

9

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THE SCOPE AND CHARACTER OF WORK  
AT THE ARMY WAR COLLEGE

By

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In order that we may have a clear idea of the place The Army War College occupies in our educational system I first want to review briefly our Army School System.

As I see it, the military profession is peculiar in that it can be practiced only in war. In time of peace our work is to a large extent theoretical. This is not the case with other professions. By a method of trial and error a doctor, a lawyer or an engineer can put into practical application the theory of his profession concurrently with his study of that theory. If the theory is wrong or the results unsatisfactory but little damage is done, and harm results to only a few people. With us, if our theories are wrong, our endeavor to put them to practical application may result in disaster to a large number of people. Therefore, in time of peace, we must adopt such methods of training and instruction as will evolve the soundest theory as well as tend to minimize disastrous results in war.

Due to our organization, our small number, and our multifarious duties, our instruction has to be largely theoretical. Our officers must be indoctrinated and methods must be evolved so that reaction in war does not become an unknown problem or task. To my mind our school system fulfills this requirement as nearly efficiently as it is possible to do so.

Our school system has been one of slow growth. Leavenworth had a very modest and humble beginning in the early eighties. At that time the school was little more than a grammar school.

Other schools gradually came into being, but at no time was there much coordination or correlation between the various schools. As a matter of fact, most of them met with much opposition on the part of many of our then senior officers. It was not an uncommon thing for regimental commanders to send officers to Leavenworth for the purpose of getting rid of undesirables and not because of any outstanding ability on the part of the officer.

During the World War the value of schools became manifest. The need for large numbers of trained officers in the minimum of time resulted in expansion of the then existing schools and the establishment of a great many others. It was proven that the uniform instruction of the greatest number of officers could be accomplished in the least time by means of schools. Consequently, upon the conclusion of the World War, the system of schools existing prior thereto was expanded and each school was given a definite and

known relationship to the others. The scope of each was clearly outlined and the system evolved was such as to provide for the progressive training of an officer from his entry into the service throughout his career as an officer.

The youngster who now enters the service is required during his first year as an officer to qualify in what is known as the basic course. This course consists of those subjects which are fundamental and basic and of which officers of all grades must have knowledge. The course is conducted concurrently with the youngster's practical education in service with troops.

The next step is the Special Service Schools. These are those established by each arm and branch, their primary function being the education of officers for duties of the various grades in the various arms and branches up to and including that of the reinforced brigade. In most of these branch schools there are two courses the first designated as the Company Officers Course, which is primarily for the purpose of teaching officers the duties of company commanders, the second is known as the Advanced Course, which is devoted to the training of officers for their duties as field officers.

The next step is the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth. This school is the first one where officers of all arms and branches are brought together. The course is for two years and the school has the role of indoctrinating officers in the duties and functions of commanders and general staff officers of divisions and corps. In theory, no officer is permitted to attend these schools until he has graduated from the advanced course of the special school of his arm.

The Army War College is the next step and has for its function the training of officers for duties of commanders and general staff officers of our largest units and for duty on the War Department General Staff. Prior to the World War the War College was in reality an integral part of the War Department General Staff.

The Army Industrial College is of recent growth. It had a modest beginning and has expanded as need for the study of industrial mobilization and procurement of supplies has become more evident.

From this brief survey it will be seen that our school system provides for the theoretical education of officers from the lowest group to the highest and that the system of education is progressive. There is a certain amount of overlapping between the various schools, but the overlap that exists is only such as to provide thorough coordination between the schools, thus tying each in with the other.

12

Each school has a specific mission laid down for it by the War Department which provides for the coordination of the schools one with another and indicates in definite terms just the scope of the work allotted to the particular school. For the Army War College the mission prescribed by the War Department is as follows

a. To train officers in the conduct of field operations of the Army and higher echelons, and to instruct in those political, economic and social matters which influence the conduct of war.

b. To instruct officers in War Department General Staff duties and those of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of War.

c. To train officers for joint operations of the Army and Navy.

d. To instruct officers in the strategy, tactics and logistics of large operations in past wars, with special reference to the World War.

In brief, we have two important missions - preparing officers for duty as commanders and general staff officers of our highest echelons and preparing officers for duty on the War Department General Staff.

The officers who come to us are all selected and must conform to certain requirements laid down annually by the War Department. A study of our school system shows that the War College is the bottle neck, that the officers who eventually reach it are comparatively few in number and are those who have not only passed through successfully the other schools but who have also proved their capability in other ways in the branches from which they come.

You will note that a part of our mission is to instruct officers in the duties of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of War. Formerly this instruction was much more extensive than is now the case. Due to the development of the Army Industrial College the need no longer exists for the War College to delve deeply into the study of matters with which the War Department General Staff is not directly concerned as a functional duty. It limits its investigation to an orientation on the duties and responsibilities of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of War in a broad and general way only. We attempt only to show the responsibilities imposed by law on that office and to show the cooperation that must exist between it and the War Department General Staff.

13

Having given you an idea of the scope of The Army War College I know of no better way to give you a knowledge of the character of the work of that institution than by quoting from the address by the Secretary of War at the opening of the college in 1919. He said -

"It was General Hines who first determined that this highest of educational institutions was not a school or college in the sense in which we usually apply these words, but that the word 'college' was used in the original Latin sense, Collegium -- a collection of men, the intention being not that some more wise should teach some less wise, but rather that a group of men by contact, consultation, and conference evolve the best wisdom of the entire group."

In carrying out our mission of training and instructing officers we conceive that it can best be done by means and methods different from those which are extant in the other service schools. The underlying idea in those schools is the indoctrination of officers in the basic principles of warfare. Therefore, means and methods must be somewhat set and in many cases rather dogmatic.

At The Army War College we believe that the faculty and students can "by contact, consultation and conference evolve the best wisdom of the entire group" as the Secretary of War so aptly expressed it in his address in 1919. In other words, the instruction may be classed largely as self instruction. To this end, for the major part of the work, we divide our classes into committees of varying sizes and to each committee is given a directive on a matter of timely interest and upon which a study must be made and a solution evolved.

Another reason for this committee method of work is that much of the work in the War Department is by committees and this enables our students to become familiar with working in groups. Furthermore, the committee method permits of a greater amount of research on any given subject than can be done by any one student and also permits of argument, reasoning, initiative, original thought, harmonizing views and the coming to definite decisions and recommendations by a group of men.

Each committee is headed by an officer, selected by roster, known as the Chairman, who is responsible for the organization of the committee, for the allotment of work, for the proper functioning of his committee and for the formulation of a committee report at the time specified. We lay great stress on the importance of the job of committee chairman and endeavor to hold him entirely responsible for the work of his committee.

14

The committee method enables us also to bring out another important feature of staff work, namely coordination and cooperation. The committee chairman must learn to coordinate the work of all the members of his committee, the members must learn to work one with the other, i. e., to cooperate.

In order that all our students may benefit from the work of the various committees each committee is required, on a prescribed date, to present the report of the committee to the class as a whole. A more or less arbitrary time limit is prescribed for the rendition of this report which requires of the committee the elimination of all extraneous matter, the stressing of the high points of the report and the presentation of the report in the limited time available in such a manner as to present the subject convincingly and understandingly to all the members of the class. This teaches not only the chairman but also all members of the committee the important matter of condensation. Ample time is given each committee to hold as many rehearsals as may be necessary prior to the rendition of its report.

Although committee studies form the major part of the work during the year, in addition thereto and as an aid to them, and to provide for a broad cultural education, some seventy or eighty lectures are scheduled. These lectures are given not only by military personnel, but by persons of importance in other departments of the government, and by speakers who are prominent in the educational, commercial, financial and literary life of the country. The subjects, as a rule, are those which pertain to the particular work being undertaken at the time by the student body. The object of these lectures is not only to add to the fund of information to be made available to a committee or committees and the work then in hand, but it is also to put us in touch with the opinions of the outside world and to excite interest, stimulate discussion and suggest lines of thought and study. The subject is usually one selected by us, but no limitation is placed on the method of presentation and no effort is made to conform to pre-conceived notions or to bolster up theories. The speakers are told that what goes on in the lecture hall is confidential. They are made to feel that they are safe to express their own opinions with the utmost candor. It is only by doing so that we can get the best on some topics which are highly confidential.

We welcome you gentlemen to all of these lectures, but we desire to stress to you, as we have to our own students, that the subject matter of the lectures is not to be discussed outside the lecture hall. This is necessary in order that we may live up to our promises to the lecturers.

After every lecture and committee report the meeting is thrown open to general discussion. We encourage questions and frank expressions of opinions. We believe that committees should be re-

15

quired to prove all the statements they make. We encourage questioning in order to bring out and clarify vague and controversial points. We desire the fullest and freest expression of views.

In addition to committee directives and lectures each student is required to submit an individual study on a matter or subject which is of live interest before one of the sections of the War Department General Staff. This requires individual research on the part of each student and is another means of instructing him in the duties that he will be called upon to perform if and when he becomes a member of the War Department General Staff.

The above shows in a very general way the character of the work we perform in carrying out that part of our mission of training and instructing officers for duty on the War Department General Staff

We allow a certain period of time for as thorough a study as is possible of each section of the War Department General Staff, during which time each student is required to study and familiarize himself with the organization of the particular section its functions, its methods of work and enough of the problems which come before that section to give the student a good insight into its work.

We conclude with a period devoted to the War Plans Division, during which time the class is required to formulate one or more war plans against a potential enemy or enemies, including the joint plan, Army strategical plan and mobilization plan.

In carrying out that part of our mission which relates to the training and instruction in the duties of commanders and general staff officers of armies and groups of armies we follow a somewhat different procedure. We endeavor to make this phase of our work as practical as possible and do so by means of map maneuvers, reconnaissance of a selected theatre of operations and a command post exercise. During this time the class is divided into groups, each group representing a commander and his general staff. Different theatres of operations are selected, assumed situations are presented, and each command group is required to solve the initial and subsequent situations as would be the case were the situation actual instead of being assumed. In these map maneuvers we stress strategy and logistics rather than tactics.

Each map maneuver is followed by a discussion where each commander is required to present his views and the factors which influenced his various decisions and in which the directors and umpires point out the errors of omission and commission

16

The organization of the college is in three parts - faculty, class and administration. The faculty is directed by the Commandant who has an assistant for instruction and an Executive Officer for administration. The faculty is organized into four sections known as the G-1, G-2, G-3 and G-4 sections, each with a director at its head.

The school year is divided into two main periods of approximately equal length which we have designated - The Preparation for War Course and The Conduct of War Course. During the Preparation for War Course our instruction is devoted to that part of the mission relating to the training of officers for the War Department General Staff. This period is divided into sub-periods, each of which is devoted to the study of a particular section of the War Department General Staff as I have already enumerated and culminates in the preparation of one or more war plans. Each section of the faculty is responsible for the instruction in the duties, functions and work of the corresponding section of the War Department General Staff.

The Conduct of War Course is that period devoted to the training and instruction of officers in the duties of commanders and general staff officers of large units. In this all sections of the Faculty participate.

The Army War College and The Army Industrial College have much in common. There is need for our working together. We should have close cooperation one with the other because our work and our problems are intimately related. The study of tactics, strategy and war planning cannot be dissociated from the study of industrial mobilization and procurement of supplies. Above all, our problems and studies must be approached from a practical point of view. Theory has its place, but not at the expense of practical solutions.