

## CHAPTER IV - WHAT THE CCC TAUGHT

Initiation of the Civilian Conservation Corps marked the beginning of a new era for youth and conservation.

The first CCC camp was a symbol of a new national attitude toward unemployed youth. It represented recognition of the principle that when unemployment among youth becomes acute due to a shortage of private jobs, then it is up to Government to do something constructive about it.

The first CCC camp was a symptom indicating a new note of national anxiety over the depleted state of its natural resources, principally timber and top-soil. Formation of the Corps represented epoch making recognition of the urgency of the conservation problem and the necessity for immediate and continuing action on a national scale. In a broad sense the CCC was the dynamite which smashed the log jam which for years had blocked funds and man power needed for the financing of a comprehensive conservation program which would affect importantly all parts of the Nation.

As idle youth began moving into the woods in those early CCC days, the new organization attracted world-wide attention. It attracted attention because the Corps was not only new from a national standpoint -- it was new internationally. The CCC marked the first time any government had attempted to solve the twin problem of acute unemployment among youth and neglected natural resources through a single youth-work organization. Other countries were interested because in those days acute unemployment among youth was universal. They were interested because it had been discovered that the "dole" was not the right answer to the unemployment relief problem.

One of the major cornerstones of the CCC program was the principle that young men assigned to the CCC camps must pay their own way through constructive worthwhile work on projects of definite value to the Nation. In return for the work they did to bolster the Nation's natural resources, the men assigned to the CCC camps received jobs, \$30 a month, (of which a substantial portion went to their dependents), nourishing food, comfortable clothing, adequate shelter, medical and dental attention, and opportunity for production training on the job. The young men were required to conform to a fixed camp routine that developed orderly habits and good discipline. They worked forty hours a week.

On June 30, 1942, when, by Congressional fiat, the Corps ceased operations and began to dispose of its assets it had completed nine and one quarter years of operation. Over this period there had been ample opportunity to test out on a tremendous scale the soundness



of the principles back of the CCC plan. In every state in the Union, on 500,000,000 acres of national, state and private forests, on more than 1,100 national and state parks, on 50,000,000 acres of farm lands, on the overgrazed areas of the great plains, in the dust bowl and along thousands of miles of rivers and streams, idle young men from crowded cities and war veterans stagnated by post-war economic conditions had lived under disciplined conditions in the great outdoors, had worked at conservation tasks, had developed their bodies and had won a new appreciation of the size and importance of their home land.

During the years it was a going concern, the CCC was much more than an agency for providing employment to idle young men and for planting trees, checking erosion and rehabilitating range lands. It was an agency for national preparedness too. Although the Corps was not militarized, the CCC made a signal contribution to national security. When war came, the War Department found young men trained in the CCC made splendid soldiers -- were far ahead of the average rookie at enlistment or induction. Through the CCC program, more than 2,000,000 young men of military age were toughened physically, taught to obey orders, trained in many of the most important things that make a good soldier.

Termination of the CCC program offered a splendid opportunity to assess its worth in terms of human conservation, of national preparedness and of natural resources conservation. The men responsible for establishing the Corps had no charts to guide them. They were pioneers in a new field. Undoubtedly some mistakes were made but on the whole, their activities were successful. In operating the CCC camps, certain guide posts were set up -- guide posts which should be of the utmost value to those charged with formulation of post-war CCC plans if this organization is to resume its work after victory is won. The Corps taught certain fundamental lessons. Attention will be directed to some of these.

#### CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS IDEA - SOUND

The most important lesson taught by the Civilian Conservation Corps was that the idea of combining unemployment relief for young men with the advancement of urgently needed conservation work was sound, practicable and workable. The program worked. It converted millions of young men from potential economic and social liabilities into assets which today are paying big dividends on the fighting and production fronts. The young men liked the air of adventure that permeated CCC camp life in the forests and parks, on the public domain and on farm lands. They liked the idea of doing something constructive. They enjoyed the food, the companionship of other youth of their own age and they obtained deep and lasting satisfaction from the feeling that they were earning their own way. Even



young men from city streets, after a few weeks of training, turned out to be amazingly good conservation workers. An enormous amount of work was done. The communities in which camps were located liked them. They enjoyed having the boys around. They appreciated the work which the camps did to improve and protect their farm lands, to rebuild and protect forests, and to develop parks.

#### DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING OF YOUTH MAJOR CORPS OBJECTIVE

The Civilian Conservation Corps was created to provide work relief and to conserve and develop natural resources. As the Corps progressed, it became more and more apparent that the Corps' principal contribution lay in the work it was doing to promote the welfare and further the training of the individuals making up the enrolled personnel. The development and training of youth became a major Corps objective along with the relief of unemployment and the advancement of conservation work.

A nation's youth always is its greatest asset. This was recognized by every responsible official in the CCC organization. It was recognized that the young men sent to the CCC camps were the youngsters who, up to the time of their enrollment, had not had a fair chance to develop their abilities and prepare themselves for their rightful place in the world. Accordingly, officials strove constantly to improve the general health, working skills and usefulness of all enrollees. Each year the Corps operated, new training facilities were added and greater attention was paid to the business of converting new recruits into useful and successful citizens.

But while the development of the individual enrollee was a major aim, Corps officials steadfastly refused to reduce the hours of the Corps work program or to turn the CCC camps into formal schools which would be competitive with the public schools or colleges. The camps were operated on the principle that they were supplementary to, rather than in competition with, the regular school system. If a youngster entered the camps unable to read and write or if he had not finished the equivalent of the fourth grade, he was required to attend classes. If a youngster had not finished the elementary schools or high school and desired to continue his education, the camp educational adviser did his best to give him what he needed. Academic education, however, was subordinated to work training on the job.

It was the concensus of Corps officials that the regular activities of camp life and the work programs themselves, furnished the best means, when properly organized and supervised, for the training of enrollees in work habits and skills. As a result, the training program



was integrated into and around the camps themselves. Enrollees acquired skills by actual production work on the job and by taking supplementary academic courses and vocational training in camp shops. They learned how to be good citizens by conforming to camp regulations, through contact with other enrollees and by example. They developed splendid physiques by engaging in hard outdoors work and by taking calisthenics and practicing infantry marching drills. Good health, safety and sanitation habits were required of all enrollees. In a word, the CCC training program was planned to utilize to the fullest the educational and training resources inherent in camp life and camp work projects. Enrollees learned by doing.

Experience demonstrated that in a post-war CCC, two changes should be made in the administration of the training program. All training activities should be placed under the direct control and direction of the official charged with administration of the CCC program. Steps should be taken to make organized training so integral a part of the CCC program that every enrollee would be reached. Training should be recognized in any post-war CCC act as a major objective.

Probably the most important lesson taught by the CCC was that a youth work program cannot be run without giving training and education high priority in the list of major objectives.

#### ADEQUATE WORK RETURN REQUIRED OF EACH ENROLLEE

Operation of the Civilian Conservation Corps demonstrated the soundness of the basic CCC principle that each young man enrolled should be required to make an adequate work return for the benefits he receives from life in the CCC camps. From the very beginning of the program the Director and the four departments cooperating held fast to the principle that all enrollees must work a regular forty-hour week and that those who could not be persuaded to work should not be allowed to remain in camp. Officials acted on the belief that each enrollee must be taught how to work and to do an honest day's work. It was felt that allowing boys to work part of a day was inimical to the boy's character and would handicap him when he went into private life to obtain a job. Every effort was made to model the camp work day as closely as possible upon the work day followed in private industry, so that when a youth left the camp, he would be able to fit quickly into private industry, business or agriculture.

The CCC camp enrollee developed sound work habits because he worked under competent supervisors who required all work to come up to regular government specifications. The enrollee learned to carry out



instructions promptly and accurately. Each enrollee conformed to discipline, kept regular habits, learned how to take care of himself followed safety regulations and learned how to get along amicably with his fellows. He learned to stand squarely upon his own feet. He developed pride in accomplishment and his ability to do work which would pass inspection. He became the kind of a worker that industry welcomed and that a community liked to have as a citizen.

#### A CONTINUING CONSERVATION PROGRAM NEEDED

Three million young men and war veterans working on conservation tasks throughout the length and breadth of the United States hammered home to the American people the magnitude and urgency of the Nation's conservation programs. Through their accomplishments in forests and parks, on farm lands and on the public domain, CCC enrollees elevated conservation from a "forgotten man" role to an essential activity. From something that most people felt should be done in a somewhat indefinite sometime, conservation, especially in the fields of reforestation and erosion control, emerged with the status of a "must" activity.

In a sense, the unemployed young men who moved by the tens of thousands from city streets and relief families into the forest and farm CCC camps were conservation evangelists. A nation might not pay much attention to a few thousand men planting trees or demonstrating erosion control methods, but it could not ignore the movements and accomplishments of an active and widely distributed conservation army of 300,000 men in spruce green uniforms. As years passed more and more people had opportunity to visit the camps and find out for themselves what the millions expended on the CCC program was doing for the Nation. Returning enrollees were full of their camp experiences; proud of what they had done to safeguard natural resources. All of them talked about it. Gradually the country became more and more aware of its great forests, its parks, its enormous farming areas, its grazing lands and its wildlife population.

The CCC dramatized the hugeness of the conservation task ahead. It demonstrated that even with an army of 300,000 men, the task of reforesting waste lands and protecting agricultural areas cannot be completed in a few months or even a few years. In a word, it made the Nation conscious that the task of conserving and rebuilding our resources is an essential and continuing one.



## POST-WAR CCC BEST GUARANTEE OF CONTINUED CONSERVATION PROGRAM

One of the major lessons taught by the Corps was that the CCC method for the conservation of human and natural resources represents the surest and most practical method for getting the Nation's important conservation jobs done. During the years the CCC operated, conservation of natural resources won national recognition as a worthwhile and necessary activity. But notwithstanding its new importance, Corps experience and the history of pre-CCC attempts to obtain conservation funds in substantial amounts indicated strongly that unless the CCC or a somewhat similar organization is reopened after the war, there is little prospect that anything important will be done for conservation in the immediate future. If a CCC is operated, the unfinished conservation program will be picked up where the last CCC man left off on June 30, 1942. If the Corps is not opened, appropriations for conservation work only, will be hard to get, if past experience is any criterion.

Prior to the CCC, conservationists were unable to obtain sizeable appropriations for conservation activities although national attention was called repeatedly to the need for such work especially in the reforestation field. Congress voted funds liberally when they were to be used by the CCC for the dual purpose of aiding youth and advancing conservation. The primary force back of these appropriations was the need for funds to employ and train youth. In June 1942, Congress abruptly choked off CCC appropriations not because the work it was proposed to do was not worthwhile and necessary, but because the need for spending money to provide employment for youth had passed with the expansion of war production programs.

### NATIONAL CONSERVATION PLAN NEEDED

Corps experience demonstrated the need for a national master plan for the maintenance, conservation, expansion and developments of the Nation's natural resources. Such a plan, if developed and adopted as national policy, would be of the greatest usefulness to federal and state conservation departments in the preparation of tentative work programs for a post-war CCC. Priorities could be established in accordance with the urgency of the various conservation projects included in the master plan and these could serve as a guide in the preparation of work and operations programs for the CCC or whatever agency is utilized to carry on conservation work after the war.

The Civilian Conservation Corps was handicapped from the beginning by the fact that no master conservation program was available. The



two principal conservation departments and their conservation bureaus had individual plans in varying states of development when the CCC began. These were substantially improved during the nine years of Corps operation. But no over-all program outlining the future conservation work load ahead and determining the importance of the various types of conservation work was developed.

If a master conservation plan is developed, arrangements should be made to coordinate its activities closely with the CCC. Perhaps all conservation work programs should be submitted to a national planning board before being finally approved or disapproved by the Director, CCC. There was and will be again conflicting departmental interests. While the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture worked harmoniously in most aspects of the CCC program, they never were in agreement on the percentage of camps each should have for work on lands under its jurisdiction. The Director of the CCC was not technically in a position to decide on the relative importance of Departmental projects. At no time did the Director have a technical staff capable of determining the comparative merit of the various projects submitted by the departments.

An adequate supply of such basic natural resources as timber, top-soil and water is essential to the national welfare and safety. The Nation must have so much timber, so much good agricultural land, so much water in areas tending to be arid or semi-arid to support its population. Each of these resources has been allowed to deteriorate to such an extent that no one generation ever will be able to restore them to the extent they are restorable. Certainly a plan which will set forth the conservation task ahead and outline the types of conservation work which should be accomplished first in the national interest is eminently desirable.

The final chapter of this report calls attention to reports forwarded by the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture listing a future conservation work load in reforestation, water conservation, erosion control, wildlife improvement and other types of work which would require 1,000,000 men twenty-five years to complete. Who will decide which of the various projects listed in these reports is the most urgent. Who is to say which should be begun first if a post-war Corps is started. Does this work load include all essential types of natural resource conservation which must be done in the national interest. A master conservation plan would help to solve this problem. It would serve to rationalize, definitize and increase the value of any future conservation work undertaken after the war.

A master natural resources plan should be supplemented by improved planning by federal departments and agencies charged with



administration of natural resources. Better natural resource planning by the states is also essential if a post-war CCC is to be operated. Through improved planning each conservation department could make better use of the camps assigned to it. By preparing improved state conservation programs, state executives would profit more from CCC work. Good state conservation plans would make possible a better distribution of work projects and permit populace states to retain a larger number of enrollees at work camps in their own states.

#### EXPENDITURE OF GOVERNMENT FUNDS TO TRAIN IDLE YOUTH A PAYING VENTURE

Operation of the camps demonstrated that it pays to spend government funds to look after the training and welfare of youth who because of economic conditions beyond their control are unable to find jobs in private industry, business or agriculture. Prior to 1933, the Nation operated on the principle that every young man, if he tried hard enough and was willing to do any kind of work, could always find a job. The government was interested in youth but it felt that the burden of finding a job was on the individuals.

In 1933, the government through the CCC gave an affirmative answer to the question of whether the government should provide work for youth who could not obtain private jobs. At that time millions of young men were idle. To a sizable portion of these young men the government, in effect, said "We are going to set up work camps, provide useful work, set up high standards of performance, model work schedules and conditions as closely as possible upon those in private employment and do everything we can to give you the basic work experience and training needed to handle a job when work opportunities develop."

Some 300,000 men entered the Corps within three months. Close to 3,000,000 served in the Corps during its operating life. These youngsters were changed from economic liabilities to assets. Their energies which would have gone to waste were diverted to useful purposes. The morale and health and strength of these enrollees were built up. When business began to pick up, enrollees went directly from camps to jobs and made good. They left the camps with new faith in Democracy and its ability to solve its problems. When the war came, these men were ready. They went into the Armed Forces, into arms plants, into industry, into agriculture. Through the CCC some 3,000,000 men were enabled to make a greater contribution to the war than they could possibly have made if they had been permitted to remain idle and to shift for themselves.



## DISCIPLINE ESSENTIAL TO OPERATION OF SUCCESSFUL CAMPS

The Civilian Conservation Corps demonstrated that no camp's program can be a success without discipline. Invariably the camps which produced the best results were camps which maintained fair but rigid discipline. Well disciplined camps had high morale. Enrollees took pride in the cleanness, orderliness and well kept appearance of the camps in which they worked. They took pride in their work programs. They developed something of the esprit de corps that characterizes a first-class military unit.

The Civilian Conservation Corps imposed authority from above upon all CCC youth. Officials took the position that in setting up the CCC, the Nation wanted to provide the best possible work and character training for young men and at the same time complete the maximum amount possible of useful work in field, forest, and on farms. The young men entering the CCC camps were, for the most part, raw and inexperienced in any kind of work. They had to be taught how to use their hands, how to work, to obey orders and to respect their company commanders and superior officers.

In addition to the routine that was imposed upon them, enrollees were stimulated to learn how to run tractors, trucks, automobiles, power driven machinery and to do all the various kinds of work that have to be done on a widely varied and national conservation program and in the operation of a huge housekeeping establishment that utilizes large numbers of cooks, mess stewards, tractors, truck and automobile drivers, leaders and assistant leaders, mechanics, radio operators, etc. The Corps exerted pressure upon enrollees to attend classes, to work in machine shops, to attend nearby schools and trade schools, to attempt to get ahead and to qualify for camp administrative jobs -- in short, to make themselves useful citizens by embracing every opportunity within the camps.

In deep forests, in parks, along river beds and streams, on farms, on the great public domain, enrollees lived and worked in conformance with a fixed, rigid schedule. The Civilian Conservation Corps put enrollees through a procedure somewhat similar to that which produced the citizens who pioneered this country and made it a first-rank Nation.

## YOUNG MEN AND WAR VETERANS WELCOMED OPPORTUNITY TO WORK

The Civilian Conservation Corps taught that idle young men and war veterans would rather work than loaf. Some doubt was expressed in early 1933 as to whether idle young men would be willing to accept employment which meant hard physical labor in the outdoors. Doubt was expressed as to whether war veterans, especially men who had been idle or who had



worked only at odd jobs for several years, would be willing to do hard physical work. The worth of inexperienced men or men who had been idle for years on conservation projects demanding considerable skill was also questioned. The promptness with which both young men and war veterans grasped the opportunity of joining the Corps quickly proved that the only thing that was keeping the average unemployed young man or idle veteran from working was lack of an opportunity and incentive. Both the young men and the veterans proved adaptable to conservation types of employment and both made excellent records. Those who were skeptical of the value of raw youth on forest, park and farm conservation projects quickly revised their opinions. The excellent work which the Corps did in the building of large dams, the construction of fire towers, the erection of telephone lines and the building of truck trails and minor roads offered convincing proof of the boys' ability to learn quickly and to apply themselves effectively.

In this same connection it is interesting to note that the CCC effectively disposed of the argument that furnishing jobs in the Corps to youth would destroy their initiative and turn them into what was described as wards of the government. Civilian Conservation Corps employment records disclose that both the young men and the war veterans were quick to grasp any real work opportunity offered them in private life.

#### CCC PROGRAM MADE GOOD CITIZENS

Corps experience taught that the CCC camps did make good citizens. One reason it made good citizens was because camp administration was based upon the fundamental principles of Democratic government. Each camp was a small democracy in action. In the CCC camps, each youth had to stand on his own feet and make good on the basis of his own capacities and abilities. Each enrollee's chances for development and advancement were as equal as they could be made. Each was served the same food, lived in the same type of quarters, wore the same kind of uniform, received the same basic pay, had the same amount to spend and conformed to the same routines and regulations.

Year after year the Corps took raw, timid, unsure, undernourished young men and developed them into competent, healthy, sturdy citizens. In a sense the CCC camps were miniature melting pots where youth from varying backgrounds and racial origins touched shoulders with each other on a basis of equality. Enrollees had opportunity to become leaders and assistant leaders and in that way shared importantly in the operation of the camps and the outdoor work programs.

Enrollees were given equal opportunity to rise through merit to the top positions in the CCC camps. Thousands of enrollees rose from the ranks to become company commanders, sub-alterns (junior officers),



educational advisers, project superintendents and foremen. At the time the camps were closed in July 1942, about one-half the company officers were former enrollees.

The results of the CCC program justifies the philosophy of the CCC camps. The men who served in the CCC made good, safe, dependable, able workers and splendid soldiers. These men also knew how to obey orders intelligently. They knew what an honest day's work was and they took pride in their work. In a word, they were good workers and good citizens.

#### GOOD FOOD, AN ESSENTIAL MORALE FACTOR

No morale factor was more important than good food. One of the first things that CCC officials learned was that you cannot have a first-rate camp without a first-rate mess. A camp might have firm discipline, high-class leadership, attractive training opportunities and a good recreational program and yet fail to attain high standard rating because the food served, for some reason, was not up to par.

The average enrollee worked hard, put in long hours, looked forward to the time when he could stretch his legs under the table and fill up on good appetizing victuals, in CCC parlance, "chow." If the food served was badly prepared, or of poor quality, the company commander heard about it. If nothing was done to improve conditions, something usually happened to bring the matter forcibly to the attention of District, Corps or even Washington, headquarters.

In the early days there were instances when enrollees refused to work because of camp food conditions. Strikes or disturbances were rare after the first few months. Once the camp program was well organized, a camp with a poor mess became the exception. The Corps took pride in the food it served. The average enrollee ate better than he did at home.

The most effective steps taken to raise camp messes to the high standard maintained by the War Department included careful inspection, the establishment of bakers and cooks schools for enrollees and officers, and constant vigilance. Camp officers were taught how to judge meats and other foodstuffs. They learned to distinguish between cow and steer beef, and between choice and good grades. Rigid inspection of all meats and foodstuffs by the Army Veterinary Corps and the rejection of all food not of the type, grade and class specified in contracts was an important factor in maintaining a good mess at all camps.

Throughout Corps operations the Army system of subsistence supply was utilized for the CCC. The standard Army garrison ration of about five pounds of food a day per enrollee was the basis used for computing



the amount of food needed for enrollees. On the average, enrollees ate a little more than soldiers. There were many departures from the standard articles of the Army ration and camp officers were encouraged to substitute, whenever possible, fresh fruits and vegetables for canned or dried articles on the garrison ration. On occasion, meats were purchased locally but on the whole, better results were obtained by the purchase of beef, pork and lamb from regular contractors. Food purchases in the vicinities of camps were important stimulants to local business, especially in time of depression. While most of the canned goods and staples were purchased centrally through the Army Quartermaster Corps, about half of all funds spent for food went to local farmers or merchants.

Any official charged with responsibility for setting up a CCC would do well to make a careful study of the rigid camp investigation system established by the Office of the Director. Camp experience indicated the necessity for maintaining rigid food inspections by qualified professional personnel, the operation of bakers and cooks schools and painstaking and frequent inspections.

#### CORPS REDUCED JUVENILE DELINQUENCY RATE

Reports submitted by the men and women who selected young men for the Corps and kept in touch with former CCC enrollees offer convincing proof of the value of the CCC as a means of reducing juvenile delinquency. While actual statistical results of the Corps' program, in terms of juvenile delinquency reduction, cannot be measured exactly, data reaching the Office of the Director from Department of Justice officers and heads of prisons and reformatories showed that the Corps had been a factor in reducing juvenile crime in the eight years preceding the outbreak of the war. The Corps attacked the foundations of crime by replacing unhealthy recreational pursuits of the cities -- gambling, drinking, immoral movies -- with organized recreational programs, life in the outdoors and days crowded with work, training and other constructive activities.

#### MACHINERY ESSENTIAL TO MORALE AND HIGH PRODUCTION RATE

One of the first lessons learned by the Corps officials was that the use of modern machinery and automotive equipment enormously increased the usefulness of the Corps both in the training of men and in the advancement of conservation programs. The camps had been in operation only a short time when it was discovered that use of merely handtools to build roads and do other conservation types of work was detrimental to the morale of the young men. Immediately, President Roosevelt approved plans for the use of machinery and the necessary machines and tools were supplied the camps, the morale of the men went up by leaps and bounds.



## CCC ORGANIZATION SUITABLE FOR DOING MANY TYPES OF WORK

Nine years of active operations during which the Corps engaged in a wide variety of work ranging from the construction of steel fire observation towers to truck trails and telephone lines of communications demonstrated that the CCC type of organization can be utilized effectively for many kinds of work not included in the original work program. The effectiveness with which CCC enrollees were utilized to construct the big dams on the Winooski River Valley flood control project in Vermont, the Sheridan Dam in South Dakota, bomb proof shelters for airplanes on the east and west coast, and tens of thousands of miles of truck trails through forest areas indicates that a post-war CCC could be utilized effectively on virtually any type of engineering construction project.

If a post-war Corps is created and expanded to double or triple the size of the Corps in 1940, it may be found advisable to use young men and returning soldiers, too, on the construction of highways, large dams and large flood control projects in addition to routine conservation activities. The CCC furnished much of the heavy equipment used on the Alaska Highway and it could have constructed the entire project.

As it operated during its last eight years, the Corps was a highly mobile, well-equipped and well-staffed organization, capable of handling almost any kind of a construction contract. The Corps' technical staff included engineers and construction and road-building technical experts on its supervisory staff. Enrollees were trained in construction as well as conservation work. It would be perfectly feasible to use the Corps as a construction agency which would build highways, or other improvements for other federal departments on a contract basis.

There is no reason why the Corps organization techniques could not be used in post-war construction work in war torn countries.

### CCC SELECTION, A PROBLEM

The Civilian Conservation Corps depended upon non-federally paid organizations for the selection of its junior enrollees. This system was adopted because it was economical and because it was believed that welfare and relief officials were in the best position to pick out the young men who should be sent to the CCC camps. The state directors of selection welcomed their new assignments, took them seriously, worked loyally to send men who would get the most out of their camp experience. These officials naturally were concerned with getting families off local relief rolls. Boys from such families had the first opportunity at CCC



vacancies as was their right. There were hundreds of thousands of other youth, however, whose families could not afford to give them the work training and opportunities available in the CCC camps. These men had a right to be considered in CCC selection. In many cases they were, but for many years a relief card was considered the major entrance requirement to a CCC camp.

Having enrollees selected through state welfare and relief organizations often caused increased CCC costs that more than offset the advantages of depending upon unpaid selection personnel. Camp operating programs provided for the operation over a three months or six months period of a certain number of camps. Supervisory and camp personnel were hired on that basis. Costs were figured on a certain average enrollment. If, during a six months period, relief rolls lightened in a certain section of the country, the number of replacements to fill normal camp vacancies suddenly dropped. The camps operated at below average costs thus increasing the man year's costs for each enrollee and reducing the work output. State selection organizations in some states accepted men who would have been rejected by other states. In some states young men who needed the work training and health developing phases of Corps life were refused admission because they were not on relief rolls. In others, such men were selected. In some states, state selection organizations cooperated closely with state and local employment offices, in others they did not. The Director could ask state selection officials to follow policies; he could not order them to comply.

Corps experience indicated that state relief and welfare officials and organizations should have a part in any future CCC selection picture. These organizations, however, should be supplementary to, rather than main selection agencies, and perhaps the U. S. Employment Service should do all selecting for all youth organizations that may be in operation. A plan to have this organization aid in selecting CCC juniors was before Federal Security Administrator Paul V. McNutt when the Corps ceased active operations. Perhaps a new selection system peculiar to the needs of a post-war Corps should be established. Certainly if more than one youth organization is to operate after the war, arrangements should be made to coordinate selections for both organizations. Past experience indicated that when this was not done, competition developed which was followed by adverse publicity.

Corps experience indicated the need not only for a strong selection agency paid from Federal funds but also for legislation clearly defining the type of men eligible for enrollment in the Corps. The CCC Act authorized enrollment of men who were unemployed and in need of employment regardless of whether they were on relief rolls. Notwithstanding this clear



statement in the law, the Corps was roundly criticized for taking in men who were not on relief. There was a general feeling in Congress that only men on relief were eligible for CCC enrollment.

If a post-war Corps is to require applicants for enrollment to carry a charity card, then this should be stated clearly in the Act. If the Corps is to provide basic work training to young men, who, although their families are not on relief, still cannot obtain training from other sources, then this should be stated clearly in the CCC Act so that no mistakes will occur.

Corps experience indicated also that if two youth organizations serving the same youth groups are to operate after the war, then the functions of each should be clearly defined and arrangements made to avoid duplication of effort and competition in the selection of enrollees.

#### ENROLLEES MADE SPLENDID SOLDIER MATERIAL

One of the most important lessons taught by the Civilian Conservation Corps was that the training given young men in the camp to fit them for effective, active citizenship was effective in preparing youth for military service in time of war. While the Corps did not teach enrollees to shoot, it did teach them most of the things considered most important in the schooling of a soldier. The young man sent to a camp was toughened physically, disciplined, taught to obey orders, accustomed to barracks life, one of the most difficult things to teach a new soldier, taught good posture and how to march, given first-aid training and grounded in good health and sanitation habits. Enrollees also were rendered immune to most of the common diseases which ordinarily occur in epidemic form during the mobilization of large numbers of men.

The average young man who spent six months in the Corps left with a better understanding of his country and his responsibilities in event of war. Many had been grounded in basic skills and large numbers had received training in leadership. Officers associated with CCC administration have not hesitated to state that former CCC enrollees enjoy a big advantage over other young men when they enter the Army. Many enrollees developed skills as cooks, mess stewards, mechanics, truck drivers, tractor drivers, radio operators, company clerks and as leaders and assistant leaders which fit them directly for the Armed Forces. The change from driving a tractor to driving a tank is so small as to be negligible.

Many of the types of work in the conservation program paralleled those done by engineer troops -- constructing roads and trails, bridges,



dams, breakwaters, disposal systems, telephone lines, fences, garages, storehouses, and shelters; felling, skidding, and sawing timber and logs; operating and maintaining trucks, tractors, power shovels, jackhammers, road machines, and pile drivers. The work, directed by skilled foremen, met blueprint specifications, withstood critical inspection.

When war came, CCC trained men were in demand in both industry and the Armed Forces. The War Department on several occasions referred to CCC trained men as splendid soldier material. In a letter to the Director of the Civilian Conservation Corps, dated September 28, 1942, Major General James A. Ulio, the Adjutant General, U.S. Army, said in part:

"..... the Corps has supplied a splendid group of young men as a great reservoir of man power for the Armed Forces. The enrollees by their fine training and discipline have made model soldiers when they joined the Armed Forces."

#### EXPERIENCE AND CHARACTER, JOB ASSETS

Corps experience demonstrated that character, good work attitudes and good health are prime factors when it comes to obtaining a job. Camp life counteracted the undesirable effects of idleness. It taught enrollees that good personal appearance is an asset, that slovenliness is a trait no employer will tolerate in his employees. The CCC discipline, the regularity of camp life, the definite responsibilities that fell on each enrollee all contributed to the formation of enrollee character.

Enrollees lived two hundred in a camp. Living together in barracks with other young men taught enrollees to respect the rights of others and to be tolerant of their ideas and beliefs. It taught them to be good sports, and to take minor disappointments without flinching. An enrollee, away from home for the first time, had to decide whether he would stick it out or return home. It took courage to overcome homesickness, to stay on the job when every muscle, during those first few days in camp, screamed against unaccustomed tasks. Often that first decision not to quit marked a definite turning point in a young man's character. As enrollees adjusted to camp life, fear was replaced by assurance, and discouragement by ambition. Self confidence came with experience. Enrollees learned how to work, how to follow instructions, how to use their hands and how to make use of their native intelligence. All these are traits which employers look for in new men. Many personnel directors told CCC officials that good character, sound work habits, self reliance, willingness, discipline and good personal appearance were more important to them than specific technical knowledge or mechanical proficiency. The desirable traits developed by young men in camp were reflected in their home communities when they returned.



## CCC, A HEALTH BUILDER

Corps experience with hundreds of thousands of undernourished youngsters who entered the Corps in poor physical condition demonstrated that good nourishing food, regular hours, plenty of outdoor vigorous work and proper medical attention and care can work wonders in a few weeks and months. Any one who took the trouble to compare the scrawny, underweight youngsters entering the Corps with the tanned, healthy, vigorous young men leaving the camps could see for himself the transformation which a few months in the outdoor camps brought about. Weight increases ranged up to fifty pounds. Health foundations were built which will have a beneficial effect on enrollees all the rest of their lives.

The CCC taught that this country cannot afford to allow young people to grow up underweight and with correctable defects when a few months in an outdoor camp like the CCC can build up their health, correct defects and send them back to society capable of carrying their own weight in the world. In any future Corps, special attention should be given to the recruitment of youngsters with correctable defects, susceptible to treatment in the CCC camps. The physical standards for entrance in a future CCC should be lower than those which prevailed during the first nine years of Corps operations. Arrangements to lower physical entrance requirements were made in the closing months of Corps operations and these should be included in any future CCC program.

Good healthy workers are just as important in peacetime as in war. A great wastage of man power would be avoided if steps were taken in normal times to aid those with remediable physical defects. Perhaps a future CCC should have conditioning camps where enrollees would remain until they had been built up enough physically to do work side by side with the regular enrollees.

The CCC system of correcting physical defects and building strong bodies does not place a burden on the government. The young men pay their way with useful work.

## ENROLLEE TURNOVER

During the period the Corps operated, turnover among enrollees was too high. Too many men left the CCC camps within the first few weeks after enrollment. A high rate of turnover among enrolled personnel had a tendency to increase total man-year costs and per enrollee. The camps were established and manned with the necessary company and supervisory personnel for 200 men. Certain overhead costs



remained stationary and if the number of men in camp dropped below a satisfactory average, these overhead costs were divided among a smaller number of enrollees and necessarily were higher per enrollee than they should have been. On the average, enrollee man year costs averaged \$1,000 per year with all CCC operations costs assessed against the enrollee. If a method had been found which would have kept enrollees in camp until they found satisfactory private employment or until they completed their full six months, the average enrollee would have gotten more out of the Corps and the costs per enrollee could have been reduced at least \$50 per year per man.

The CCC enrollee agreed under oath to remain in camp for six months unless he obtained a private job or unless he had a satisfactory reason for leaving before that time. This oath and the regulations established which stipulated that enrollees deserting would not receive honorable discharges failed to hold young men when they became homesick or when they became dissatisfied with camp life or with camp officers or camp discipline.

Homesickness led all other factors causing enrollees to go "over the hill." The disciplined camp with its regular hours, its location in the outdoors often hundreds or thousands of miles away from home were so different from anything the enrollee had experienced previously that many found the adjustment too great and deserted. If the new enrollee bridged the gap of those first few difficult weeks, he usually became enthusiastic about his camp experiences and stayed on until he finished his period of service or obtained a private job. Most of them loved the adventure of being away from home for the first time and of the new exciting life in the open.

Camp experience indicated the need for a far better adjustment program for new enrollees in any future CCC. Careful study should be made of the causes for enrollee desertions and a sincere attempt made to make the camps attractive enough to hold enrollees during the "homesick" period. A wide variety of methods, many highly successful, were tried out in an attempt to solve the enrollee turnover problem. Some camp commanders did away with desertions entirely. Others cut them to a low minimum.

Probably camp leadership was the most important factor in keeping men in camp. The importance of having qualified and inspiring camp leadership, and this includes the educational adviser, the project superintendent, and foremen as well as the officers, cannot be stressed too much. Perhaps stricter regulations on desertions should be promulgated. Future company commanders, even with stricter regulations and penalties, would experience difficulties if the camps are not well operated and attractive to young men.



Corps experience disclosed that it was not necessary to cut work programs or relax discipline to make camps attractive. Camps with first class educational and training programs and good recreational facilities usually had low turnover rates. In many cases desertions were reduced tremendously by adoption of the "buddy system" where an older enrollee was assigned to each new rookie during his first few days in camp. In other instances, camp commanders wrote letters to the parents of new enrollees urging their cooperation and asking them not to write of things which would tend to make the new enrollees homesick. Often the state selection officer wrote letters to the new enrollees they had selected after the young men had reached camp.

Perhaps it may be found advisable to permit enrollees wider latitude in choosing the camps to which they are to be assigned so they can obtain the type of training they are most interested in.

#### HIGH QUALITY OF COMPANY OFFICER NEEDED

Corps experience demonstrated that the company commander, the C.O., was the most important man in camp. The whole camp revolved around the C.O. If he was a good leader and knew his business usually the camp was high class. If the company commander was of mediocre caliber usually he had an average or below average camp. For the most part the CCC was fortunate in its officer material. Almost all the men placed in officer positions were reserve officers and they quickly learned how to manage the camps and help the enrollees get the most out of their CCC experience. The Corps helped the reserve officers and, in consequence, the Regular Army and the Nation for something like 60,000 reserve officers received valuable command and supply experience in the two-hundred-man CCC camps.

While the Corps was of great value in aiding the War Department develop a high grade pool of officer material -- material that has been of the highest value in the war -- this practice did not always work out to the best interest of the CCC. In the early years of the Corps, there was a tendency to rotate officers too rapidly so that larger numbers of reserve officers could receive training. As a result of Corps experience in the middle thirties, the practice of rotating officers frequently and limiting their service in the Corps to eighteen months was discontinued. Halted also was the practice of calling officers to duty under their commissions. From 1939, new officers were drawn largely from the reserve officers' pool, but they were employed in a civilian capacity when appointed by the War Department and they were given Civil Service status. Officer positions in the Corps also were opened to enrollees, educational advisers and other company civilian personnel and many qualified. Officers schools were maintained and hundreds of enrollees qualified as junior officers and many eventually became company commanders. For the most part the Civilian



Conservation Corps was very fortunate in its officer personnel. It is recommended, however, that in any future CCC, arrangements be made to operate officers schools for the training of junior officers and the development of qualified enrollees as junior officers. In these schools officers and enrollees should be grounded in the importance of maintaining a good mess, high morale, discipline and a good training program. Camp commanders should be instructed in the handling of enrollees to the best advantage of the enrollee and the camp, in the selection and grading of meat and other food supplies, in the best method for stimulation of enrollee interest and in the development of citizenship programs.

Greater uniformity in the management and standards maintained at all camps would prove beneficial in reducing the enrollee turnover rate. It would also serve to provide uniform training and camp experience. Investigators assigned to check on CCC camp administration found a wide variance in management, camp messes and camp training programs.

#### CAMPS NEED EXCEPTIONAL MEN FOR PROJECT SUPERINTENDENTS

Corps experience demonstrated the importance of having well qualified men as project superintendents and foremen. These men exercise great influence upon enrollees for the greater part of the day and during the period when the minds of the young men are fresher and more likely to gain from instruction. The "on-the-job" training received by enrollees is perhaps the most important part of the training program and much of the value of this training is lost unless good technical men are in charge.

The average youth entering the Civilian Conservation Corps was a young man without work experience who needed elementary instruction on even the simplest task. Experienced enrollees who knew how to drive trucks, tractors, graders and how to operate the complicated machinery used in many Corps work operations were constantly leaving the Corps to accept private jobs. New men had to be trained and ready to take their places or the work project would suffer. One of the duties of the project superintendent was to maintain a continuous training program for the development of new drivers and specialists to replace men leaving to take outside jobs. An exceptional type of man was needed as project superintendent because he not only was responsible for the quality and amount of field work performed but for the work training of enrollees as well.

#### SAFETY TRAINING IMPORTANT

Nothing which the CCC did paid higher dividends than the Safety Program. A glance at the figures showing the comparative number of accidents and fatalities for the first year of the Corps and for the last indicate the great progress which was made in the development of proper safety regulations and practices in the CCC camps. This record shows that



injuries were reduced from a rate of 16.81 per thousand in 1934 to a rate of 4.34 per thousand in 1941.

Two great benefits stemmed from the Safety Program. By drastically reducing the accident rate, thousands of accidents were avoided which might have maimed or fatally injured young men working in the CCC camps. The safe practices learned by enrollees are today serving them in good stead as they work in war industries or serve in the Armed Forces.

#### CORPS AROUSED INTERNATIONAL INTEREST

The truth of the statement that "If a man makes a better mousetrap than his neighbor, the world will make a beaten path to his door," was strikingly illustrated by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The camps had been in operation only a short time before they attracted world-wide attention. Within the first few years, more than a score of governments asked for information regarding the camp set up or sent special investigators to check and report on the new United States formula for alleviating unemployment among youth. King George VI of England was among royal visitors who studied the CCC camps at first-hand. Before the Corps closed its doors on June 30, 1942, inquiries regarding the Corps had been received from more than thirty nations including several South and Central American countries, China and Great Britain. Several countries had initiated CCC type programs or were on the point of establishing outdoor camps when the war began.

#### CORPS SHOULD HAVE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

The widespread interest in the CCC program exhibited by educators, conservationists, labor and industry raises the question as to whether steps should be taken, in planning for a post-war CCC, to set up an Advisory Council of leaders of these various groups to advise the Corps' Director on CCC policy. Such a council would be made up of representatives of the groups which normally are responsible for the education and training of youth, the relief of unemployment, the placement of workers, industries which hire large numbers of men, social organizations and the general public. Two major results should flow from such a program. In the first place the existence of such an Advisory Council would afford the Director and CCC officials opportunity to explain Corps policies to the groups most interested in making the program a success. It would also afford the various group representatives an opportunity to make their criticisms or suggestions direct to the man in charge of the Corps. Such a program should increase general knowledge opposing viewpoints with beneficial results for the entire Nation. Some thought has been given to establishing of state advisory councils on which would be appointed representatives of the governor, conservation



authorities, welfare authorities, placement agencies and employers.

#### OTHER LESSONS LEARNED

The Corps taught the importance of having neat distinctive uniforms for enrollees. It demonstrated that under ordinary circumstances substantial savings can be effected through use of portable buildings in camp construction, through careful advance planning in the laying out and construction of camps and through maintaining larger numbers of men at work in their states of origin.

It taught that operation of a sound, well administered work program is good training in national preparedness regardless of whether the camps are militarized. The Corps demonstrated also that youth training and education cannot be subordinated in the face of a universal demand on the part of American youth to get ahead.

- - - -

In the preceding pages an attempt has been made to list some of the most important and basic lessons taught by the CCC program. Not all could be included. Not all may be applicable to the type of CCC set up after the war, if this program is revived.

If a post-war corps is established, full use should be made of buildings, equipment, clothing, foodstuffs, medical supplies and other materials made surplus by the ending of the present war. Utilization of this equipment may make it impossible to furnish a distinctive uniform or to provide portable type buildings for a revived CCC in its early years as it would be more economical to utilize existing supplies first.

The Armed Forces, industry and agriculture know what the CCC did to prepare this country for the war, to increase natural resources essential to peak wartime production, to increase the ability of farm lands and grass lands to produce for victory.

The War Department knows what it meant to America, when the war began, to have 3,000,000 men better prepared to fight or work on war production, to have 60,000 reserve officers trained in CCC camps, to have close to a million specialists such as cooks, bakers, radio men, construction workers, etc., trained in CCC camps to call upon in the creation and expansion of the Army, to have a more adequate supply of natural resources and to have, within Army ranks, the invaluable experience in supply, administration and handling of large numbers of men which accrued through operation of the Corps.



The Civilian Conservation Corps' contribution to the war was a vital one. The funds expended to divert the energies of idle youth to useful work in the public interest paid the Nation enormous dividends. The Corps was one of the best investments the Nation ever made.