

THE ARMY INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE
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GRADUATION EXERCISES

Addresses by

Honorable George H. Dorn,
The Secretary of War

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GRADUATION EXERCISES

Colonel Jordan:

Mr. Secretary, Admiral Standley, Colonel Scott, General Simonds, other Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Army Industrial College is completing its fourteenth course and we are very proud indeed to put another milestone on our record. On behalf of the College I wish to express to our guests our appreciation of their presence here today.

We of the College feel that a diploma from this institution is a possession of which any man may well be proud - that the possessor has become a national asset for he has been trained to plan for the mobilization of our country's industrial activities in case of need - a training that was so startlingly lacking and needed when we entered the World War.

Our classes here are small; the number usually is about sixty, of whom perhaps forty are from the Army and the rest from the Navy and Marine Corps. As time goes on, trained officers will increase in numbers. Including the present class, 523 officers have been graduated from this institution; there are still on the active list 464 of these officers in the Army and approximately 75 in the Navy and Marine Corps. In this reservoir of trained personnel we feel that our country has a priceless possession - one which will be of incalculable value in case of another major emergency, ever ready for instant use.

This is the first time in the history of this College that the Secretary of War has been good enough to dignify our graduation exercises with his presence, and Mr. Dern, we appreciate it sincerely. I want to say to you and to Secretary Swanson that we of the Army Industrial College pledge to you our undying efforts to solve the many problems that arise in connection with industrial mobilization. They can be solved; we are working hard and we promise you that they will be solved.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you the Honorable George H. Dern, Secretary of War.

Mr. Dern:

Colonel Jordan, Gentlemen of the Army Industrial College, Ladies and Distinguished Guests.

It is indeed a pleasure for me to be here to greet you on your graduation day - certainly a momentous occasion for graduates - and their wives alike. The Army Industrial College has filled a long-felt need in the system of military education of both the Army and the Navy and today has taken its well earned place among the most important of our colleges of higher learning in the military establishment.

This occasion affords me particular gratification because it gives me the opportunity of greeting not only the Army members of the graduating class but those from its sister service - the Navy - as well. History has shown, time and time again, the necessity and importance of the spirit of cooperation between these two services in their associations with each other both in peace and in war. History has proven that close cooperation is vital to the success of joint operations and joint planning. Here in the Army Industrial College the flame of this spirit is fanned by the teachings of the institution and by the opportunities afforded to Army and Navy officers alike to understand the mutual problems of their services. Narrowing this down to our land forces the problem of the supply of an army is not the concern of officers of the supply arms and services alone. Those from the line of the Army in their positions as commanders or on the General Staff and especially when functioning on joint agencies, are much better fitted for the responsibilities imposed upon them if they have a first hand knowledge of the problems of procurement and industrial mobilization. I am glad to see that this fact is recognized in this school and that the line of the Army is so well represented.

And so today I offer all of you my heartiest congratulations.

It is also a distinct honor for me to be here on this occasion to introduce to you one of the nation's most distinguished industrialists and one who did so much in the last emergency to mould together industry and our fighting forces so that we became a nation in arms. His outstanding services as Chairman of the War Industries Board you well know. His contributions to preparedness have continued since the war. He has served as Chief of the Cleveland Ordnance District and is still Chairman of its Advisory Board. He is a Colonel in the Auxiliary Ordnance Reserve. For his distinguished services he was accorded the very unusual honor of receiving the Ordnance Medal of Merit. Our nation and its people owe him a debt of gratitude for his part in forging the sword that it became necessary to wield to uphold the principles upon which this great country was founded.

Ladies and gentlemen it is indeed a great pleasure and an honor to introduce to you Colonel Frank A. Scott

Colonel Scott:

Mr. Secretary, Colonel Jordan, and Gentlemen of the School - and, for the first time in the many years I have been coming here - Ladies of the School:

This is the only light touch I have seen since 1917 in connection with the supply problems of the Army and Navy. It cheers me and gives me some hope for the future.

It is difficult for us from the vantage point occupied 18 years after the war, and 15 years after the passage of the National Defense Act, which set up the procurement and coordination system under The Assistant Secretary of War, - it is difficult for us to visualize the procurement conditions existing in early 1917. Then, in both the Army and Navy, they were an agglomeration of methods and procedures based on law, custom and tradition, and what the departments and bureaus had found by experience best produced satisfactory peace-time results.

There had been no program established for either the prompt expansion or the essential coordination of these great buying agencies. The country had participated in only one major war, and that was a civil war into which both sides entered equally unprepared and in which they trained each other and met as best they could the demands which the conflict created. It is a waste of time to try to fix responsibility for this unpreparedness. The fact is that the country gets about what it demands from its law-makers, its elected officers and its military services. Our failure to prepare was due to a lack of knowledge and interest, for which we must all accept some responsibility.

There were at least 5 departments of the Army and 5 bureaus of the Navy participating in procurement works and necessarily competing with each other and all of them together necessarily competing with civilian demand and with the demands of the Allies. If an enemy had sought to compel us to a method likely to be fatal to our own purpose, it is probable that no better method could have been devised. However, it should be remembered, to the credit of all involved in this unsatisfactory situation, that the departments and bureaus each was doing an excellent piece of work, and the absence of system was a national fault and not chargeable to the men who were utilizing the only machinery provided. It was this complete absence of coordination, and the spectre of the obvious confusion and delay certain to be created by it, which led the secretaries of War and the Navy with myself, and with the advice and cooperation of Major Generals Crozier and Sharpe, and Colonel Palmer Pierce,

of the Army, and Admirals Earle and McGowan of the Navy, to develop the body subsequently known as the General Munitions Board of the Council of National Defense.

To state it in the briefest way, this new board operated through authorized representatives of all the departments and bureaus, and under powers delegated by the President and the Council of National Defense. It was to locate new resources, coordinate demands, determine fair and just prices, establish priorities between the departments and bureaus, and generally produce in the handling of Army and Navy and Allied requirements the conditions that led naturally into the control of the whole industry of the country through the War Industries Boards of July, 1917, and March, 1918.

The three or four months period immediately following our entrance into the war in 1917, to one near the center of power in the War and Navy Departments, created somewhat the effect assigned by observers to a peek into the crater of an active volcano. The general impression was chaos.

"All work had to be done at a furious rate, amid countless interruptions, ceaseless alarms, and the wildest public confusion. Everyone wanted to fight; few were willing to recognize that war calls, first of all, for ordered preparation. The public seemed to think that arms and ammunition and all the equipment of an army could be provided instantly and by magic, and all that was needed was the word to go forward and overwhelm the enemy."

This quoted paragraph is from Douglas Freeman's great book, "R. E. Lee". It was written to portray the conditions under which Lee did his work as commander-in-chief of the forces of Virginia, in Richmond in 1861. It accurately describes conditions in Washington, April to July, 1917. It can not fail to impress all of us with the fact that war in any period and among any people develops its own phenomena. We must remember that at that time we had no automatic way of going to war. The day after war was declared, except for the war powers of the President, our status was the same as before the declaration. The peace-time limitations and checks still prevailed, and the first few weeks were a chaos of effort by some authorities to get started, by others to avoid the breaking of laws without the fracture of which they could not start, - laws that unfortunately have no place in a war program.

Most of our citizens quite naturally do not understand the nature of war. Certainly those who are most vocal in opposition to a sane program of preparedness do not understand the ruthlessness of war or they could not advocate their doctrines. On this occasion

I shall permit myself only this comment about those laws which we enact in times of secure peace and which limit the development of our power when war comes; such statutes must produce one of three possible results whenever war is declared; first, immediate repeal so we may arm and fight; second, defeat because we can not arm quickly enough; third, virtual abrogation by the Executive or the Secretary of War because they find themselves unable to carry out the mandate to make war and at the same time obey the law.

In 1917, by great good fortune, we possessed a Secretary of War who had the courage and imagination to take advantage of all authority provided by law and stretch implications to the breaking point. It may easily be that this, alone, saved us from disaster.

My present impression, after much reflection, is that the greatest obstacle we had to prompt action in 1917 was formed by the body of peace-time regulations and checks which were not automatically repealed by Congressional action acknowledging a state of war. We are alone among the great nations in this respect, so far as I know, for even England, which we most resemble, is in a better position than ourselves when war is declared, as there certain drastic changes immediately occur in the peace-time set-up.

Some recent suggestions anent war mobilization create on me an impression of a total lack of comprehension on the part of those who make them as to the stark nature of war. The United States will not enter a war until it can take no other course. When we do declare war, we can have but a single purpose and that is to win. Why, then, propose at the outset of a war to make such drastic changes in our economic and social status as to destroy the fruits of our labors in peace? An enemy could do nothing worse to us if we lost a war! Why voluntarily surrender the precise national assets we fight to protect?

Whenever this nation of 125 millions goes to war, it will be the movement of a colossus. It will be driven by the force of our younger generation, in a state of high emotion. Are we able to believe such a force will be held within confines fixed by the peace-time attitude of unaroused minds? If we can believe that, then we may assume that we, too, know little of the nature of war.

The important subject of the war powers of the President, related to your study, could alone well be the theme of more than one lecture. I will venture only a few comments now, suggested chiefly by the proposal perennially arising that "We ought to define the President's war powers."

Quite certainly we should do no such thing. One of our greatest assets in time of war is the vast authority exercised by the Executive and broadly termed the "War powers of the President."

Inasmuch as we cannot possibly foresee the exact nature of our national conflicts, we cannot make exact provision to meet them either by law, statute, or General Staff organization. We suddenly need in the conduct of a war a power not theretofore recognized; no existing officer or agency possesses it. We might be helpless in that matter except for this great reservoir of power possessed by the executive. He authorizes the required act; covers those who perform it with the blanket of his war powers until Congress can cover it by statute, if that seems desirable; or until - and this is what history shows usually occurs - the crisis passes and with it all further need for that particular performance.

My own opinion is that any attempt to define these powers merely robs the country of one of its peculiar forms of protection. These powers must remain undefined. They are not susceptible of definition without consequent limitation. They extend during war to the limit of what is required to save the Nation and for which there has been no provision in law or statute because the need for such provision could not be recognized until the emergency arises.

Without the broadly stated authority of the National Defense Act of 1916, plus the war powers of the President, the General Munitions Board of March, 1917, would have been impossible, the War Industries Board of July, 1917, would have been impossible, and when we have eliminated in our review the work of those bodies we have lost enough time to assure losing the war.

From my experience in 1917, and with all my heart, I counsel you to lay your plans on the broadest basis. Use the lessons of the past, multiply our then effort by the factors of time and progress, let your imagination work on that and, even then, I am confident the result will fall astonishingly short of the need. When compared with the normal activities of business, the military services are at a severe disadvantage in measuring the results of their work and their thinking. In business, the annual meeting calls for a show-down and the success of the management or otherwise is badly confessed in the balance sheet. In the military services there can be no trial and no balance sheet until there is war, and then omissions, errors, modifications must all be made amidst the distractions of a crisis.

To form a fair judgment of the work of the General Munitions Board of March, 1917, and the War Industries Board of July, 1917, it is necessary to recall, in addition to the actual work accomplished, a vital purpose of the Chairman of those Boards,

namely, to support the existing procurement departments and bureaus of the Army and Navy and render unnecessary the creation of a civilian munitions department such as England had been compelled to develop. The thought behind this purpose was the preservation and utilization of all the experience, patriotism and technical skill represented by departmental personnel during the war, and the preservation of the departments in our scheme of military organization after the war. To any suggestion that this sounds like after-the-war thinking; I can only respond by requesting an examination of the newspaper files of the period. There was a considerable mass of opinion on the side of a munitions department.

By mid-July, when the first War Industries Board was formed, a number of vital points had been gained - the procurement departments were functioning and growing stronger; priorities were being decided and enforced; price control had been established in departmental buying; the cannon, rifle and ammunition programs were under way; the cantonments were being built; and, most important of all, the press, the public and the Congress had been persuaded by actual accomplishments that the departments could do the work and that a civilian munitions department was unnecessary and would be unwise.

In any attempt to contrast our production experience in 1917 with any other possible performance, we must calculate that the creation here during 1915, 1916 and 1917 of great munitions plants for the Allies probably saved us about one year. Some plants, for example certain rifle, shell and fuze plants, were literally transferred onto our requirements; all had developed trained personnel capable of being diluted and all had developed machining and gauging experience we could apply.

In everything I happen to be familiar with, except small arms and ammunition, the Government's peace-time experience in our arsenals can contribute to a war effort little beyond a high standard of quality and the nucleus of trained personnel. The peace-time appropriations for production in most items are too low to admit a peace-time production which could teach us much about quantity production. This is inherent in our circumstances, and gives us only greater reason for developing, as we are doing in this College, a trained officer personnel who have been taught something of the resources of our vast country and how quickly to make them available for military purposes in a crisis.

We used to emphasize man-power. The World War taught us that machine power is the first requirement, and the most difficult of attainment within a given time. And this thought suggests the whole group of problems that include jigs and fixtures, gauges and tolerances. Are arsenal and navy yard drawings and specifications maintained so as to be clear to outside contractors, etc.?

We have no worry about resources, only the need for planning intelligently and quickly so we may utilize them for war purposes. We have most of the raw materials or satisfactory substitutes. We have half of the world's machine tools and ours are better integrated for production than elsewhere. We have a population apt and resourceful and therefore quickly serviceable. We need only faithfully to apply our brains in planning. This is the function of this college and the War College; and here again we must guard ourselves to see that our programs march with the times. I might venture a query: Are we planning the next war, or replanning the last war? Air, acoustics, and the field of chemistry demand our attention. "New occasions teach new duties."

We may assume with confidence that our present organization assures a quicker mobilization of production than that of 1917. But have we improved in a proportion that offsets the advance in communication and transportation? The time allowed for preparation will each year become less, because with each year an enemy's means of striking promptly will improve. Also, the quantities of 1917 now become unreliable, just as the quantities of 1863 were valueless in 1917. Put the 33,000 rounds of artillery ammunition fired by the 200 Federal guns during the 3 days at Gettysburg into the terms of fire in 1917, and my point will be clear.

One danger created by our peace-time studies and peace-time plans should quite frankly be recognized by all of us that we may study to avoid it. It is this: All academic work tends toward dogmatism and rigidity. We begin to believe we must follow the rule, to believe we must not depart from accepted principles and preconceived programs. We become victims of a self-imposed inflexibility. That is a serious limitation. In military procurement work and planning, as in the field, the first task is to apply to the solution of the problem, or at least toward the solution of the problem, the resources immediately available. While these are flowing toward the point of need, work may proceed to provide assurance of continuous supply.

We must keep ourselves free to utilize such resources as are available at a given time, even if they do not come up to or within our pre-war program. A rigid program in preparedness and procurement is justified only for a nation that has in prospect an aggressive war policy, that can determine when the Psychological moment has arrived to declare war. When the program has to be fitted into conditions that are controlled by outside circumstances it must be flexible and, on that account, our programs can never avoid a period of improvisation. In this respect, our nation and England bear close resemblance at the beginning of any major war.

Most fortunately for our Country we continue to develop new men. And this brings me to my conclusion. You are of the group to whom we now look confidently for discerning leadership. Modern war calls for the use of the entire resources of the nation. Nothing, therefore, in our national economy can be without interest for you. We may pray that our Country may never again be subjected to the trials and sorrows of war, and we may include a petition that, should war come, we, or those whom we have taught, may lead with courage, clear vision, and the firm belief that if we exert our strength we shall maintain our cause.