in our training of veterans and we hope they will continue to be as fair as they have been in the last few years.

QUESTION: Dr. Sylvester, in the early part of your talk you indicated that the authority for the mobilization of manpower during World War II was inadequate. Specifically what authority in your opinion would be adequate for World War III?

DR. SYLVESTER: Well, of course, it would probably be my opinion, but I know that during the early days some industries paid little or no attention to manpower officials. As time went on, there were more rigid controls. It seems to me that you are going to have to set up for "total war" requirements with regard to manpower for industry and manpower for civilian employment, as rigid as you have set up with regard to manpower for the Armed Forces. I think that must come. I am not sure that in the past war we would have needed quite that much, but more teeth were needed in the manpower regulations in my estimation and from my experience. I think if men are to be drafted for the Armed Forces, they should be drafted for all of the jobs in the over-all community. I think that can be done; I think that should be done.

QUESTION: Would you also control migration in that way?

DR. SYLVESTER: Yes, that is right. I don't think over-all migration should take place until the war communities are ready for those people and need them. A check on skills should be made of the people in the local area so as to determine who might be used in the local industries and forestall unnecessary migration. All those people may not need training, but what training is needed should be given on the spot. This is a good way to weed out many who don't have what it takes. If these people need additional training, as happened in Baltimore, it could be given just before they were put into the industries.

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There should be some control through employment services. Migration is essential. Housing is, of course, one of the real problems in connection with that. The restrictions I suggest may be pretty stiff, but that is what I see. We saw so many during the war who skirted around the edge. They did everything possible and used all sorts of influence to do certain things which were not in keeping with war needs. Some teachers were in that category, too. I don't hesitate to say that I was pretty hard when they came to me to fill out blanks in connection with exemption requests. Often I just didn't fill them out. In some instances persons were needed in certain jobs; you need to take that into account. I don't know whether that answers the question. Maybe my opinion is too hard, but I am talking about the next war now. If the officers who talked to us on economic mobilization in Baltimore in December knew what they were talking about, and I believe they did, everybody--men, women, and children, cripples--will be needed in the next war.

QUESTION: Dr. Sylvester, I would like to hear you enlarge a little on this business of stockpiling, particularly with regard to mechanical skills.

DR. SYLVESTER: You know I have seen a great deal of stockpiling of materials. I am quite in accord with that. I think it is necessary. But we in the school business in America, from Washington down through Maryland, including Baltimore, and all the rest of the States, don't give as much attention to stockpiling skills as we should.

There is in my home community and other communities entirely too much emphasis on the liberal arts education or college preparation courses. Only 10 percent of the boys and girls of our community--a few more in some other communities and less elsewhere--go to college. Then, why should 90 percent of our emphasis be placed on the training of 10 percent of the youth? We need to build the proper kind of facilities, proper kind of buildings, attractive ones, and we need to have all of our educators see that this is as important, even more important, than simply providing for the academic needs. We know what people are called upon to do. During the depression, about 1939 or so, we placed every vocational school graduate we could turn out. There were hundreds of academic high school graduates who couldn't get a job--I referred to a few we trained for these war industries. The war industries couldn't use them until they were trained. It seems to me we are coming to a time when we must recognize the reality of the situation. Educate all people as far as we can educate them for civic duties and responsibilities, but, beyond that, give them some skills and knowledge with which to earn a livelihood.

We are falling far short of that today. We are in accord, for the most part, with the need for federal funds in some of the States, but I believe that unless the funds are earmarked as they have been for vocational education through our national legislation, we may expect much of this money to go in the direction of so-called cultured subjects. I am not sure of the true meaning of culture. I believe however that there can be culture in the factory or in the cosmetology shop, just as in the academic classroom. When we debunk a lot of the educational programs and these attitudes, then we will be on our way to providing some realistic education for the people of America. We know that many workers need technical skills but not all of them to be sure. The white collar jobs are pretty prominent these days and always have been. Too many of our people work for \$18 a week rather than \$16 a day, because they want to be in respectable white collar jobs, and not work as bricklayers. Skilled trade workers are needed. If we could get that across to the parents of all children, we could accomplish something. We have to start with our teachers because in our school ranks there is much opposition to the education and training of pupils for trade and industrial occupations.

QUESTION: To narrow the issue, on that business of stockpiling, I would like to get your comments on what you think of the relative effectiveness of making an actual stock pile of mechanical skills, say lathe operators, is it possible to train a man now and put him on ice for 5 or 10 years?

DR. SYLVESTER: No. What I am thinking of as stockpiling, particularly, is to take care of our peacetime needs. I went through a plant the other day in Baltimore. There were 30 or 40 milling machines idle. I said, "You have no need for these machines?" They said, "Yes, we have need for them, but we are unable to locate milling machine operators." I suspect, by and large, you will find in our peacetime industries much of that.

My attitude with regard to stockpiling skills and knowledge is to give the kinds of training that are in proportion to the employment needs during peacetime. I believe that if, in our mechanical industries and in our electrical realm, and similar fields of work, we prepare people adequately with these skills, they will acquire experience before the emergency comes and will then be ready. I don't feel that we should train 500 lathe operators when only 250 are needed, but I believe we should train 250 rather than 50. They need thorough basic training. Many machine hands know not why they do their jobs. They are prepared in just the "how" of the job and not the "why." If we can take these prospective workers and give them thorough training, an understanding of the job--the lathe operator, milling machine hand, wood worker, television mechanic, and what have you--I think we will have piled up skills and knowledge for the future.

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We have many people who are at work as technicians who have very little technical background. You have only to watch the mechanic who installs your oil burner and see what he does with the electrical setup to know what I mean. You have only to look at your automobile which you take, as I do, into a high-priced service garage. It is not one of those places where you get a \$10 job for \$10. You get a \$10 job for \$40, and half the time it isn't right. You take it back. The foreman says, "I am awfully sorry, but these mechanics aren't too good." We have calls for boys from our vocational high school with the statement, "They are better than any men we have." You know that is a pretty sad situation. It is just as sad as when a union representative said to me, "You know that your boys from the school are taking jobs away from our skilled mechanics." It is too bad we don't have more of those boys. If any boy from our school can take a job away from a skilled mechanic, so-called, I think he is a poor skilled mechanic.

In Baltimore we have never had anything but hand-me-down buildings in which to carry on this kind of program. But for the cultural, the academic, highslatin-program, we build junior high school, high school, and college buildings. After working and planning for 26 years we will build two vocational high school buildings in the next two or three years one for 2,000 boys and girls is a building which has now nearly reached the advertising stage. One for negro boys and girls, 1,200 or 1,300, is on its way. After four years we have been successful in acquiring a site for this school. I think we can speed up the processes a little bit in getting the building.

New buildings will be an important factor in advancing our program. We think more youth are going to be attracted to vocational education. We believe we can build up the same kind of reputation as that enjoyed by the Baltimore Polytechnic Institute. Quite a large number of boys go through that school. These boys don't go into trades necessarily, but they are piling up, in a manner, some of these skills and some of the knowledge about which I speak. I think we can do a lot of that in vocational schools in cooperation with business and industry. The people in business and industry are backing such training. We are working with the trade unions trying to show them that the interest we have is the same interest they have--preparing for trade occupations only the necessary number of craftsmen needed.

Of course, if we can do that, perhaps some of these schools will turn out apprentice bricklayers who will know a little more than just how to sling mortar. They also can fit into some of the industries because they need bricklayers to line blast furnaces and such work. They may take their place later in building new war plants. In the building of skills where workers are required to know a little more than how to perform mechanically, I believe we can produce better craftsmen.

QUESTION: Dr. Sylvester, is there any over-all community group representing various segments of the industry--labor, city government--to study the problems that you have outlined for manpower mobilization?

DR. SYLVESTER: Yes, in some places but it is not very complete. We have for the past several years worked with a Technical Advisory Committee representing 20 industries. That committee from the standpoint of need made a study of the industries in the City of Baltimore. It was a very good study. They have estimated the number of beginning workers needed next year and five years from now. That is from the standpoint of management. However, you can't do this job without the cooperation of labor. Where organized labor exists in any of the occupations, we invite them to take part in our trade advisory committee sessions. We have labor representatives in printing trades sitting in with the employers and educators in planning that particular program. And so it is with bricklayers and electrical workers. It is not so with the automobile trade, tea rooms, cosmetology, and many others; those trades are not organized. We simply take conditions as they are and work with the people who are in the various occupations. In the large cities you will find programs of that kind. We have done as much as we can over the years in our national vocational and trade organizations to promote proper relationships with management and labor.

QUESTION: Have you gone so far as to study what the over-all community problem might be?

DR. SYLVESTER: That's right.

QUESTION: Such as housing?

DR. SYLVESTER: We have not gone into housing--we leave that to the housing bureau. We do work through the City Planning Commission when locating school sites. The commission is constantly studying communities with regard to their size in time to come and where the schools should be built.

As to the needs of industry, we are making studies in cooperation with the Technical Advisory Committee. We know in most of the mechanical trades what the situation is. The Technical Advisory Committee is reviewing that information from time to time. It ties in through the Association of Commerce with other committees. The AAC ties in with our program on vocational education. It does not tie in so much with our general educational program. That, more or less, is a community endeavor, but we need to work together in building an over-all educational program. We have found that to be a very effective way. Where you find the most effective vocational programs, they have been developed in cooperation with employers and labor.

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POLYTHENE TALK

MR. POLUHOFF: Dr. Sylvester, we appreciate your coming here and giving us your time. We appreciate your talk. Thank you.

DR. SYLVESTER: I enjoyed it very much. I am sorry it was not more nearly complete.

(14 March 1949--450)S/mmG.