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NATIONAL SERVICE

14 February 1949

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COLONEL GREER: Gentlemen, we are entering the final two weeks of our weeks' course in Manpower. During this time you have heard a lot about national service and you have had many questions about it. Today we are going to devote practically our entire time to a consideration of national service.

You have seen in your studies how Britain, with her very existence threatened by Nazi Germany, turned to national service to make use of every man, woman, and child that could possibly contribute to the war effort. Britain had national service and it worked. It worked efficiently. Meanwhile, we, in the United States, although we gave lip-service to an "all-out" effort, nevertheless did not make effective use of our full manpower potential. We tried half-measures, indirect methods, and achieved only partial results.

Early in the war, a small body of patriotic citizens, recognizing the need for a national service law that would give some order and systematic direction to our millions of workers, banded themselves together as the Citizens Committee for a National War Service Act, and worked for its enactment. As most of you know they were never quite successful; the Bill was never enacted.

This morning we are fortunate in having as our guest lecturer Mr. Arthur L. Williston, who was the National Secretary of that Committee. He was the coauthor of the National War Service Bill, which was introduced in the Congress 8 February 1943, by Senator Austin of Vermont and Representative Wadsworth of New York and became commonly known as the Austin-Wadsworth Bill.

Mr. Williston was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on the Eleventh of October, 1868. He is a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (graduate course, 1890). He is both an industrial engineer and a technical educator. He has served on the faculty of MIT, Ohio State University, and was the Director of Pratt Institute, and Wentworth Institute. In addition, he has served as an adviser to various colleges and cities on educational matters. In 1924 he was the American delegate to the World Federation of Education, and in 1925 was the American delegate to the World Conference on Adult Education.

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As National Secretary of the Citizens Committee he collaborated with Mr. Grenville Clark in the preparation of the National War Service Bill and worked for its enactment.

It is also interesting to note that the Department of the Army considers Mr. Williston the "father" of the Experimental Unit for Universal Military Training at Fort Knox.

Mr. Williston addressed the Industrial College last year on this same subject. We thought he was so good that we have asked him to give us a repeat performance today.

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to our platform this morning, Mr. Williston.

MR. WILLISTON: Colonel Greer, I thank you for a very gracious introduction. I am afraid you have given me quite a difficult assignment to live up to. I will try to do my best. During this period in which I, with others, was trying through every means available to us to secure the passage of a national service law, I became so thoroughly in earnest for its need in order to shorten war that I ought to be able to give you a like enthusiasm for the enactment of a similar law if another war ever seems imminent. This law, which, basically, just asks for everybody to do his bit---for everybody on the homefront to help---is so obviously one that it should not require one would think any argument.

At the beginning of the last war, the Administration and everyone else emphasized the importance of "equality of sacrifice." Yet, in spite of this fact, the difficulties that we encountered in the effort for national service were of such a serious character that I think it extraordinarily important for each and every one of you gentlemen to get a clear comprehension of what they were in order that a corresponding failure may never happen again.

Stop to think for a moment, please: If you gentlemen were to vote I risk my life in protecting your homes and your families, just common sportsmanship, it seems to me, would require that you should agree in return to do everything that you could to make my risk as small as possible. That is all national service is: It simply requires that the people on home front support the boys who are fighting overseas, if it is a foreign war, in return for their most obvious sacrifices.

Part of the difficulty I think, that we found in getting the Congress to understand what was needed came from a lack of real understanding of meaning of our Constitution, of our fundamental laws. Everyone understands that our Constitution and Bill of Rights guarantee to each and every citizen life, liberty, and the privilege of pursuing happiness in his own way.

people fail to comprehend that there is a contract here; that in order that I may have that freedom, others must assume a responsibility. In order that John Doe may be assured his freedom of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, every other citizen in the United States must assume the responsibility of protecting his liberty. I think that the failure of our people to understand that this responsibility is just as surely inherent in our Bill of Rights as is the right to liberty was a large part of the trouble.

When it comes to selective service, everyone who is asked to join the the Armed Forces and to do his part obviously sacrifices very definitely important elements of his liberty and assumes very serious risks regarding his life. There are however, very few people who question giving such service because the imperative necessity here is so apparent. If somebody doesn't join the Armed Forces, if there is no protection for our homes, we all can see right away what is likely to happen. The imperative necessity in this instance is very, very apparent.

But in the case of national service the difficulty is that the sacrifices of liberty that would be required on the part of the citizens at home are not equally apparent. Consequently, people cannot see that there is the corresponding imperative necessity. You probably will hear representatives of organized labor this afternoon tell you that their sacrifices are not necessary and should not be required. If you have questions to ask, ask them, "How about the correspondingly imperative necessity if we wish the earliest victory?" There are sacrifices, beyond question involved in national service. Men are expected to leave their homes. They may have to put up with housing and food that they don't like; supervision in their new tasks may be repulsive to them; they may not like the fact that certain individuals, having government contracts, may get profits that they seem not entitled to; or they may think the draft boards that would draft them may be prejudiced, and, in spite of classification, they think they may be assigned to tasks that are inappropriate.

A full list of these objections is a very long one. Workers under a national service law do sacrifice liberty in some of these particulars. But the fact which they don't always seem to understand is that there is an imperative necessity that everybody do his part in order that the war may be as short as possible, and in order that there may be as little loss of life as possible.

One of the things that, I think, would help people to understand the need for national service would be for them to seriously attempt, in contrast with the aforementioned sacrifices, to estimate the true value of a single human life. From my point of view, these sacrifices of tens of thousands of people on the home front in doing things they don't like are trivial as compared with the sacrifices of a single life, particularly if it happens to be your son or mine.

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Now let us consider what happened during the last war. You can make your own guesses. But from the estimates that we continuously made, as we watched the war progress, I am thoroughly convinced that with national service we might have had two million more men under arms, also with all the equipment (transports and everything else) necessary for these added men, than we actually had in service.

I do not have to argue with this audience regarding the advantage of an overwhelming force in case of combat. The more divisions you have, the less the casualties; in fact, the less the number of combat engagements. If your forces are sufficiently overwhelming, the enemy will fall back, avoid engagements, and you won't have to do much fighting. And, I repeat that I am convinced from the available evidence that we could have had these two million more men under arms. Please, now stop and figure. Suppose that we had had two million more men in arms, and also had had them six months earlier. Ask yourselves what might have happened if we had had the convoy protection to prevent sinkings in the Atlantic at a time when the enemy was sinking a million tons a month and damaging nobody knows how many more tons, but an extraordinary number, in addition to all the ships that were sent to the bottom of the ocean. Figure too, what would have happened in reduced casualties in North Africa, or in the Sicilian landings, if we had had these added forces. We landed 80,000 men in Sicily and in 39 days there were 31,158 killed, wounded, or missing. If we had had twice that number of men, or even less than twice, do your own guessing as to what the result would have been in decreased loss of life and suffering.

And, likewise in Italy, where General Eisenhower described the situation at Salerno as "touch and go"; or up through Italy at Cassino, and in all the rest of the Italian fighting; or during the landings in Normandy or in the Battle of the Bulge--figure it out in each campaign and then decide whether my judgment is altogether wrong in thinking that with national service we might have greatly reduced the over-all casualties and materially shortened the war.

After 7 December 1941, the battle casualties in the Army alone were over 360,000 dead and 1,200,000 other casualties. Maybe I have overestimated. I don't think I have. Take the record campaign by campaign--the European campaign, the Atlantic, and then add to these the Pacific fighting--and draw your own conclusions regarding the unnecessary loss of life and sacrifices because we had no legal requirement for everybody to help. Even with victory behind us, and in spite of the fact that it is hard to realize today the seriousness of that situation, I think you will agree that the number of the unnecessary casualties, because of the fact that we had no national service law, is very, very large.

One more thing that made it hard for our people to understand what national service might have done, was the difficulty of seeing just how we might have obtained these two million additional men for our Armed Forces. Here is the answer. There was a very large number of able-bodied men, of just the right age for military or naval service, who were engaged in all kinds of essential industries, from which they could not apparently be spared. There was no machinery or legal process by means of which we could get older men to transfer from nonessential industries to take their places on the farms, in the shipyards, transportation, or war-production industries. These younger men could not be spared until they were replaced. They were essential in airplane plants, too, and so on in a multitude of other industries. There was no procedure by means of which we could get the older men, who often had more skills, who also would have been more effective and dependable, transferred from the nonessential industries. A law was required to accomplish this.

If there had been that possibility of making these transfers the draft boards would have been able to furnish the very much larger numbers of men for the service and General Marshall would not have had to complain continuously that the shortage of men needed for our battle lines was desperate, as he did repeatedly report during 1943 and 1944, and even in 1945, especially for the European areas. And, you gentlemen know how even more critical were the shortages in the Pacific, in the war against Japan, to say nothing of the campaigns in Burma and China.

Let us now get to some of the other details. Our country has extraordinary potential strength in machines and in mechanical production. But we are inclined to forget the greater potential value that lies in the men who build and operate the machines, and the extraordinary variety of latent skills and capacities which they have that are meaningless until discovered and which, unfortunately too seldom are brought forth.

In so many instances, in military organization as well as in industry, we think of a labor force or an armed force in terms of a given number of units; in terms of just so many individuals; so many heads. In order to show the real absurdity of thinking in such terms, in a conversation the other day, I used this kind of an illustration: "If we are building an airplane, or an automobile, or a tank, or something else, we very scientifically determine the best kind of material for every individual part. But in human affairs we appear to want only so many units in our labor force. This is just as unreasonable, of course, as though we classified all material as being alike, or as though when some design for a complicated machine or new aircraft is needed, we say, 'Oh, ycs; we need so much material. It doesn't make any difference what kind of material. We might as well use a ton of concrete, or a cubic yard of sand, as the accurately determined alloy that is best suited for that purpose.'"

Human nature has as large variety as materials of construction. And human nature can be strengthened, shaped, and developed as well as raw materials can be transformed from the crude material that is taken from the earth and transformed into the exquisitely and accurately determined alloys that best fit the most careful specified purposes.

I used that illustration to show how absurd it is for us not to try to measure the human resources of the Nation and try to develop them.

At this point, I want to interrupt myself enough to show how extraordinarily simple was the bill that we tried to get in the last war---the Austin-Wadsworth Bill. It really was extremely simple. I am going to read to you a very brief abstract of the bill which contains all its important provisions. That bill states that: "Congress hereby declares that in view of the critical nature of the present war, and in justice to those in the armed forces, it is necessary to provide for the future effective mobilization of the manpower and womanpower of the nation.

"The Congress further declares that an obligation rests upon every person, subject to necessary and appropriate exceptions, to render such personal service in aid of the war effort as he or she may be determined best fitted to perform; and in order to maintain a proper balance between such persons and the persons in the armed forces, each person is required to register under the Selective Service Act.

"Every woman between the ages of 18 and 50 shall be liable to contribute by personal service to the war effort, in non-combatant capacity according to her abilities.

"The Selective Service System shall be utilized as the agency to register and to classify those persons who are liable to service. However if practicable, calls for volunteers shall be issued before action is taken to obtain workers through the selective-service process.

"Also, the necessary regulations to carry out in an impartial manner the provisions of the Act include appropriate provision for registration and accurate classification of all persons who are liable for service. Due regard shall be had to assigning men and women to service near their home communities and, so far as practicable to do so, persons assigned to service shall, prior to such assignment, be given opportunity to receive aptitude tests and intensive training for the purpose of efficient allocating them in places where they may render the most useful service, and of re-directing or stepping up their skills in order that they may be competent for the tasks which they are to perform."

The act, with amendment, provides for a director to administer the act, to be appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate.

There were other provisions that were guarantees against hardship, but the foregoing abstract shows the simplicity of the law that we tried to get, and of the process by means of which we tried to use men not just as units, but instead with scientific procedure to put the right man in the right place---men with the right capacities, abilities, and skills carefully chosen for each job.

The need for such a law at the time we were trying to get it passed by the Congress was almost universally recognized by thoughtful persons. The Secretary of War (Mr. Stimson), Mr. Patterson, Admiral Land, and even Mr. McNutt made most positive and emphatic statements in favor of national service. It is interesting to note the character of the statements that even Mr. McNutt made in the early stages of the war, stating that a national service act was absolutely necessary and was important in order to answer the question that almost everybody was asking, that is, "Where do I fit best?"

Let us get a few more of the details. One of the very early things that we did in order to demonstrate the importance of a law was to conduct an important survey in Baltimore. Baltimore was the first place that the War Manpower Commission selected to demonstrate that it could make its so-called "voluntary system" work.

However, this survey showed that the shortages in nearly every category of labor were extraordinarily serious. Here are typical examples: Where fifty tool designers were required, only one was available. In the case of ship carpenters, where there were 27 needed, only one was available, and so on. And yet the survey showed, too, that there were plenty of skills in Baltimore throughout nonessential industries: an experienced seaman was in a small tailor shop; a ship fitter was a letter carrier; a ship rigger was a grocer, and so on with a multitude more similar examples. It would have been perfectly easy, if we had had national service, to get these men into the places where they were needed and where they could utilize their skills in the war effort. But, we had no legal authority to help in getting them transferred.

Another important fact brought out in the Baltimore survey was not only the number of the shortages in the war-production industries but, in spite of a huge unemployed reservoir, that the war industries in Baltimore, which required 32,000 added workers for the last half of 1943, found that they must get 20,000 of these 32,000 men to come to them from outside of Baltimore, where already the housing situation was critical.

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In the face of that fact, our survey showed the large reservoir of employable people in the Baltimore area, who might have been available if we had had a national war service act, totaling 371,000 individuals. This is the situation! There were 371,000 persons who would have been available if we had had a national service act, simply saying: "The Government as you please to come and do this, or that." Yet, 20,000 had to be imported from outside Baltimore in that half year of 1943.

It was hoped that the U. S. Employment Service would be able to be of substantial help in this regard; but, as a matter of fact, the Service's efforts were so nearly negligible that they might as well be regarded as almost zero. During this period, for example, the Employment Service analyzed 20,000 cases in order to see if they could get a considerable number of persons voluntarily to change from nonessential jobs in order to aid in the war effort. The attitude of the persons interviewed was almost universally "We are perfectly willing to go when the Government says it is necessary." The Government had not said this. As a result, out of those 20,000 cases analyzed and out of 2,700 personal interviews, only 26 verified placements in war industries were obtained. It is probable that the cost of that employment enterprise was more than the aggregate wages of those 26 men over a period of several years. There wasn't just this one survey for the purpose of studying the employment situations. There were 44 other similar surveys, and universally we found in all those surveys that there were the same acute shortages of skills in nearly every category especially of managerial skills; that there was extraordinary inefficiency in getting the right kind of persons needed for particular jobs; that there was the correspondingly very large reservoir of unemployed people; and that turnover and absenteeism were in every instance excessive.

Even with the almost staggering need for skilled labor of the right kinds and in the right places, it was almost always found impossible to secure its transfer from the nonessential industries, where there was labor in abundance, without some legal authority. And as I think I have already made plain, there was great simplicity of the operation of a national service law that would have given the needed legal sanction.

Fundamentally, there is an enormous amount of latent skill in our population that is not used. When war comes, one more added difficulty is that a very considerable portion of the tasks that are involved in war production are tasks, while quite similar to the tasks with which men are familiar, that still have just enough difference in new requirements to make a certain amount of retraining imperative.

During the last war we had no efficient means of conducting this retraining process. A great deal of money was spent in trying to develop such educational facilities. But again the trouble was that there was no procedure by means of which the right men could be brought into the training programs, nor after they had been trained once more there was no guarantee that there could be found jobs to correspond with the training that they had received. In consequence, a very large proportion of the World War II training failed to function.

I am going to go back for a moment into the history of World War I because there was an instance then where we did have an exceptional opportunity to furnish training that admirably functioned.

General Pershing discovered shortly after he got to France that he had great need for a very considerable number of military technicians, primarily for the military repair establishments in France. He promptly sent back word to the United States asking that something be done about it. Fortunately, in this instance there was a sufficient number of men still available within the draft who could be selected for the training programs.

The United States was divided into 10 different sections. Each section was given the responsibility of establishing training camps in schools, colleges, and other places where facilities could be found. I happened to be responsible for the New England area. In a very brief period after 1 April 1918, I had established 14 training centers in the schools and colleges in New England.

Throughout the country we trained military technicians from selected boys taken from the draft. We knew just what boys we were going to train, and trained for exactly what jobs. In the country as a whole we trained 378,000 of them. I personally was responsible for 23,000 trainees.

One of the assignments that was given to me from overseas was to promptly produce, "out of the blue," as it were, 600 gunsmiths. There wasn't such a thing as a gunsmith anywhere in sight. The Remington Arms Co. and firms of that kind had taken everybody who had ever even seen a gun, if the Army hadn't gotten them first.

What was I to do? I asked the draft boards of the New England area to furnish me 600 men who had some expert skill with some kind of a musical instrument or another. I knew, but they didn't, that those musicians were gunsmiths in the making. They had the intellectual conception of accuracy, and they had extraordinary skill in finger manipulations, and so on. All that they needed was little more than instruction in the names of the tools. From 600 musicians we made gunsmiths in eight weeks, with practically 100 percent success.

We not only transformed musicians into gunsmiths during this period in World War I, but we transformed dentists into military engineers. They had the scientific background. But the scale of their activities had to be stepped up. We transformed newspaper cartoonists into topographers. The star topographer that General Pershing had to prepare for him the wonderful military map that showed him the location of every division in the fighting line from the North Sea to the Swiss Border was a Boston newspaper cartoonist who had had but eight weeks' training to transform him from a cartoonist into the most skillful of military topographers.

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I am going to take a moment just to give you one more extreme illustration of this art or technique in transforming skills from one field to another.

I presume that many of you have heard of the work that Dr. Wilfred Grenfell did in Labrador for many years among the poor population of the area. I happened to know Dr. Grenfell very well. He was greatly disturbed in the old days, over the idea of having to perform surgical operations with ether in wooden buildings and with only kerosene lamps. It was very difficult to persuade him that it was possible to train any of his people to build or operate an electric-light plant so that he might have electricity instead of kerosene lamps. He could not believe that the people up in Labrador with their ignorance and their entire lack of schooling, could be so trained. He also knew that he could not get a person from the United States to go and endure the long winters or the Labrador climate.

I finally persuaded him, however, to send down two persons to me at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, N. Y., to see what we could do with them. But these were my specifications: Dr. Grenfell was to hold up his right hand and swear that he was sending me the two best dog-sled drivers in all Labrador. Again, I knew, but he didn't, that those dog-sled drivers were already engineers of a very high order, in their ability to build their sleds, to load them and transport them over their rough country, and to be able to drive them safely through blizzards and every other kind of rough weather. They knew how to plan and look ahead. They had the imagination and trained judgment of real engineers.

This was back in 1908, forty years ago. It is interesting to know that one of those boys, one of those dog-sled drivers, called me up on the telephone night before last in Dedham, Mass. to tell me some of the things he had been doing recently. I knew, before that, his record in building hundreds of electric-light plants, and in building reinforced concrete hospitals, but, I did not know until he told me that he was now building fireproof schoolhouses.

I give you this illustration of what can be done in transforming a dog-sled driver into an electrical engineer in the very brief period of only nine months to show the way in which latent skills can be transformed and made useful. This picture of what this single individual has done for the civilization of Labrador is astounding. In Labrador today they have because of him and his mate all up and down the coast, fireproof hospitals with electric-light plants. They also have their electric-light plants for other purposes, and now schools.

Ted McNeill, that was the name of the young man who called me up the other night, told me in detail of these schools that he was building. So you can see, gentlemen, what the latent talent of just one individual has done for the betterment of the living conditions of that entire area.

The calamity of our situation, as I see it, is that at the present time in the United States I doubt if more than half of the latent leadership of the Nation is brought forward and developed. This illustration that I have given shows what one individual, who has some undiscovered leadership, can do for his generation. Just figure what it would mean if we could double the creative leadership throughout America--or nearly double it--not only for our whole civilization but equally for our national defense.

You remember the first thing that Dr. Compton brought forward in his notable report on A Program for National Security was, that he considers for our security, as the first essential an intelligent and alert citizenship, where every citizen has had his latent abilities developed to the maximum. That is imperative for war; it is extraordinarily valuable, too, for peace.

In the introduction today by Colonel Greer you were told of England's success with a national service act which was passed the very morning after Dunkirk and practically without discussion or debate. It is interesting to note that in the English experience there were observed practically no hardships. All that the representatives of organized labor will tell you, in contrast, this afternoon will be about the inconveniences, sacrifices and hardships involved in national service. In England these were regarded as trivial. A very large percentage of the people in England, who came in under their national service act, came in voluntarily. They did not come in because they were forced by law. They came in because they had an organized system of directing them into the activity where they might be of most use for the war effort. They called it, in England, "direction," not draft. There were too, in England extraordinarily few court cases compelling people to do things they preferred not to do. Legal procedures were rarely applied.

And here, again, it is very interesting to note that in the United States today, with our compulsory education laws, we have more cases of court actions (telling boys who don't want to go to school that they must go to school) than they had in England requiring people to do what was assigned to them under their national service law. If anybody suggests to you this afternoon that a national service act involves "slave labor," just remind him, please, that every boy and every girl who is asked, for the protection of our democracy and our Republic, to attend a public or a private school, is equally a "slave." The compulsion in one case that of required education is to protect our civilization. The compulsion in the other case that of national service is to protect our national life. The two compulsions are in fact very similar in character.

Another thing that is rather important for us to keep in mind this afternoon is that a national service act would affect, but to a very slight extent, most of the persons in organized labor because first, they

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constitute really a small proportion of the population--it was about 12 million during World War II, and 16 million, now they claim, I think today. That is a small fraction of our whole population. But besides, the members of organized labor for the most part, have skills and are already employed by the large companies in which they can be of most use. National service would ask such persons simply to retain their present employment. The place where national service can be most helpful is in regard to the rest of the population: in the extraordinary expansions of the big shipyards, the airplane plants, and all the other very wide and extensive developments. I have already explained the way in which national service would enable us to get the boys who are best fitted for the Army Services off the farms and out of industrial occupations and how we could replace them with other and older persons.

Then there is one thing more that I must mention before I close and that is extraordinarily important in all new developments of war industry or extensions of transportation, or of almost anything else; that is, the right proportion of managerial skills in relation to all the other types of skills. In your military organization you know how important it is to have the right proportion of privates, corporals, sergeants, lieutenants, captains, and so on all the way up through the line. You must have the right proportion of each one of these categories of individuals if your organization is going to function efficiently.

Industry is organized in exactly the same way. You must have the right proportion of common laborers, of semiskilled, of skilled, of foremen, supervisors, of superintendents, all the way up to the top. In our nonessential plants in the United States there was always an abundance of very high-grade managerial skills that unfortunately, we could not train. Our shipyards, in particular, were literally a mess because of the lack of managerial skills. In a shipyard, for example, not very far from my home in Massachusetts, in December 1944, the management was demanding 6,000 added workers. Yet, the chief production engineer of that plant assured me--and from my own knowledge of the plant I could confirm his statement that if only his existing labor force could be stabilized and if in addition he could have a score of competent production supervisors that he knew were in neighboring plants in nonessential industries, he could not only get along without that added labor force of 6,000 men but that with his existing labor force he could double his production. And, gentlemen, this was a time when the Navy was putting all kinds of pressure on that plant to increase, or surely live up to, its schedule of producing landing craft for the coming Normandy invasion.

Now there was in the war effort a number of places where women could have been even more efficiently used than men. Yet we succeeded in getting a very small ratio of women, really, into such work. In Dayton, for instance, a very serious drive was made through publicity of every kind, to see what could be done to help correct this. With a population of 108,000 unemployed women, they succeeded in adding to the number of women then

employed in that area only six-tenths of one percent. Yet we know from the other surveys that the attitude of those women which was: "We'll be glad to go and do anything for which we are competent if the Government asks us to."

You know the difficulty we had with shortages of various materials--copper, lumber, steel, etc. That list is long. Every one of these was a labor shortage that might have been cured with national service.

There is one last point that I want to emphasize, particularly. The big excuse which organized labor and others continuously made during the recent war was that "schedules were being met." Of course, those schedules were determined by the manufacturers who said, with their existing labor force, "We can do just so much." Schedules were set to fit their conditions. But there was no suggestion ever made that with national service those schedules might not have been doubled or tripled. In many instances they might have been much larger. I leave it to you gentlemen as to whether doubling or tripling, let us say, the production of landing craft at that particular date I described a moment ago would have been most desirable. The fact was that schedules were trimmed and re-trimmed and trimmed again in instance after instance to meet the limitations of production. The fact that schedules were met means, therefore, absolutely nothing as a defense for our failure to secure a national service law.

I want to say one word, before I sit down, about the relationship between universal military training and this national war service. Fundamentally, they are part and parcel of the same idea or program. As I have said, we take pride in using science in regard to materials. Why shouldn't we have a scientific inventory of the skills, latent talents, and abilities, first, of our youth, and then, if need be and war is imminent, of our more mature workers, too, obtained through national service.

The most important feature, from my own point of view, of our universal military training is that it gives us the opportunity to discover in each individual in the land his latent talent. Through aptitude tests today we can do this with extraordinary skill. I personally verified that--as they did it at Fort Knox--and it came out almost 100 percent. The boys were then trained in accordance with the determination of their classification. Also that six-months' period, gave an opportunity to test the accuracy of the classification. Furthermore, each individual knows for what he is best fitted in civilian life as well as for what he is best fitted in case he has to serve his country. In addition, the Government has this permanent record, this inventory, of all the latent talents of all our young men.

National service provides the same opportunity. One follows the other. Everything I have said regarding the importance of national war service applies with equal force, it seems to me, to the need for universal military

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training. Hanson Baldwin, of "The New York Times," probably made the best argument that has been made against the universal military training. He pointed out eight things that it did not do: It does not give you a immediate striking force, in the air, or anywhere else. It does not turn out a finished soldier who is ready to fight today or tomorrow--well, neither does West Point nor Annapolis. It isn't supposed to do that. It isn't its purpose or its function.

But here is what it does: It provides a steady flow of efficient, tested, and appropriate manpower for each and every category of skill and occupation required throughout the Armed Services, as well as for a multitude of other essential tasks in a war effort. It also provides the background of that flow of the right kind of person for the right job. It reveals exceptional talent and undiscovered leadership, an absolutely essential requirement if we are to have the highest talent where it is needed.

Gentlemen, I thank you for the attention you have given me. I regret I have over-run my time by a few minutes. I hope, however, that you will forgive me.

COLONEL GREER: Are there any questions for Mr. Williston?

MR. WILLISTON: I shall regard my talk as a failure if I don't get a lot of questions.

QUESTION: Mr. Williston, with regard to national service, the consensus is like waiting until the horse gets out of the barn before putting a lock on the door. In other words, wait until the emergency is upon us before we put it into effect. What is your reaction to that? When do you think it should be put into effect? Should it be done immediately or wait until the emergency comes?

MR. WILLISTON: If you ask for the ideal thing, I would say "day before yesterday." That, I think, you would probably find impractical with the Eighty-first Congress. But just as soon as you have a sufficient scare and get the Congress really to pay attention to it and get busy, I think something should be done. I think you would find the Austin-Wadsworth sufficiently near what you would like today so you wouldn't have to worry about drafting a new one.

You have exactly the same thing with regard to your selective service. The biggest God-send that happened prior to the last war was the fact that we did succeed in getting a Selective Service Act fifteen months before Pearl Harbor, thanks to Mr. Grenville Clark. If we had not gotten the Selective Service Act at that time we would not have had a million and half fairly well-trained troops the day that war was declared. We would not have had a nucleus of officers ready for their final training. We

not have had the experience, by our senior officers, in handling large groups of men. Well, I won't go any further. Answering the last words of your question: It wouldn't be nice. What's the next question---from the Navy?

QUESTION: It has been said, sir, that since our per-capita production during the last war was higher than that of some countries employing so-called "forced labor," we should not have a national service act. I would like to know whether or not you consider that a valid argument? Also, do you consider that either our per-capita production or our total production would be less under national service?

MR. WILLISTON: We are extraordinarily gifted, as a nation, due to the resourcefulness that was developed in conquering the continent, and for other reasons. We have, fundamentally, in times of peace as well as in times of war, a productive capacity that is incomparably greater than any other nation.

But the thing that I think is perhaps the most effective argument, in answer to your question, is that during this last war, instead of concentrating our entire energies on our war effort, our standard of living increased. Our consumption of nonessential goods was some 20 to 25 percent greater than in normal peacetime. Our consumption of food was 30 percent greater. Yet, England maintained a better health rate than ever before on a decreased food allowance.

We could have had, in my judgment, greatly increased war production. I made the estimate of a possible increase in the Armed Forces by at least two million men, with a corresponding increase in all our supporting war productions; and of our being, at least after 1 January 1943, six months ahead of the dates at which we reached various degrees of readiness. There is absolutely no question, in my judgment, about our ability to have done that with an early passage of a national service law.

Furthermore, organized labor was by no means a unit in opposing national service. By and large, I am convinced that an Australian ballot among their 12 million members during the war would have overwhelmingly defeated the top leaders of organized labor. I have had the privilege of training something like 50,000 boys in skilled crafts, the majority of whom have, I think, gone into organized labor. They talk with me frankly. In private conversation with the members of organized labor I never found a single individual who took their talk, for example, of "slave labor" seriously.

They would have worked more efficiently if they could have been wisely assigned; to appropriate tasks; if they could have been, where necessary, retrained, or have had their skills improved to fit the new tasks of war production. I hesitate to give you a definite percentage, but I am

confident that we could have increased our war production by, oh, perhaps 30 percent, or more. Let me give you a simple illustration. It'll only take a moment.

One of the things that was very disturbing during the last war was the situation regarding steel. During the war, between Pearl Harbor and the end of the war in 1945, we were able to increase our steel capacity by about only three or four percent. This was very distressing in view of the demands for steel, particularly for plates for ships. The reason for this was: What was the use in increasing the capacity of the steel plants when we couldn't get the increased quantities of the iron ore, or of the ships to transport the iron ore, or of unloading equipment for the iron ore at the terminals, or facilities for transportation of one to the steel plant? There was an absolute bottleneck at each point all along the line.

But with national service, where one could definitely depend upon the right amount of labor to produce the iron ore, to produce the ships for transportation, the unloading equipment and the other essential things, think how easy it would have been to have planned for that increased steel production.

The case of copper is another equally definite point where there was a very serious bottleneck that held up war production seriously in very many directions.

But the over-all view is this--here is the point I meant to make but I fear that I didn't: By and large, this country wasn't over 60 to 65 percent mobilized. We could have had, all told, oh, I think at least from 15 to 20 percent, any way, more persons engaged in the war effort. Our efficiency would have been proportionally so much better.

I would like to point out also that absenteeism was a big factor. Henry Kaiser had to employ 500,000 men in order to maintain an average labor force of 70,000. Think of it! The turnover in all of the big plants approximated 100 percent. It was 7 and 8 percent per month.

The over-all efficiency, even to the extent that we were mobilized, because of these various factors that I have called your attention to, I am again convinced, was not over 60 or 65 percent. Now 65 percent of mobilization, multiplied by 65 percent of efficiency, results in only 42 percent of potential effectiveness. I ask you gentlemen whether you think that is enough, particularly if you are risking your life fighting on the other side.

QUESTION: You mentioned that there were certain exceptions in your proposed bill. I would like to know what those exceptions were that you had in mind.

Also, who would be the claimant agencies for the labor? Would it be private industries, or would it be the government-owned industries?

MR. WILLISTON: Those are two very good questions, and they are separate ones.

The draft boards would have exactly the same control over the persons who were directed to aid the Government in the war effort that they had over the persons who were selected to enter the Armed Services. By and large, the members of the draft boards--they were all volunteers--were neighbors of the persons whom they assigned to various tasks. The records of the draft boards--there were 6,000, or more, of them, during World War II--for impartiality and patriotic service were extraordinarily high. So, you see, you would have had exactly the same relationship between the assigned workers and the required tasks involved in government contracts in essential industries, so officially declared, and the men assigned to the Armed Services by the draft boards.

The exceptions were women with young children, primarily, and a few other perfectly natural, normal exceptions which the draft boards were instructed to make. The list was not very large. The draft boards referred to women with dependencies that made their services at home imperative, and certain cases that could not be taken care of readily in other ways.

You had a somewhat similar situation in connection with the selective service. The draft boards were instructed not to call men where there would be an unnatural hardship.

Now regarding the second part of your question, "Who would be the claimant agencies for the labor?" It would be totally improper, in my judgment, to ask any individual to work for the private profit of any private individual. The two War Powers Acts that were passed early in the last war, giving the President certain authority, gave him, through his agencies, the power to mobilize capital. This is one of the points that organized labor never understood, or at least pretended not to understand.

The President, too, had power to mobilize management. The President could take over any plant that was not serving the Government as the Government asked it to serve.

The Government controlled the prices of all the essential war activities, not only in war production but in railroad rates and in a thousand other ways. So that the individual was asked to work for the Government, on a government project, at a government price, and was in exactly the same relationship as the young man in uniform who was asked to do whatever his government representative, in the person of his superior officer, asked him to do.

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That is a relationship that, I think, is really perfectly definite, when you think it through, but is not so obvious as is the case of men in the Armed Forces. Our difficulty in securing national service all along the line was because these various conditions that I am describing did not appear sufficiently obvious. Organized labor and other special interests and pressure blocks were spending, nobody knows just how much, but I suspect millions, in trying to confuse the issue while a relatively few of us in the Committee for a National Service Act were doing everything that we could to try to explain the answers to just the kind of points that they are making. There should be no situation in which John Smith is asked to work for someone else, for his personal advantage.

QUESTION: Sir, I would like to know to what extent you would recommend compulsion; that is, making a man work in a job that he didn't want to work in? What would you do if he refused to work, or if he was absent most of the time or part of the time?

MR. WILLISTON: Why, to my mind, again, that is very simple. What do you men do with the private in uniform who doesn't like Kitchen Police some of the other things in military life? He learns to like them!

The interesting fact is that that is a lovely theoretical question, but it just doesn't happen. It didn't happen in England. It didn't happen in Australia. It didn't happen in New Zealand. It didn't happen in Canada. It is a lovely theoretical question, but practically it doesn't happen.

In the first place, the draft boards are reasonable. The first question they ask is, "What would you like to do? Of course, you want to serve the Government. Now how do you think you can serve it best?" After you tell them, they say, "That's a bully answer. We'll ask you to go and do just that."

The thing that actually happened, without national service--oh, it happened to a shocking extent--was that in the shipyards, particularly, where there were three crews working, dividing up the 24 hours into three 8-hour shifts, it was so pleasant to sleep on some of those shifts. A relatively few boys on those shifts set the fashion. Unfortunately, there wasn't any process by means of which those who opposed this policy could really correct it, in this instance. I wish you could have known as I, who made some of these surveys, knew how extraordinarily distasteful this policy was to the majority of the boys and how they would like to have chastised the fellows who unpatriotically soldiered on the job.

But you gentlemen know the situation. There are certain kinds of things that are impossible to make a fuss about. If there is no authority it is at those times, where even an individual slacker can cause a great deal of damage to the whole morale of a big plant.

QUESTIONER: What legal methods would you use to make him come to work if he just wouldn't come?

MR. WILLISTON: Why, you have the courts as the last resort. You have in peacetime the courts as the last resort for the fellow who persists in cutting his school assignments. The court can do almost anything it likes in order to enforce law. The second time after the court has asked someone to do thus and so, if he doesn't, then it is appropriate for the court to take whatever action it deems necessary. I suspect that for each 10,000 individuals two court actions of that kind would be sufficient.

I used to have, in the school I had charge of, a similar situation. We were training boys for industry. I used to regard what I called "industrial discipline" a good deal the same way some of you men regard military discipline. The ideal situation is, when someone from above gives an order, is for the individual in question to jump onto his toes as fast as he can and to make believe it is a Thanksgiving football game. To get that attitude isn't always easy, especially with a group of over a thousand boys who are not entirely used to that kind of requirement.

We started, as one of the very first assignments, to retamp the floor in a good-sized foundry. It was about 60 feet square. The sand in the floor was about a foot thick, so you can figure the number of cubic yards of sand that had to be turned over, sifted, put back, and tamped. It is a nice engineering problem in handling material on a rather large scale. But the boys who study electrical engineering don't always like that as a first assignment.

It used to be a policy of the instructor who was responsible for that work to look around until he saw somebody who didn't seem to be enjoying it. He would ask that boy if he was really enjoying what he was doing. The boy would, quite naturally, say "no". So that boy would be sent up into my office. I would call on him and ask him if he was enjoying what he had been asked to do. He would tell me that he did not enjoy it. I would then say, "A very serious mistake has been made. We don't mean to have any assignments that the boys don't heartily enjoy in this institution." I would then ring the bell and my secretary would come in to whom I would say, "A mistake has been made in accepting John Smith. Please return his tuition to him." I would turn and walk out of the office promptly. It would usually take about three days before the boy had a chance to tell me I had misunderstood him. In the meantime, he was obliged to sit in a position where every other boy in the school knew what he was waiting for.

One boy learning this lesson every two years was all that was necessary to cause everyone to enjoy his assignment.

QUESTIONER: Assuming the early passage of the national service act do you think it would be necessary, later on, to have to pass a conscription bill? By "conscription," I mean selective service.

MR. WILLISTON: The two things should be passed, in my judgment, as co-features of a common bill. Of course, you must have your selective service in order to get the mobilization of your Armed Forces. If there was a question as to which one should come first, selective service ought to come one day and national service the next.

QUESTIONER: I mean a conscription act, not selective service.

MR. WILLISTON: What do you call conscription?

QUESTIONER: Conscript everybody for service.

MR. WILLISTON: The national service plus the selective service does create a legal obligation on the part of everybody within the age limits with the few exceptions I have named.

I do not like the word "conscription," because that, more or less, assumes that people don't see the imperative necessity; that they don't like it; that they don't want it. Now my observation with the selective service was that 9 out of 10, at least, if not 99 out of 100, of the boys who were asked to put on a uniform, knew that it was necessary and had no suspicion when they were called that it was their turn. Under these circumstances, I don't like to call it conscription. But you must have that for your Armed Forces. I hope that I have demonstrated the imperative necessity of the national war service for all the other essential tasks in connection with the war effort.

So, I repeat: these two things ought to come together.

COLONEL GREER: Mr. Williston, I want to thank you for a very fine lecture this morning. It certainly has stimulated everyone's thinking on this vital and controversial question of national service in time of war. I'm confident that your talk this morning has won many converts to your cause.

MR. WILLISTON: I appreciate very much your gracious introduction; also the attention you gentlemen have given me.

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