

CHAPTER I - THE CIVILIAN
CONSERVATION CORPS PROGRAM

On March 9, 1933, the newly elected President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, called to the White House six High Government officials and laid before them a plan for the information of a Civilian Conservation Corps. From 4 P.M. to 10 P.M., with time out for dinner, the conferees listened, spoke, debated. Mostly, they listened. "They" were, in addition to the President, the Secretary of War, Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary of the Interior, the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, the Judge Advocate General of the Army, and the Solicitor of the Department of the Interior. They listened for two hours as the President outlined his plan. He talked of natural resources and men and the dependence of the future on the two. His was a dual reclamation scheme on a Gargantuan scale, reclamation of wasting natural resources and reclamation of young American manhood.

It was the President's idea that perhaps a half million idle young men could be placed at work in the forests, on farms and along the streams wherever natural resources needed help. The men would be picked from cities, towns and farms and transported into these resource areas. There they would live and work in a great chain of wholesome outdoor work camps, planting trees, reducing fire hazards, developing fire prevention and suppression, physical improvements, such as fire towers, trails and lines of communication, clearing streams and checking soil waste through erosion.

The Secretary of War had been asked to appear because his Department was to establish and supply the camps, enroll the men, feed and pay them and otherwise look after their welfare. The Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture had been asked because they were to select the work projects and supervise the work which the young men were to do. The project would cost money--that accounted for the presence of the Budget Director. There were legal aspects to be considered and this meant that the presence of the Solicitor of the Department of Justice and the Judge Advocate General of the Army was essential.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the President asked the Secretary of War if the plan for a national CCC, as he had outlined it, could be put into effect at once. The answer was "yes." Then the President turned to the two Cabinet members whose departments were charged with the administration of natural resources wealth. "How quickly," he inquired, "can the Departments of Interior and Agriculture arrange work projects in forests and parks and put young men to work." The President was assured that the work projects would be ready when the camps had been established and the young men enrolled.

Satisfied that his program could be made effective promptly, the President asked the Judge Advocate General to put the CCC idea into legal form and have it ready at 9 o'clock that evening. Then the conference recessed.

That first official CCC meeting had moved rapidly because the President had been thinking and planning about this project for months. He, as a matter of fact, had been concerned about conservation for many years. Even as a boy on the family Hyde Park estate, the President had shown interest in conservation. This interest had grown with the years, strengthened and clarified by an address given by Gifford Pinchot, at Roosevelt's request, before the New York State Assembly while the young man from Hyde Park was a member. Later as Governor of New York State, the future President had done much to develop a first rate reforestation program for the Commonwealth. During the President's last year as Governor, 10,000 persons from community unemployed lists were employed on tree planting and other reforestation projects.

The plan to provide work and training for unemployed young men on a national basis through the inauguration of a broadscale reforestation program was first enunciated publicly by the President in his address at Chicago in June 1932 when he accepted the Democratic Presidential nomination.

"We know," said Mr. Roosevelt, "that a very hopeful and immediate means of relief both for the unemployed and for agriculture will come from a wider plan for the converting of many millions of acres of marginal and unused lands into timberland through reforestation. There are tens of millions of acres east of the Mississippi River alone in abandoned farms or cutover land now growing up in worthless brush. Why, every European nation has a definite land policy.--We have none,-- we face a future of soil erosion and timber famine. It is clear that economic foresight and immediate employment march hand in hand, in the call for the reforestation of these vast areas.

"In so doing, employment can be given to a million men."

As the months passed after his nomination, the Candidate further developed his reforestation-unemployment relief idea in speeches and in discussions with his advisers. In September 1932, he wrote a letter to a Pacific coast editor outlining his plan for using unemployed men in the cause of national conservation. Immediately after the election the Department of Agriculture began explorations to see how many men could be employed usefully on natural resource projects. Similar studies were made by the Department of the Interior. The War Department also studied the question.

In his Inaugural address President Roosevelt indicated he would move quickly to establish a CCC.

"Our greatest primary task is to put people to work," he said. "This is no unsolvable problem if we face it wisely and courageously. It can be accomplished in part by direct recruiting by the Government itself, treating the task as we would treat the emergency of war, but at the same time, through this employment, accomplishing greatly needed projects to stimulate and reorganize the use of our natural resources."

There is no doubt but that the Nation was confronted by a tremendous conservation task on that Spring night when the President made his first official move to put his new reforestation program into action. Forests had been cruelly abused and neglected for generations. Although the Country's future depended on its natural resource wealth, forests and soils had been used and squandered with little thought to the needs of generations still to come.

By 1933, heedlessness and waste in the handling of natural resources had taken a terrific toll. The original 820,000 acres of virgin timber on the Nation's natural resource balance sheet had dwindled to 132,000,000 acres of virgin forests, mostly in the west, and some 500,000,000 acres of second growth, farm woodlots and sub-marginal lands.

The Bureau of Chemistry and Soils of the Department of Agriculture had reported in 1929 that a minimum of a billion and one-half tons of soil material annually was washed out of the fields and pastures of the landscape, costing farmers an annual loss of \$200,000,000 through wastage of plant food. It was estimated that 125 million acres of farm land had been severely damaged by erosion.

Critical as was the natural resource problem, the Nation had a more serious one in its youth population. Youth coming to manhood in the Thirties was threatened by a Terrific economic blight. There were some five million young men between the ages of 18 and 25 who clamored for work when there was no work, or who clamored for the right to stay in school when there was no money to keep them there. Some had had jobs but lost them when their employers failed or reduced their working staffs. Few of these youngsters had ever held a regular job. They were ready victims for the moral dry rot that accompanies

enforced idleness and its resulting dejection. Insidiously, there was spreading abroad in the land the **nucleus** of those bands of young depredators who infested the Russian countryside after the Revolution and who became known as "wild boys."

It was with this background of dejected youth and a bleak natural resource outlook, unless immediate remedial steps were taken, that the six Government officials returned to the White House at 9 o'clock that evening. In the interim each official had talked with his advisers and reviewed again the steps necessary to put the President's plan into execution.

The draft of the new legislation asked by the Chief Executive was placed on the President's desk. After a brief discussion in which the President urged speed upon the part of the Departments and Agencies connected with the proposed program, the officials left.

CCC LEGISLATION INTRODUCED

At 10 o'clock P.M. the President received a group of Congressional leaders. Agreement was reached to act immediately on the proposal to establish a Civilian Conservation Corps. On March 21st there was read in both Houses of Congress, a message from the President on the CCC program.

"I propose," the President said, "to create a Civilian Conservation Corps to be used in simple work, not interfering with normal employment, and confining itself to forestry, the prevention of soil erosion, flood control and similar projects."

The President called attention to the practical value of such work asserting it would create future national wealth and present great personal financial gains.

"More important, however, than the material gains," the President added, "will be the moral and spiritual value of such work. The overwhelming majority of unemployed Americans, who are now walking the streets and receiving private or public relief, would infinitely prefer to work. We can take a vast army of these unemployed out into healthful surroundings. We can eliminate to some extent at least the threat that enforced idleness brings to spiritual and moral stability. It is not a panacea for all the unemployment, but it is an essential step in this emergency."

".....I estimate that 250,000 men can be given temporary employment by early summer if you will give me authority to proceed within the next two weeks."

On March 31 a Bill embodying the President's ideas was signed at the White House in the presence of Congressional leaders and representatives of the American Forestry Association. This Bill was based on the principle that the great public domain of the Nation offered vast opportunities for employment. The President was given blanket authority to go into that domain and use it at his discretion to partially relieve the unemployment situation and to improve the Nation's economic and social conditions.

Section 1, of the statute stated the purpose:--to relieve unemployment, provide for the restoration of the Nation's depleted resources, and to advance an orderly program of public works. To accomplish this the President was authorized, "under such rules and regulations as he may prescribe," to provide for employing unemployed citizens, regardless of race, color or creed, in carrying on the work of a public nature in connection with the forestation of national and state lands, prevention of forest fires, floods and soil erosion; plant pest and disease control, construction of paths, trails and fire lanes in national forests and parks and such other work on the public domain or on Government reservations as the President deems desirable. The President was authorized to provide clothing, housing, medical care, hospitalization and cash allowances for enrollees.

CCC ORGANIZATION SET UP

Just as at his historic White House conference on March 9 when the plan was broached, approved and started on its way to Congress in six hours, speed was the President's keynote. Instead of setting up a great, new and cumbersome administrative organization, the President utilized old-line existing departments to carry on the enterprise.

In a final pre-organization conference when the Congressional Bill was approved, the President sketched out on paper the broad organizational plan of utilizing existing Federal Agencies whose activities would be coordinated and directed by a Director of Emergency Conservation Work. He planned to use the services of the War Department, Department of the Interior, Department of Agriculture and the Labor Department. This was done. The selection of the right man to be Director was vital: the man had to be one who could coordinate the efforts of these departments and supply the spark that would set the multiple gears in action.

FECHNER BECOMES
FIRST DIRECTOR

The President called in Louis Howe, then his secretary, and told him to locate Robert Fechner, Boston labor leader, who was "somewhere in New England." When he was Assistant Secretary of the Navy during the last World War, Mr. Roosevelt had come to know Mr. Fechner and to learn, as their acquaintanceship ripened, that Fechner was a man of seasoned judgment and of action. Howe finally got in touch with Mr. Fechner at Plainfield, New Jersey. Fechner was a man philosophically versed in the humanities due to his long career in the labor movement and as Vice-President of the International Association of Machinists.

Mr. Fechner arrived in Washington the next day and was received immediately by the President. At first the labor leader demurred. But when the President called attention to the great opportunity for helping young men and for relieving distress among hundreds of thousands of families hard-hit by the depression, Mr. Fechner agreed to accept. The following day, April 5, the President issued an order naming Robert Fechner, director of the organization which was to run the CCC.

Initially the organization was called Emergency Conservation Work, and the new Director took that title. In addition to naming a director and fixing his salary, the Executive Order directed the War, Interior, Agriculture and Labor Departments to cooperate in the launching and administration of the new program. Each Secretary was directed to name a man to represent the Department and to serve with the Director on a CCC Advisory Council. The order outlined the broad relationship which was to exist between the various cooperating Departments and the Office of the Director, and authorized the expenditure of funds for necessary services, materials and foodstuffs.

James J. McEntee of the International Association of Machinists, a resident of New Jersey, and Charles H. Taylor of Boston, were named Assistant Directors. Mr. McEntee later became Director of the CCC on Director Fechner's death in 1939. As representatives of the various Departments the Secretaries appointed, Colonel Duncan K. Major, Jr., for the War Department; Major R. Y. Stuart, soon succeeded by F. A. Silcox, successively Chief Foresters of the U. S. Forest Service, for the Department of Agriculture; Horace M. Albright of the National Park Service for the Department of the Interior, and W. Frank Persons for the Department of Labor.

CCC ORGANIZATION
UNIQUE

The new organization set up to run the CCC was unique in Governmental administration. It was unique because not one but several agencies and departments participated in its operations and administration. The President had arranged to utilize the personnel and services of old line departments, thus assuring sound administration from the start and avoiding the expenditure of large sums for the building up of a new supply unit and large administrative staffs. At the top was the new Director with a small staff. The Director laid down the policies, issued the basic operational directives and coordinated the work of the four Departments.

Immediately after the Executive Order was issued, the Council met. Confronting it was the task of setting up a Civilian Conservation Corps to be composed of young men. The President's instructions were that the men were to be grouped in 200-man camps widely distributed throughout the Nation. The men were to work forty hours a week on conservation tasks. Attending that first meeting was the Director, the four Representatives, and high War Department officials, including General Douglas MacArthur, then Army Chief of Staff.

At the first council meeting, the Director again outlined the President's instructions. A formula for action was completed at dusk. Each man, as he left the Director, knew what his Department was supposed to do. Labor had the task of selecting the enrollees. Its job was to be carried out through State paid welfare and relief officers acting on a voluntary basis. Interior and Agriculture had to select the camp sites, map work projects covering the entire Nation and arrange for a technical staff to supervise the work. The War Department's mission was that of enrolling the men, constructing, supplying, and establishing the camps, mobilizing and transporting the enrolled personnel and looking after the medical care and welfare of the men. Getting the job done--on time--was the Director's assignment.

That night the telephone lines, the telegraph and the Army radio net crackled with orders to go ahead.

THE FIRST
THIRTY-SEVEN DAYS

There followed days of feverish activity as the Director and the Departments set up their organizations, issued operational directives, translated the President's idea into a living, operating agency. There

were no blueprints to guide the new Director or the cooperating Department's representatives. There were no precedents on which to base policies or operating schedules. There was only a tremendous job to be done.

Millions of men were unemployed but arrangements had to be made to select the ones eligible for enrollment, to physically examine and clothe them, to send them to conditioning camps and ultimately to the camps where they would be put to work. Work abounded, but the task of selecting the right projects, picking out the sites where camps were to be established and arranging for the proper supervision of all work was a tremendous problem.

To do the job, the Director and the cooperating Departments pooled their resources and worked at top speed. All branches of the Regular Army, the Army Corps Areas, the Field Offices of the various departments and hundreds of State conservation and welfare organizations were mobilized for the big task ahead.

The selection of men began on April 7 and the first camp was established in the George Washington National Forest near Luray, Virginia, on April 17. It was named Camp Roosevelt. It was a season of rain and chilly nights, the kind of weather that disheartens fighting armies, let alone city-bred kids kept soft by enforced idleness and malnutrition. The first group made the trip into the mountains in trucks at night and under a steady downpour. What seemed like endless detours had to be made. Arriving at the camp site, they had to set up tents in the dark. Rain continued the following day and there was more mud, and deeper. Probably it was here that the CCC's defiant slogan, "We can take it!" was born.

Similar bivouacs were being made throughout the Continent--in the lingering snows of New England and the Middle West; in the South; in the forested slopes and valleys of the Mountain States and the Pacific Coast Region. The shelters were not the comfortable wood barracks of a later day; they were pyramidal tents or wall tents with or without wood floors. They kept out most of the rain and snow and some of the insects. That is all that could be said for them. But at worst, they were better than the homes from which some of the enrollees came.

Boys from New York's teeming East Side found themselves--or, rather, had trouble finding themselves--in the high meadows of Glacier National Park, their eyes squinting at limitless distances that faded in purple haze. Likewise, the pallid battalions from Chicago waded

through the Spring thaw in Mt. Hood National Forest in Oregon, stared in wonder at the lofty stands of fir and spruce. Youngsters from the Plains saw their first mountains in Wyoming. New and unbelievable worlds were opening to that segment of young manhood fortunate enough to have been enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps.

THE HISTORIC MAY 12 SPEED-UP ORDER

But while men were being enrolled and camps established in every section of the land, mobilization of the Corps was not proceeding as rapidly as the President had hoped when he sent his initial message to Congress. It was perhaps inevitable that such a vast undertaking, at once towering and sprawling, would get off to a slow start. The results of the first five weeks was disappointing to the new Director. He had spent a lifetime bucking tough industrial relation problems and he was determined that the new project should not fail. He expressed his disappointment to the War Department by letter and asked that a plan be prepared at once to speed up mobilization. He asked that it be submitted to him without delay.

The War Department presented a plan within thirty-six hours. It was put up to Louis Howe, the President's secretary, acting as contact man in the establishment of the Corps. He consulted the President. As these consultations proceeded, the President arranged to add about 50,000 men to the Corps--25,000 to be Local Experienced Men and 25,000 war veterans.

On May 12 the President issued a Directive calling for tremendous speeding up of the Corps mobilization. This order cleared up certain misunderstandings which had developed. It was clear cut. It directed that the entire unit of 250,000 juniors and the 25,000 Local Experienced Men should be selected and put to work in the outdoor CCC camps by not later than July 1. The 25,000 war veterans were to be selected and placed in conditioning camps then moved to work camps as rapidly as possible.

The order was received enthusiastically. It was carried out successfully. On July 4, 1933, there were enrolled in the CCC in round numbers, 275,000 youths and older men of all creeds, colors, convictions, Jews, Christians, Infidels, Negroes, Indians and the various other polygot shades and textures that are given off from the simmering melting pot that is the U.S.A. The War Department described it as the swiftest mobilization in the Nation's history, exceeding in numbers and speed the mobilization of troops in the first World War.

THE FORTY-NINE DAYS

The dramatic story of those forty-nine days when the new Director and his "four horse team," the cooperating agencies, snapped

the wobbling CCC enterprise out of dead center and completed the mobilization on schedule time is told in the Director's first report to the President.

Sent to the White House on July 4, this report tells in detail how the Corps was mobilized. The War Department, in its section of the report praised the May 12 Order, fixing July 1 as the date the Corps must be in the woods, as one which "electrified the whole effort."

"In a few hours," the Department states, "more has been accomplished than in a previous month." That afternoon, (after the Order was issued), all Assistant Chiefs of Staff and Chiefs of Services met in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff. The new mission was given, stirring everyone. Plans and action for the field were required by the next morning. That night instead of a stray light here and there, the War Department's windows were ablaze. The big machine was rolling in a war effort. The Army was under test but what a grand opportunity the task offered.

"The task assigned contemplated the reception by the War Department of an additional 222,000 men by June 7, 1933, at an average daily rate of 8,540 men, the complete organization and equipment, including the necessary motor transport, of approximately 1,200 additional company units by June 23, at the rate of 27 per day, and the establishment of approximately 1,300 work camps by July 1, at the rate of 25 per day.

"The rate demanded of 8,540 men received, processed and equipped per day IS GREATER THAN THE AVERAGE FOR THE UNITED STATES DURING THE WORLD WAR FOR BOTH ARMY AND NAVY COMBINED. With all the vast organization of the (1917) Selective Draft, the many large division cantonments, a Nation's purse wide open, and the removal of many restrictions governing contracts, an average rate of 15,000 men per day was maintained for only two months during the war period as the peak of the effort."

Movement of men from point of enrollment to conditioning camp was made largely by regular and special trains. For local movements and short trips, buses, were sometimes used. Movement of work companies to forests was made almost entirely by rail. The greatest movement was from conditioning camps in the east and middle west to forest camps in the far west, particularly in the states of California, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah and Nevada. The Quartermaster General's office of the War Department arranged for the use of 211 special trains in the transportation of 55,130 young men from eastern cities to the far west.

During the mobilization not only General Headquarters in Washington, but the Army in the field was alive as with the pulsation of actual war. In the forming and administration of the CCC it was necessary to utilize a very large part of the Regular Army's commissioned personnel and to call to active duty a large number of reserve officers. In addition, several hundred Navy and Marine officers were placed under jurisdiction of the War Department as emergency helpers, and a like number of enlisted men. On July 1, 1933, the Army had on active duty Supervising CCC operations 3,011 regular Army officers, 1,898 reserve officers, 556 Navy and Marine officers and 301 contract surgeons.

Feeding and sheltering the new forest army taxed the facilities of the Quartermaster Corps. Existing Army stocks of clothing, bedding and tentage were utilized. For the most part the men were sheltered in tents. It was not until the Fall that arrangements were made for semi-permanent housing for enrollees. The cost of feeding the young men averaged \$85,000 daily. Each day the young foresters consumed the beef procured from 330 steers. Each day they ate nearly 225,000 one-pound loaves of bread.

On July 1, the War Department reported its job completed and completed on time. On May 12, the enrollment had been just over 50,000.

"On May 16," said the War Department, "enrollment jumped 5,890 men to a total of 62,450 men, the next day added 8,100 men, the next 10,500. On June 1, a peak daily enrollment of 13,843 men was reached. The average daily gain in actual strength for the mobilization period was 8,700 men. More than the quota of 274,375 were enrolled.

"The mobilization of the Civilian Conservation Corps with time as the essential element in the execution of the task has been the most valuable experience the Army has had since the World War."

Up to this point it would appear that the Director and the War Department had borne the brunt of the mobilization effort. But the Director and the Army could not have performed with such signal success if the Department of Labor and the individual state directors of selection in the field had not supplied the enrollee material. Neither could they have made a success of the mobilization without the hard and effective work done by the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture and state governors and state conservation authorities.

LABOR DEPARTMENT BEGAN
CCC SELECTION ON APRIL 3

Weeks of careful planning and hard work on the part of the

Labor Department and state and local officials interested in doing something for idle youth had preceded the May 12, White House directive. W. Frank Persons, Labor Department CCC representative had begun preparations on April 3. Preliminary details for CCC mobilization had been worked out. Decision had been reached to enroll 250,000 young men, to confine enrollments to unmarried, unemployed young men between the ages of 18 and 25, first selections to come from seventeen large cities. The actual selection was to be done by established and competent public relief organizations.

At the April 3 meeting, an agreement was reached that the Corps would be utilized primarily to serve the needs of young men who had been utterly thwarted in ambition for self-support. The position was taken that the program would tend to drain the pools of unemployed transients, then wandering about the country in search of work. The enrollment of these young men would preserve their morale, fit them for industry, contribute to the support of dependent families, relieve local situations difficult for relief organizations to handle and would constitute a distinctive national service.

The Labor Department representative left this meeting with a clear picture of what the President wanted done. He immediately contacted welfare representatives in seventeen cities and summoned them to Washington. At the conference which followed ways and means of selecting 250,000 young men were discussed. On April 5, the first call for 25,000 men was issued. The first man was selected two days later. At the meetings of state welfare representatives with the Department of Labor, arrangements were made to have the selection work handled in each state by a state CCC director of selection to be appointed by and paid by the state. The state representatives were given state quotas on the basis of 250,000 men. Later they were asked to aid in the selection of 25,000 additional men from the vicinity of the new camps, these men to be known as local experienced men (LEMS).

Advance warning sent to state directors of selection on May 12 was followed on May 15 by orders that a total of 250,000 men must be selected by June 7. In the period between May 12 and the deadline, there was scarcely a day that Labor representatives were not in touch with selection agents in every state and in every big city. The relief and welfare agencies chosen as the Selection Agents for the Civilian Conservation Corps began contacting youth from needy families as soon as their quotas were set. By June 7, the Labor Department's first objective had been reached and the War Department was notified that the men were ready for enrollment.

Thousands of veterans were awaiting enrollment when mobilization began. The Veterans Administration, through C. W. Bailey, who had been named as the CCC representative of the Veterans Administration, acted

quickly. Selection was made through the regional offices of the Veterans Administration. All men were ready when the War Department asked for them.

CONSERVATION DEPARTMENTS
ACTIVE

In the six weeks which preceded the May 12 order, Chief Forester Stuart and his assistant C. M. Granger of the Department of Agriculture and representative Albright of the Department of the Interior made good use of their time. They had been deciding on exact locations for camps making detailed plans of work, and lining up work superintendents, foremen and technicians to supervise the conservation jobs. They were ready when the go ahead signal sounded. In the six weeks these Departments were told that they were to have the job of planning and supervising all work. They held conference after conference in Washington. Federal regional officers as well as state officials spent anxious days and evenings studying the problems incident to launching the country's first real work program. In the beginning they were not certain if projects would be immediately available sufficient to care for 300,000 men. It soon developed, however, that the time would never come when all applications for new camps could be met.

The regional foresters of the U. S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, had improvement and fire protection plans already prepared for the development of their regions. With this group it was simply a question of where the camps should be located and types of work to be done first. At first the states had not been quick to realize the opportunity offered by the Corps. They soon did realize it and began to submit applications for camps. Governor Pinchot of Pennsylvania soon had applications for close to a hundred camps on the President's desk. Middle western and western governors were soon heard from. Southern governors made their needs known. These executives kept the wires hot during those early days urging that their camp needs be met. The Superintendents of the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, were ready to take every camp they could get. State park and state forestry organizations were sending in their applications.

There were many problems to solve. In many instances leases had to be negotiated for private lands. Agreements had to be worked out with state officials regarding conditions under which camps could be assigned to state and private forest lands. Above all, sites for individual camps had to be selected, programs arranged, recommendations made to Director Fechner. The new program had to be ready so the War Department could plan the thousands of men movements. But notwithstanding the obstacles, camps were selected, the men were enrolled and moved to their new outdoor homes, food and clothing was purchased and camp officer and supervisory staffs mobilized. Tools, equipment and materials to work with

were gotten to the camp sites. The camps were ready when the boys arrived. The first big job was done.

By mid July 1933, all the war veterans were in CCC camps. At the end of July the Corps was 315,000 strong. An additional 15,000 Indians and territorials had been added by the President. The Corps was operating on all cylinders.

One day the Nation awoke to find the landscape dotted with tented CCC camps and active young men. In the forests, on the western plains, in the mountains, on the banks of streams and lakes. They were spread out among the spruce and white pine of New England and New York, in the pine barrens of New Jersey, the hemlocks of Pennsylvania and in the hardwood coves of Virginia and the Carolinas; yes, under the red and jack pines of the northern lake states down through the long-leaf pines of Alabama, and from the white pines of Inland Empire to the redwoods of California and the Douglas firs of Washington.

AN ARMY WITH SHOVELS

The CCC grew so rapidly that before the Nation realized what was happening, the Corps was born, was out of its swaddling clothes and at work. The great white chain of camps stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific; from the Canadian border to the Rio Grande. It was a strange new army--different from anything the world had seen--a young army with shovels.

CCC ARMY TOOK ORDERS

When William James wrote his famous essay on the "Moral Equivalents of War," he suggested organizing the Nation's youth to form for a few years an army enrolled against nature. "To various and sundry hardy tasks," said James, "in forests and fields, on roads and in mines, on ships would our gilded youth be drafted off according to their choice, to get the childishness knocked out of them, and to come back into society with healthier sympathies and sobered ideas. They would have paid their blood tax," he argued, "done their part in the immemorial warfare against nature."

But when the young CCC army doffed its coat and went to work, it did not go into mines or on ships and it did not pick out the jobs it wanted to do. It was not an army of gilded young men voluntarily leaving comfortable homes to give a year or more of their lives to their government as a sort of blood tax. Instead it was an army of men from all walks of life bound together by one common bond--the lack of a job and a desire

to do something which would provide food and housing for themselves and some measure of relief for their families. It was an army which took orders.

In one important particular, the 1933 army did resemble the "ideal" army of Professor James. It was a force arrayed against the forces of nature. It was a constructive, building force, too. President Roosevelt's CCC army was assigned a double conservation task. It had first a fighting job--a tremendous task of halting or slowing down the destructive and devastating forces of nature which rapidly were draining our natural resources wealth. Its second mission was that of rebuilding our forests, grass lands, farms, water resources and wildlife and improving our forests and parks for greater public use. Both missions dovetailed into each other and both were constructive.

The new CCC was largely an army arrayed against nature--an army on the defense and perhaps the offensive, too. There was a tremendous reforestation and forest improvement job to do but plans for this work had to be perfected. The men of the Corps were regarded popularly as tree planters but there were insufficient seedlings to keep a force such as the CCC at work for any appreciable period. Tree planting is also seasonal work confined largely to a few months in the Spring and Fall. But the forces which destroy never take a holiday. Forest fires need no blue prints. Tree attacking diseases and pests as devastating on a national scale as fire were already on the march when the white tents of the CCC began to march across the Nation's timberlands.

Thus it was only natural that fire fighting and fire protection became the Corps' first big task in the Spring of 1933. It was in this field that the Corps was to make its greatest record--a record that today is written in almost a hundred million acres of forests now green, but which, had it not been for the Corps would have been scarred by fire.

As the fledgling Corps struggled from swaddling clothes into manhood, the President sent word to the Director that he desired information on which he could decide whether to continue the CCC for a second six months. The War Department was asked for recommendations. On July 30, the Director submitted his recommendations and those of the War Department to Secretary Howe. The War Department presented three alternatives. One was to stop the Corps and discharge all men on October 1. The second was to continue the Corps, allowing the strength to gradually drop to the lowest point a Corps could be operated and then close it. The third was to continue operations at full strength.

PRESIDENT VISITS
A CCC CAMP

In submitting his report, Director Fechner suggested the

President visit the camps and see for himself what was being accomplished. The invitation was accepted. In early August the President accompanied by several members of his Cabinet and the Director motored to a camp located on the Skyline Drive in the proposed Shenandoah National Park, Virginia. The camp was inspected. The President and his party had lunch with the enrollees. Several of the young men were interviewed.

On the basis of this visit the President ordered the camps continued and arrangements were made to house the enrollees during the winter months. Most of the enrollees were in tents. More adequate housing would be needed in the cold winter months in the east, north and west and arrangements were made to erect the needed buildings. A replacement enrollment was ordered and 75,000 juniors and war veterans were selected and sent to the camps to fill vacancies.

By the end of the first year the Corps was well established. It was made up of four distinct groups of men. In it were 250,000 young men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, 25,000 war veterans, 25,000 local experienced men called "LEMS," 10,000 Indians and 5,000 residents of Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. The junior group had to come from needy young men whose families were on relief. The juniors had to be single, citizens of the United States and of good character. They had to pass physical examinations, which while not so severe as those for entrance into the Armed Forces were critical enough to make certain the youngsters could do a full days work. No marital--age restrictions were placed on the War veterans group or the Indians or Territorials. The Indians came from and worked on Indian Reservations. They were not required to live in barrack type camps and the Army had nothing to do with their administration. Throughout the Corps' life the War Department administered only the camps for juniors and war veterans.

A VETERANS' CONTINGENT

The entrance of veterans into the CCC was made possible through an Executive Order issued by the President on May 23rd, following conferences between CCC Director Robert Fechner and General Frank T. Hines of the Veterans' Administration. These conferences explored the distress rampant among veterans of the last World War, many of them in early middle age, and made recommendations which were quickly made official by the President. A limit of 25,000 veterans was set and no age or marital restrictions were imposed on this group. Thus a second "Bonus Army" was demobilized with jobs. The veterans selected had to be unemployed and in need of employment and had to have honorable discharges from the Army. The Veterans' Administration certified those accepted. By August 2, 28,000 veterans were enrolled in their own camps. This was over the quota, of course, but the Veterans' Administration, when

face to face with acute distress, was afflicted with the same soft-heartedness that characterized many an Army doctor physically examining candidates for enrollment, who looked at an object, ill-fed specimen of youth who could not possibly meet the physical requirements, and passed him anyhow. The doctors simply said, in effect, "That poor kid is starving; he needs food." (Average weight gain in 3 to 4 months of service was 11 1/4 pounds.)

On the recommendation of the Office of Indian Affairs of the Department of the Interior, the President had authorized the enrollment of 10,000 Indians, this group to live and work on the Indian Reservations where they made their homes. When Indian conservation work began, about July 1, 1933, annual income of the Indian was at the vanishing point because of the drought and other conditions. As a class, the Indian never had any capital to speak of, only natural resources which could not be converted into cash or supplies in a time of depression. Enrollment was open to any male 18 years and over who was able to perform ordinary labor without injury to himself. Cash allowance was \$30. per month, with an additional allowance for food and quarters inasmuch as the bulk of them continued to live in tepees, either working on their reservations or moving their tepees close to the CCC work project. It was something of an anachronism to a casual visitor to see Henry Three Wolf Skins, who lived in the manner of his ancestors, operating a caterpillar tractor or reconditioning a Diesel engine.

A DAY IN CAMP

What was this new Army like at the first year's end. How did it live. Let us take a composite enrollee and follow him from the time he left home to apply for enrollment, on through his first day in camp. He was eighteen or nineteen years of age, had little or no work experience, and he came from a family on relief, usually a family of four or five persons including himself. He was under-weight because of a deficient diet, and in camp he had to be coaxed to mix green vegetables with meat and potatoes. He was personally interviewed by the selecting agency, usually a member of the local welfare office staff, who cannily estimated his capacity to improve under the CCC program, and either accepted or rejected him. (In the early and middle years there were five applicants for every vacancy.)

Accepted, the young enrollee some days later mingled at the train shed with half a hundred or more boys of about his own age, from varied walks of life, some from good homes, perhaps one or two from orphanages, others from slum dwellings, the majority of them from farms

or rural districts. Here, on the station platform was Enrollee Blank's first sample of things to come--group living. For six months or more, he would have to re-adjust himself to living in harmony with these half hundred mixed types and 150 others they would be thrown in with on reaching camp. He would have to acquire the give-and-take attitude, make concessions, govern his temper. There were 199 other youth in this camp as good as he and most of them ready to prove it.

Among the first things to happen to him at camp were vaccination and inoculation against typhoid fever and smallpox. His fingerprints were taken, for no other reason than to insure identification in case of accident. The next morning, his first in camp, Enrollee Blank awoke at 5 to the notes of reveille. Under the direction of his leader, he cleaned up the barracks, made his bed. Promptly at 6:30 came the breakfast call. Enrollee Blank lined up with 199 hungry men, ate plain, substantial, well prepared food. Another whistle and the men policed the grounds, made the camp spick and span. Sick call was held and Enrollee Blank watched the men who did not feel up to par march off to par march off to the dispensary.

At 7:15 the trucks loaded with enrollees and tools rolled off to the work project. Until 12 o'clock, Enrollee Blank worked under the supervision of an experienced foreman, received on-the-job training. Then the lunch whistle and thirty minutes to eat and talk with other men as green as himself. At 4 o'clock the trucks returned to camp. Games, bathing, shaving, a shower, other diversions took up Enrollee Blank's time until 5:00 P.M., the time for the daily "retreat ceremony." The bugle called the men to the assembly grounds. Brief announcements were made, officers inspected enrollees for personal appearance, shoes, trousers, shirts, tie, face, hair, hat, hands. The company came to attention, hats off, as the bugle blew "colors" and the flag fluttered and swayed as two enrollees lowered it for the night.

For the retreat ceremony Enrollee Blank wore his best uniform. In 1938, a distinctive dress uniform, spruce green in color, was adopted. This new uniform was cherished by the enrollees and was an outstanding factor in elevating CCC morale. The Director was as proud of it as though he wore it himself. So, it can be freely understood why, two weeks after the Corps was terminated on July 1, 1942, the Director wrote the Secretary of War, in part, as follows:

".....Many thousands of young men and officers now serving in the Armed Forces of the Nation once wore the Civilian Conservation Corps uniform with pride and high devotion to their country.I realize that once this clothing is transferred to the War Department, it is beyond the jurisdiction of this office.In

deference, however, to all those who, in the past, have worn the olive green CCC uniform, may I suggest that the use to which the War Department puts these uniforms be other than that of clothing conscientious objectors who have been assigned to work camps (mostly evacuated CCC camps) under direction of the War Department?"

To return to the daily routine. After retreat, supper. From 6 to 10 P.M., either recreation or study. Lights were out at 10.

On Saturdays work around the camp in the morning was the rule, fixing walks, planting shrubs, painting, scrubbing, etc. The afternoon was free and night found most of the boys in the nearby towns, at the movies, on dates, on certain Saturday nights, designated far ahead, they brought their dates to camp for a big dance.

It was a revelation to most enrollees to find how good they felt when they led regular lives, got a full night's sleep, a full day's work, and quantities of good food (about five pounds a day) at regular times.

Invariably, during the first weeks in camp, complete and honest exhaustion overtook the men at "lights out" and only the heavy breathing of tired bodies riffled through the darkened barracks. Six A.M. came all too soon for most of them.

COMPANY COMMANDER
THE BOSS

To the enrollee there were three men in each camp who were more important to them than any others. These were the company commander, the project superintendent and the educational adviser. Important, too, were the doctor and the chaplain but these camp officers split-up their time between more than one camp. In the beginning the company commander was a Regular Army officer assigned to CCC duty. Gradually the Army officers were replaced by reserve officers. At first these officers were called to active duty in the Army and served under their commissions but later, all camp officers were placed under civil service and served on a civilian basis. Under the camp officer there was a junior officer, the camp doctor and the camp educational adviser. The company commander was the "boss". To the enrollees, he was known as the C.O.

The project superintendent was in charge of the work program. He was "boss" while the men were away from camp on the work project. He was appointed by the Department of the Interior or the Department of

Agriculture. For eight hours each work day the enrollees worked on the project for the superintendent. Usually the superintendent was an engineer. He always was a technical expert in some field. Assisting him were from eight to ten foremen, each of whom managed a work crew. Most of the training on the job was done by the superintendent and his foreman.

PAY--

THIRTY DOLLARS A MONTH

Base pay for CCC enrollees was \$30 a month. Assistant leaders and leaders of whom there were twenty-four in each camp, received \$36 and \$45 a month, respectively. When he entered the Corps, each man allocated a certain part of his salary to his dependents. The sum ranged from \$22 to \$25 first, later was fixed at \$15. This allotment was deducted by the War Department at the source and sent home. In those early days these monthly allotment checks meant meat and potatoes on the table for the folks back home. They kept families intact. Pay day meant \$2 in cash to each enrollee; the leaders and assistant leaders, men chosen from the ranks, had slightly fatter pay envelopes. Each enrollee had his fill of good food three times a day. His clothing was furnished by the government. He had a good bed, with clean sheets once a week. If he became ill the camp doctor looked after him. If he attended camp classes, tuition was free. With his \$8 the enrollee bought candy, cigarettes and toilet articles, attended the movies, sometimes spent a little in nearby towns.

In those early days all the enrollee's money except the \$8 went home. Later the government set up a savings account for each enrollee and deposited \$7 of his earnings each month. When the enrollee left camp he had a small nest egg to tide him over until he got a job.

There were no guard houses in the CCC camps. If a man desired to disregard his "oath", he could go home anytime. No law stipulated that if he deserted he had to go to "jail." The C.O. had to learn to command without resort to a guard house. Life in camp was different than life at home. In the camp there was strict discipline, regular hours, little privacy. Sometimes young men who had never been away from home before couldn't take it, and "went over the hill," camp parlance for desertion. Usually the young man who deserted was sorry he did. Usually he slipped back home as unobtrusively as possible. The enrollee who had the intestinal fortitude to stick it out wore his uniform proudly when he went back home. He did not feel that the government had done something for him. He felt that he had rendered a national service. He had.