

MANPOWER IN WARTIME COMMUNITIES

18 October 1950

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MR. HILL: If there can be said to be one common denominator of wartime problems, it is that of labor. Our speaker this morning is going to talk on the subject of wartime community facilities, which centers around manpower mobilization.

We have thought a little bit about the subject because Mr. Stocking in his lecture about two years ago discussed a different angle of the same subject. You will have, therefore, the benefit of reviewing his lecture of April 1948, as well as what he will tell us this morning.

His experience in the War Manpower Commission and also in the Employment Service will be of outstanding value to us. He is now with the Resources and Requirements Division of the National Security Resources Board.

Because of your previous contributions to our thinking at the college, I take much pleasure in welcoming you, Mr. Stocking, to our platform again.

MR. STOCKING: About a year ago a very good friend and colleague of mine, Mr. Ernest Tupper, told me that he was scheduled to deliver a lecture here on a subject that we were working on at that time-- "The Balancing of Resources and Requirements in Wartime." I had just completed reading a very entertaining and instructive book by Josh Lee on "How to Hold an Audience without a Rope." I brought it in the next morning and left it on his desk. He looked up at me with a quizzical expression and said: "Look, Collis, I know you are trying to be helpful, but I remember that about eight months ago you gave me a book to read on the art of simple writing. After I read the cursed thing, I was so self-conscious that I couldn't write anything for six weeks. Now you come forward and give me a book that will tongue-tie me until after the time of the lecture."

I mention that incident simply because I am about to violate one of the cardinal principles laid down in that book, and that is: "Don't start out by apologizing. Your audience will detect your deficiencies soon enough without you calling particular attention to them." But I do feel obliged to give you a little bit of explanation, because I see some of my loyal and long-suffering friends who have heard me speak several times on this subject. Colonel Moses, for instance, knows everything that I know about it. Then some of you were in the seminar day before yesterday and heard me hold forth on certain aspects of the manpower problem there.

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Another thing I want to mention is that I have been out of the manpower field for the past two years and have concentrated on a different aspect of the mobilization problem. And now I am embarrassed to be reminded that I spoke to you on somewhat the same subject here two years ago, and that my remarks unfortunately are available in reproduced form, so that you can read them for yourselves. So I feel a little bit on the spot.

After I accepted the invitation to speak here, you very thoughtfully gave me a little note telling me what you would like me to talk about. You wanted me particularly to discuss community facilities and community problems in relation to manpower mobilization.

If you hadn't given me that note, I am afraid that I would have gotten off on the wrong track and delivered an entirely different lecture, because it happens that during the war I was with the War Manpower Commission and our responsibilities were to direct the mobilization of labor and interplant transfer and in-plant utilization of labor. While we came into contact with the problems of community facilities, the responsibility for community facilities was primarily that of agencies other than the War Manpower Commission. I don't mean by that remark to indicate that these activities were any less important than those that were being carried on by the War Manpower Commission. To do so would be like arguing that the right-hand horse of a team was more important than the left-hand horse. It takes both of them to pull the load. It just happens that I am accustomed to working on the left-hand side; and if I bump into the wagon tongue occasionally trying to get across to the right-hand side, I am sure you will forgive me.

But your subject is a very important one. We found that in civilian mobilization one of the most major considerations is what is done in the communities. Of course, you have to start out by establishing national goals. You have to figure out the size of your armed forces that you are going to have. You have to figure out what part of your facilities and resources will be devoted to the production of munitions. You have to calculate what part will go to other uses--war-supporting and essential civilian production. But the moment you start to translate these into specific production schedules, you run smack into the question of community participation and community action.

At the time that the National Defense Council was activated prior to World War II, all our data were on a national basis. Indeed, we were thinking in national terms. We talked about the national income, the national production level, the national steel capacity, the national power capacity, the national employment, national unemployment,

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and so on. But as soon as we started to lay out a program for mobilization, we discovered that these national aggregates were of little use, that is, after we got past the planning stage.

The reason they were of little use is that, except for perhaps a few professions, there is no national labor market, but a series of independent or semi-independent labor markets. For example, a surplus of labor in Hartford, Connecticut, doesn't do you much good with respect to a shortage of labor in San Diego or vice versa. I realize that during the last war we had the greatest geographical shift of population ever experienced by this country or any other country; and I further realize that our labor force by and large is the most mobile labor force on the face of the earth. Yet the proposition stands that what is done in the community by the community is one of the most important features leading to the success or failure of your civilian manpower mobilization.

At the time that the "phony war" or the "sitzkrieg" burst into a blitzkrieg, with the invasion of the Low Countries, I was with the United States Employment Service. One of the first things we did was to sit down to try to devise a labor market reporting system that would give us the information we needed for administering a manpower program.

One of the essential elements of that system was an analysis community by community of the population, its age and sex characteristics, the number in the labor force, and an estimate of the number of additional people that could be brought into the labor force should the war production activities be expanded.

The backbone of that system was the employer's report. We asked all the large employers in every community and a great many of the smaller employers to report to us--as a matter of fact, we went out to the plant and got the report--the number of people they currently had on the pay roll and the number of people they expected to add to the pay roll during the next 30 or 60 days. On the basis of this information we were able to classify every important industrial community in the United States as to whether it was an area of labor shortage or an area in which labor was simply tight with a prospective shortage in the near future, or an area where there was an abundance or a surplus of manpower.

It would lead me astray from the main subject today if I were to go into the details of how this labor market information was used in the direct mobilization scheme. It did become, however, the backbone of the manpower program; and that program included the establishment of an employment stabilization system in each community, the establishment of a system for setting ceilings for the different employers in

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the community, and a system for the issuing of statements of availability for directing workers that were available to employment of basic importance.

It had many other uses. One of them was that on the basis of this area classification we were able to exercise some influence upon the allocation of contracts. At that time, there were seven or eight million people unemployed and that made the problem very difficult. But we could foresee that this situation was going to change and change very drastically. At that time General McSherry was head of the Labor Division in the Office of Production Management. We went to talk to General Somervell about the situation and called his attention to the fact that this was going to become an acute problem in the near future. He recognized this fact immediately and at that time issued advice to all procurement officers that in the awarding of contracts they must take into account insofar as possible the manpower situation; and that where there was an alternative, contracts were not to be placed in areas of labor shortage, but in areas where the labor was surplus or adequate.

Some time later on this principle was included in a much more emphatic way in Production Order No. 1, issued by the War Production Board. Already the Plant Site Committee of OPM was trying to take manpower considerations into account in the establishment of new facilities. But there are other things that you have to take into account in trying to locate new facilities--such things as the adequacy of electric power, proximity to transportation, and so on. So there were a great many new facilities built and a great many contracts awarded in areas that were later to become areas of acute labor shortage.

But that partly demonstrates the inefficacy of any simple formula for resolving this very difficult manpower problem, because you have to put contracts where facilities exist. That is the prime consideration, particularly if you want to speed up war production, you have to put the contracts where the machines already exist.

When you start using these facilities more intensively, as you do when you move from a 40- to 48-hour week, or to around-the-clock operations, you simply must have more manpower. Even a well-established industrial community, one that is accustomed to cyclical fluctuations--for example, Detroit--is bound to feel a manpower pinch when you expand war production. In Detroit from 1940 to 1943 there was an increase in population of 544,000, an increase of about 26 percent, to bring the total population of the community up to 2,880,000.

In September 1943 the in-migration was still running at the rate of about 12,000 a month; at the same time there had been a terrific increase in the use of women in the Detroit area. From May 1942

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to September 1943 the employment of women increased from about 50,000 to 194,000, an increase of something like 275 percent. Ford alone was employing over 35,000 women in his plant. Yet at that time it was estimated that the shortage of manpower in the ensuing three months would amount to 25,000 persons.

So you just can't avoid dealing with community problems if you want to effectively utilize your manpower. Community problems are community-wide problems, and they have to be dealt with in the community. I think the importance of the community problems is reflected in the people who were appointed by President Roosevelt to serve on the Congested War Production Areas Committee. He chose busy men, already overloaded with war burdens, including such people as Harold Smith, the Director of the Bureau of the Budget; Robert Patterson, Under Secretary of War; Ralph Bard, Assistant Secretary of the Navy; Donald Nelson, Chairman of the War Production Board; General Fleming, head of the Public Works Agency; John Branford, who was head of the Housing Agency; and Paul McNutt, who was Chairman of the War Manpower Commission. These were the men that were appointed to assist the community in overcoming its difficulties that war production had thrust upon them.

The areas in which they had to render assistance included the Puget Sound area and the Portland and Vancouver areas. They were simply swamped with war contracts. Then there were San Francisco and Los Angeles, which had at times very acute problems with respect to housing, commercial facilities, and transportation. Then there was San Diego, where the naval base there accentuated every community problem you could think of; and the city had all of the problems of Los Angeles and San Francisco, plus some of its own. I see Charlie Little here. He can probably tell us of the situation that existed in the Beaumont-Orange region in Texas, in which inadequate medical care, inadequate garbage and sewage disposal, and disease control lurked like a spectre over these two cities during the war. Then there was Muskegon which had the whole calender of problems; including inadequate housing, medical care, police protection, food, fuel, and recreation. Knoxville, Tennessee, suffered from lack of recreation and inadequate childcare. Then there were the southern communities of Key West, Pensacola, and Mobile. All had problems of a very acute nature with respect to community facilities.

That is a partial list. It is by no means all. Charleston, South Carolina, at one time had a shortage of cornmeal and grits. Brunswick, Georgia, suffered from a shortage of milk. These examples give you some idea of the nature and scope of community problems in wartime.

The community is the only place that can resolve these problems. Fortunately, as I say, they were community-wide in character and came to be recognized as that. They are not like a slum district, that unfortunately exists in many of our cities. Such districts seem to be

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regarded as unpleasant and the responsibility of maybe social workers or a public-spirited minority. In a war situation the whole community becomes involved. It may be that the newcomers suffer more than the older citizens, but not much more. I mean, their cars, with ours, jam the streets. They shop in the same stores. Their children go to the same schools. So that you just can't avoid dealing with the problems that arise. If you don't deal with them, there is terrific loss in your manpower resources.

In Detroit I don't know how many community organizations were involved in trying to meet this manpower problem and keep community facilities in operation, but there were well over a score. The Detroit Victory Council was organized to try to coordinate the activities of the different agencies. It alone had more than a score of agencies whose activities it was trying to bring to bear in a coordinated manner upon community problems. The agencies included public schools, the Department of Public Parks, transportation, recreation, the Federation of Women's Clubs, the Merchants and Manufacturers Association, the Retail Association, the CIO, the AF of L, and a number of others that I can't recall at the moment. But they all had to work on these problems.

In Detroit in 1943, I believe it was, there was a survey made of the reasons for people quitting their jobs. The second most important reason was to return home. Now, I realize that it is a very general reason and may comprehend a great many other things than displeasure with the community's environment. But I remind you again that Detroit was far better off than some of the communities. The problems it had to deal with were better in hand than they were in a great many other communities. Charleston, South Carolina, was never regarded as very bad; and yet a Navy survey report indicated that 127 out of 600 septic tanks that had been used in a new building addition to the city were overflowing and that 99 of the buildings had water in the yards.

You can't imagine how pressing some of these problems can become, and how it takes community action to overcome them. In the case of South Carolina the citizens were stopped from dealing with the situation themselves because the law of the state prohibited them from making certain arrangements with the Federal agencies that were ready to loan money. The state had to amend the law before the local citizens could take care of their own problems.

This reminds me of one other aspect that indicated the local character of these problems. One of my jobs during the war was to act as chairman of an Interagency Essential Activity Committee. It was a committee to determine which activities should be regarded as essential to the war effort and which were not entitled to that designation.

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The purpose of this list was to guide the Selective Service System in the order in which men should be inducted so as to do the least damage to the war production effort. It was also used by the War Manpower Commission in establishing its manpower program, particularly to establish priorities for routing workers to the most important jobs. We had an arrangement where if a man was available for work, he was not to be referred to an activity that was not on the list. Indeed, the employer in some cases was not permitted to employ him if he sought work in an activity that was not on the list.

When that list was first prepared, and indeed for some time thereafter, we definitely eliminated certain activities from getting on the list. Among those not eligible were all trade and distributive services, all banking services, and all financial services. We simply took the point of view that "it may be tough, we may not have an adequate supply of these; but, if we don't, we will just have to get along without them."

The result of that was that you didn't have on the list such things as shops, grocery stores, and activities of that character. Neither did the laundries nor eating places appear on the list. But after the situation began to become so acute in some of the communities, we had to make some modifications. What we did was to provide that certain things under specified conditions could be declared "locally needed." Such activities did not have any implication with respect to Selective Service operations, although it did have very important implications for the manpower program.

We had to make this change because we found that when more women went into the labor market and couldn't find any place to have their laundry done, they would stay away from work a day to do the laundry and perhaps another day for the ironing. Then, when they found the shops continuously closed when they came home from a long day's work, the first thing we knew they were taking a day off to do the shopping; and, if those responsibilities devolved on the male member of the family, he, too, had to take a day off to do the shopping. We found that by keeping these things off the essential activity list or the locally needed list we were really diminishing the utilization of the available manpower. So we made the change.

Another thing about community problems is the variations that occur from one community to another. I mentioned these various things to give you a sample of the scope and character of the problem; but no community had problems exactly duplicating those of another community.

Another thing that deserves mentioning--and here I think I might make a general statement--is that some community problems tended to be overlooked. I mean that the tenseness of war, the bestiality of the

struggle tends to engender a singleness of purpose that makes us forget the importance of some of these community activities in the midst of war. That is true, I think, of fringe activities, such as recreation. We think, "Well, this doesn't contribute to the war effort and we shouldn't waste our time on it."

Another thing that has to be taken into account is eating places. When more people begin to work away from home, you have to device better away-from-home eating places. In the midst of war, since this takes facilities that compete for critical materials, this is sometimes a tremendous problem.

In many cases the new facilities were furnished by the plant. But then the question comes up, "Is this a part of the cost of the contract? Can this be added?" You get all sorts of problems of that nature. In some cases such facilities had to be furnished by the community adjacent to the plant, in the form of the expansion of older facilities or the creation of new facilities.

Transportation, which we take for granted, becomes a terrific local problem during the war. You all realize the wide use of car pools and things of that nature, but that doesn't meet the situation. It sometimes makes it more acute. So you have to establish additional transportation facilities to serve new additions to the community and to serve new plants.

Sometimes you have to adjust the schedules. For example, we couldn't get women to work in a particular plant, until finally we discovered that it was because of lack of police protection and convenient hours of travel. The transportation facilities had not adjusted their schedules. Once that was corrected we were able to get the women to accept jobs.

Another problem that I think is extremely important is that of childcare. I indicated that in Detroit 194,000 women were employed in that city alone. Of those employed, about 60,000 of them were mothers of 90,000 children. Half of the children were being taken care of by relatives in the family. The other half was being taken care of by others. There was a good deal of Federal assistance pumped into Detroit to establish childcare centers. There were about a hundred publicly supported childcare centers, so women, while they were in the plant could be sure that their children were being properly taken care of.

I want to italicize this question of childcare, because it is going to be more important any time in the future than it was the last time in a mobilization. There were millions of women that came into the labor market for the first time during World War II. Indeed, without them we would never have achieved the production goals that we were finally

able to achieve. Because of the tremendously increased birth rate, during the past few years there are now about 35 percent more children under 10 years of age than during the war. Unless we go further in providing for childcare in case of another full mobilization, we can never expect women to go into the labor force to the same extent as did the women of corresponding ages in World War II.

Another Community service that deserves mention is recreation. This one is really a fringe activity and it is one that is likely to be neglected.

But recreation is an important thing. There was an agency or division on recreation in the War Community Services that was headed by Charlie Taft. I think his people did a splendid job of convincing the people of the importance of recreation to the war effort; that it was in some cases a necessity, an investment in our number one resource--the human resource.

They pointed out that no recreation program on paper, as they put it, would suffice; that it had to be worked out in the community; that men and women working long hours under great tension had to have some relaxation and rest for the benefit of the war effort and for the benefit of the community.

I know you are very much interested in organization and the different types of organization that you need for mobilization. I am afraid I can't be very helpful in this connection. I have indicated that at the Federal level you had the establishment of the civil defense program. You had the Congested War Production Areas. You had the Office of Community War Services. You could add to those the Housing Agency, the Office of Education, and several others they were involved in working with the communities to help them meet their problems. But I don't think that on the whole it was handled as effectively as it is going to have to be handled the next time. I also mentioned, you remember, that in Detroit there were more than a score of community agencies dealing with community problems.

But in thinking about this subject it occurs to me that you have civil defense to consider this time. That means a far different type of organization and a far different set of functions. I realize that the emphasis now is on disaster relief in civilian centers. But let us hope that there will be many communities in which that sort of service will never be needed; and I am wondering--and I throw this out as a suggestion for you to consider--whether the business of community services might not be tied up with the civil defense organization as it is now envisioned and be planned as an adjunct or an integral part of that organization.

QUESTION: Mr. Stocking, you mentioned that during the last war you worked up an inventory of manpower, age, sex, geographical distribution, and all the other factors. In the course of your talk you emphasized particularly the fact that communities that are building up in war work are going to have to have certain facilities and services--recreation, bank clerks, store clerks, and that sort of thing. Do you have any kind of quantitative idea as to the number of workers and man-hours that would have to be provided for those services to facilitate actual production?

MR. STOCKING: No. You simply can't get a factor of that sort. I want to emphasize that the problems varied community by community.

In respect to the banks, when we realized that some of them could be declared locally needed, we said it didn't take any more manpower than the manpower that was already in them. We simply said, "You have got to adjust your hours if you want to be designated locally needed, adjust your hours so as to accommodate the community."

As to the minimum requirements for it, I wouldn't have any idea, because it would vary from community to community.

QUESTION: We have seen various charts showing how labor can be diverted from one group of endeavor to another that would be required. If we were to approach the problem of how to distribute a very small group of workers, we would have to have some idea, wouldn't we, as to how many we are going to have to set aside for services alone, at least some appreciation of how many?

MR. STOCKING: If you had a national figure as a factor, it would be very deceptive. That is to say, in each community you have to figure out what are the minimum services required to most effectively utilize the labor force, what kind of situation you need to avoid excessive absenteeism and excessive labor turn-over. I don't think there is any factor that will tell you that on a national basis.

I think I know what you are referring to. You are thinking of how we draw these columnar charts of manpower in peacetime and show how it gets redistributed in wartime. We attempted to guide this redistribution by establishing manpower ceilings.

The ceilings were never too effective, but that was because we established them late and with inadequate authority to always make them stick. The principle was that if you were engaged in a less essential activity, you were not to have any more manpower than you had at some basic date. When workers left, you were not allowed replacements.

The "essential activity" designation also has some influence on the redistribution of manpower. A person who is not engaged in an activity that is classified as essential may decide: "The next time I write to Joe I want to tell him that I am in an essential activity too." A great many of them will desert the activities that are not declared essential and move over to those that are declared essential.

But I don't know any way of factoring it out so that you say that you need 10 percent of your people in this activity, 5 percent in another and so on. I might say too that there is a great deal of dispute as to the accuracy of such figures. There are some people, for instance, who have the feeling that in the last war the most extravagant use of manpower was in the field of agriculture, but such a point of view was opposed bitterly. As a result fewer people were taken from agriculture than from many other lines of endeavor.

QUESTION: You brought out the importance of the community services and indicated that it must be done locally and that the Federal Government merely gives assistance. If we had a war very shortly, say, tomorrow, what would the Federal Government do to get into this thing right away and see what needs to be done? Would it wait until somebody cried out that there was trouble?

MR. STOCKING: No. One of your important things is housing. There is one thing that all these congested areas had in common and that was the question of continual manpower shortages. But when you construct housing to relieve the overcrowding, the workers were better satisfied and the turn-over dropped. Indeed, it was very often the most important improvement you could make.

Now, the first thing we did the last time--and I don't think we were as well prepared then as we are now--was to engineer the allocation of materials into home construction in terms of the local labor market conditions. We should be able to do a better job if we had to do it again.

There is a great deal of concern now about childcare in the Childrens Bureau in the Federal Security Agency. It is continually analyzing what you need in childcare, and that provides a basis for a great deal of what you would need in wartime.

Except for transportation and recreation, there are very few things in the way of community problems for which some Federal agency does not feel a responsibility now. But it is not organized. That is why I raised this question that maybe what we need is to tie this up with civil defense, so that it will be considered and its different aspects coordinated and integrated.

QUESTION: Would you care to discuss a little bit in regard to forcing people to go into certain phases of industry, either by methods such as Australia used during the war or on a democratic basis as was done in some other countries?

MR. STOCKING: We were the only democratic country that was engaged in this war that did not resort to what is described as national service. That is a subject that has been under constant discussion since the American Legion got the introduction of the bill for national service in the event of war in 1921 or 1922. I will say for their benefit that they went to great length. They said they believed in national service and the conscription of capital. Those terms were actually used.

The question of national service was discussed continuously through the twenties and the thirties, and at the outbreak of the war and during the war. One of the first things President Roosevelt asked for was a national service act. He repeated it three times before the war was over in his message to Congress. McNutt, when he became chairman of the War Manpower Commission when it was first established, said "National service is inevitable."

But there are more problems in getting national service in this country than most of us realize. Part of it is due to the peculiarities of this country, its vast geographical extent and the freedom of movement, that make it more difficult than in other countries.

But I don't know. You will be interested in referring to McNutt's speech before the class here June 1950, when he discussed this subject. I am in enthusiastic agreement with what he said then, which was in effect that the most you can hope for probably is the legislative foundation at the beginning of a conflict for the type of program that the War Manpower Commission was able to achieve without legislation by the close of the last war.

But he also threw in good caution. Don't be misled into thinking that national service legislation, if you got it, would resolve your problems. You would have the same problems in a different way.

QUESTION: In a case like the baseball bats that you mentioned it is not quite clear to me what authority in the last analysis refused the manufacture of the bats. Who exercised that authority? Who made the final decision that they couldn't make them? What mechanism prevented the undertaking of the manufacture of bats?

MR. STOCKING: The question was, "What would keep baseball bat manufacturers from manufacturing bats if they wanted to, regardless of what was said here in Washington?" That has to be broken down into

two things. First, they controlled the use of copper, steel, aluminum, and other raw materials and simply stated that you had to use the material for what it was being allocated and nothing else. Indeed, it was a crime to use it for something else. So if a manufacturer was producing something for which material was not being allocated, and it was a scarce material, he was stopped from producing it.

As to the baseball bats, shortage of material probably wouldn't have stopped them. You couldn't have stopped them if they had the manpower to do it. But by this time the manufacturers had swung away from baseball bats, and if they were going to start producing them again, they had to have additional labor; we argued that labor was too scarce to give them any for baseball bats. Also this happened to be just after the Battle of the Bulge, and we said, "My Lord, here you are talking about making baseball bats when in the next breath you indicate that we are in danger of running short of ammunition."

I might mention one other thing. We tried to get the voluntary transfer of workers by classifying locally what were the most important activities in the community and gave them a high priority for manpower. We said if manpower became available, this is where it should go. Then, if manpower was not on the loose, so to speak, we tried through negotiation to get people to quit the job they were working on and accept more important work.

Only once did we ever try to test our authority in this connection. We thought we achieved a pretty good job through these so-called voluntary methods. "Voluntary" should be in quotes, because we bluffed and bamboozled. I sometimes disrespectfully say in exaggeration that I used to feel that our manpower program was a race between ingenuity and ignorance, because every time we modified the rules of the program ever so slightly, it got a great deal of publicity and it got people confused. So they stuck where they were. But after three or four weeks they would see other people not observing this. They would say, "Joe went over there because he could get higher wages, and nothing happened to him." And so other people would do it. At the end of three or four weeks there was a pickup in the movement of people, feeling free to do as they wanted to. Just coincidentally, about every so often we modified the rules. So that is why I characterized it disrespectfully as a race between our genius in getting another modification in the rules and the ignorance of the people in finding out that the rules were not enforceable anyhow.

The one time we tried to test our authority was in a plant in Salem. We tried to transfer some workers by cutting the ceiling of the textile plant way down so they would have to discharge the workers

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they had and then we would offer the workers jobs in a nylon cord plant for automobile tire manufacturing. We did this boldly, as if we had a right to do it. Both management and labor jumped on our necks and we got nowhere. Fortunately, it was near the end of the war. We tried to get a minimum of publicity for it.

MR. HILL: Mr. Stocking, there are a great many questions, I see, popping up; but we have run close to the end of our time. May I tell you how much we appreciate your coming down and how thoroughly you covered our subject. Thank you very much.

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