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**THE LOCAL IMPACT OF  
THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS, 1933-1942\***

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**ABSTRACT**

The success of Franklin Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) has been well documented. The program was productive in conservation work and popular with the general public. For the most part, CCC camps were welcomed by nearby communities. Most scholarly work on the CCC has focused on policy developments in Washington and, in many of these accounts, the popularity of the CCC has been described in terms of agrarian values such as tree planting and healthy outdoor living. In contrast, this study focuses on the local level, looks at concrete variables directly related to camp-community relations, and concludes that acceptance of the CCC camps was governed largely by more tangible economic matters.

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The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was a New Deal program which engaged unemployed young men in conservation work in rural areas. The brainchild of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the CCC was genuinely committed to tree planting, erosion control, and other conservation projects. The program was highly successful in these efforts. The U.S. Army was given responsibility for managing the residential work centers, or "camps," and the Forest Service, the National Park Service, and other conservation-oriented offices of government managed the work projects. The CCC lasted from April of 1933 to June of 1942. Over this nine year period, approximately three million young men, ages 17 through 28, were employed for an average period of ten months.<sup>1</sup>

"Roosevelt's Tree Army," as the CCC was sometimes called, was among the most highly regarded New Deal agencies. Republicans supported the program almost as enthusiastically as Democrats. Approval also was reflected in the small, rural communities near the CCC camps. Communities generally welcomed the camps. As one indication of this support, an overwhelming majority of letters from communities to the CCC director's office were positive. Most letters requested new camps or requested to keep already existing camps (Table 1). For the camps, this support was crucial--the nearby community often represented the only social and recreational opportunities available to CCC enrollees and staff.

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Many communities were willing to go out of their way to keep a CCC camp, as illustrated by this telegram from the Arcadia Community Club in Wisconsin to Senator F. Ryan Duffy: "KINDLY CONTACT CCC HEADQUARTERS IN WASHINGTON AND MILWAUKEE SO THAT WISCONSIN EROSION CAMPS MAY BE CONTINUED ANOTHER SIX MONTHS IMMENSE AMOUNT OF WORK STILL LEFT UNDONE NEAR HERE WINTER QUARTERS AVAILABLE IN ARCADIA IF BARRACKS ARE NOT DEEMED ADVISABLE"<sup>2</sup> Note also this observation following a survey of 272 former CCC enrollees in Cleveland: "From the boys' own stories it would seem that, on the whole, the surrounding communities were not only glad to receive their money for the commercial recreation available but were friendly to the boys themselves. Some mentioned being invited to private homes. One interviewer noted that one small town arranged beds in the town hall so that the boys who came into town could have a place to sleep other than the hotel."<sup>3</sup>

Most accounts of the CCC have suggested or implied that the foundation of the CCC's popularity was agrarian romanticism. According to this view, the simple, hard work and country living of the CCC represented, in the minds of many Americans, a return to a pristine era--an era which existed before the factory replaced the frontier as the most imposing symbol of American life. No doubt this vision substantially influenced public reaction to the CCC, and continues to do so.<sup>4</sup> However, there are also more down to earth explanations for the CCC's popularity. And specifically, there are more down to earth explanations for the nature of CCC camp relationships with nearby communities, not all of which were positive. It is these more tangible influences, rather than ideological perspectives, which are the focus of this study.

## HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH METHODS

A variety of possible influences have been suggested in previous accounts of the CCC. Six of the most frequently suggested variables have been: (1) race, (2) local enrollees, (3) behavior in town, (4) the work project, (5) local staff, and (6) camp spending. These six variables are selected as hypotheses for analysis in this study not only because they have been mentioned in previous accounts of the CCC, but also because they represent three distinct categories of variables. "Race" and "local enrollees" are enrollee characteristic variables. "Behavior in town" and "work projects" are variables which relate to daily CCC activities. And "local staff" and "camp spending" are variables which relate to the CCC's impact on the local economy. Thus, the six specific variables are used in this study to gain some insight into the importance of the broader categories which the variables represent. In doing so, the study attempts to move toward some broader conclusions regarding the nature of the camp-community relations in the CCC.

As the primary source of data, the study utilizes correspondence from communities across the country to the CCC director's office in Washington. The study attempts to "see" camp-community issues from the viewpoint of local communities rather than the viewpoint of policy-makers in Washington. Correspondence from communities is the only data source which permits such an analysis. These letters -- about 1700 in all -- are arranged alphabetically by city or county and are housed with the CCC records in the U.S. National Archives. Of the 43 boxes of letters in this series, five boxes have been selected at random, yielding a total of 202 letters in the sample. Because letters are arranged alphabetically by city name, the sample covers all states. A "letter", in the context of this study, is often represented by a petition or by a series of letters concerning

the same issue in the same locality at the same time. The content of this sample of community correspondence is illustrated in Table 1.

To reach more detailed conclusions regarding community concerns, it is useful to look not only at overall correspondence, but at community complaints as well. Because of the small percentage of complaint letters in the overall correspondence, however, it would be prohibitively time consuming to get a reasonable sample of community complaint letters from this file. Fortunately, the researcher has discovered another source of CCC correspondence data, the "Precedent File" (unlisted in the National Archives inventories). The Precedent File contains, on separate notecards, a reference to each piece of correspondence to the director's office arranged by subject. The researcher has pulled all cards under headings such as "complaints," "dissatisfaction," "protest," etc. A total of 558 such letters are identifiable from "communities," i.e., persons other than CCC enrollees, their families, or CCC employees. More than half of these letters (324) were part of an organized drive by the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) to halt the sale of beer in CCC camps; these letters are not included in the analysis. The remaining letters, illustrating community complaints by topic, are detailed in Table 2. The number of community complaint letters identified in the Precedent File, not including the WCTU letters, is remarkably consistent with the sample of overall correspondence. (If the sample is extrapolated to the universe of community correspondence, we would expect 232 complaint letters, while the Precedent File yields 234.)

## DATA AND INTERPRETATION

**Race.** There is reason to believe that black CCC camps were not welcomed as cordially as white camps. (In the CCC most

black enrollees were segregated into all black camps.) Many observers of the CCC have reached this conclusion, for example: "It was soon obvious that the success of Negro camps was conditional on winning the acquiescence of the local communities in their establishment. This was no easy task. No sooner had such camps been occupied than angry complaints began to flood Fechner's office insisting that they be filled with white enrollees or be removed."<sup>5</sup> This observation, by John Salmond, is the generally accepted view, but it is in need of qualification.

To begin, there is little doubt that black camps frequently were targets of fears and complaints on the part of nearby white communities. In three studies focusing on the CCC in specific regions of the country, Kenneth Baldridge,<sup>6</sup> James Hanson,<sup>7</sup> and Barrett Potter<sup>8</sup> have illustrated the depth of racist sentiment. Potter, looking at the CCC in New York state, has suggested that "perhaps no single problem was as great as that raised by the enrollment of blacks and the location of camps for them."<sup>9</sup> Revival of Ku Klux Klan activity in at least one New York locality was attributed to the presence of black CCC enrollees. For the northern rocky mountains, Hanson has reported: "There was apparently only one black company in Montana . . . The shocking discrimination against the black companies was all too apparent at this camp . . . the boy's exemplary behavior did not protect them from discrimination."<sup>10</sup> And note the following plea from a woman in Brigham City, Utah, to Governor Harry Blood: "At present the War Department has stationed a very undesirable class of men, such as Mexicans, Philipians sic and, worst of all, Negroes. Imagine the social problems this incurs in our city. As a mother of two growing daughters, whose property and home joins this camp, I implore your support and influence in having this group of men moved from our community."<sup>11</sup>

**TABLE 1**  
**COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS**  
**AS INDICATED BY GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE**  
**TO THE CCC DIRECTOR'S OFFICE**

	Number	Percent
Request for new camp .....	84	41.6
Request to keep existing camp .....	45	22.3
Request for specific work project .....	25	12.4
General praise, need for jobs or business, or other remarks indicating positive impact of CCC camp .....	18	8.9
<b>TOTAL POSITIVE LETTERS .....</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>85.1</b>
<b>TOTAL NEGATIVE LETTERS</b> <b>(Complaints, Concerns, etc.).....</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>13.4</b>
<b>TOTAL LETTERS ON NEUTRAL SUBJECTS ....</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1.5</b>
<b>OVERALL TOTAL.....</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Community Correspondence, Series 300, Correspondence of the Director, General Records, Record Group 35, U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C. These data represent an approximately twelve percent random sample of all letters in this file. The term "letter" has a special meaning in these data, sometimes indicating a petition or multiple letters on the same subject from the same community.

**TABLE 2**  
**COMPLAINTS OF COMMUNITIES AS INDICATED BY**  
**CORRESPONDENCE TO THE CCC DIRECTOR'S OFFICE**

Subject	Number	Percent
Not employing local tradespersons, complaints about CCC job appointments, or negative effects on local jobs.....	64	27.3
Complaints about camp conditions, enrollee welfare, or staff misconduct .....	47	20.1
Not purchasing supplies locally, damage to local busines, not taking competitive bids, or not paid for services.....	41	17.5
Enrollee misconduct .....	36	15.4
Complaints about negative impact of work projects.....	24	10.3
Opposed to black camps .....	16	6.8
Enrollees inappropriately selected .....	6	2.6
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Precedent File, Correspondence of the Director, General Records, Record Group 35, U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C. The Precedent File contains on separate notecards a reference to each piece of correspondence which reached the CCC Director's Office between 1933 and 1939, arranged by subject. The data in this table represent the complete listing of letters under headings such as "complaints," "protests," "dissatisfaction," etc. The term "letter" has a special meaning in these data, sometimes indicating a petition or multiple letters on the same subject from the same community. The total of 234 letters shown here does not include 324 letters which were written in a campaign by members of The Women's Christian Temperence Union protesting the sale of beer in CCC camps.

Looking at more systematic evidence, letters protesting black camps did reach the director's office in Washington, but not in the "flood" that Salmond has suggested. Among complaint letters from communities, only 16 letters were in opposition to a black camp (Table 2). This was only 6.8 percent of all complaint letters filed. Outspoken opposition to black camps was not extensive. Overall, it is less than certain that enrollee race was a constant and enduring problem in camp-community relations in the CCC. Kenneth Hendrickson, CCC historian, has

supported the more moderate conclusion that enrollee race was "generally not much of a problem."<sup>12</sup>

Some communities, in fact, requested black camps for their vicinity. One notable example is a 1935 letter from Lyndon Baines Johnson, who was then director of the National Youth Administration in Texas. Johnson wrote to Fechner supporting a proposal for a black CCC camp at Prairie View, Texas:

Dear Mr. Fechner:

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Attached is self-explanatory correspondence with regard to the establishment of a C.C.C. camp for negro boys in the vicinity of Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College at Prairie View, Texas.

Any assistance you may be able to give us concerning this project will be deeply appreciated. I have no doubt that it would contribute very much to the solution of the problem of unemployed negro youth in Texas.

With every good wish I am  
Sincerely,

Lyndon B. Johnson,  
NYA Director of Texas<sup>13</sup>

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Very often it was the Chamber of Commerce which wrote in support of a black camp. Note for example this request from a Chamber of Commerce in Georgia: "This is to advise you that Laurens County is above prejudice of this kind and we offer you this large county for the location of a Negro camp. We can promise you the wholehearted cooperation of all our civic bodies and county officials in locating a camp of this kind for negroes in the county."<sup>14</sup> As this letter indicates, racist reactions to black camps often were of secondary importance to the positive economic impact of the camps on nearby communities. Rarely, in fact, did a letter of protest reach the Director's office after a black camp had been established for even a

short while. Protests generally arose prior to establishment of black camps. In a "Report on Colored Camps in the Fourth Corps Area," CCC Chaplain George Imes wrote: "It is common knowledge that at the inauguration of the CCC Camps, many communities objected strenuously, and sometimes violently, to locating a colored camp in their vicinity. In most instances this has entirely disappeared, and over and over again did I hear in person expressions of a preference for colored camps among the residents of these same communities."<sup>15</sup> No doubt Chaplain Imes was painting a rosy picture, but his point was nevertheless congruent with the scarcity of community protest letters which reached Washington after black camps were estab-

lished. Many communities which initially protested black camps eventually grew dependent on the increased business activity and employment opportunities which the camps brought to the area.

**Local Enrollees.** A large number of CCC enrollees were placed in camps far removed from their home states. In particular, young men from populous eastern states were often sent to camps in western states, where most of the national forests and national parks were located. There are some indications that communities near CCC camps did not respond as favorably to out-of-state enrollees as they did to their "own boys." The reasons for alleged community suspicion of non-local enrollees are typically interpreted as sociological rather than economic. For example, Baldrige has looked at the CCC in Utah and reported: "Many CCC administrators agreed with local residents who felt that the hoodlums of New York and New Jersey had been rounded up off the streets and shipped west into the CCC camps."<sup>16</sup> Conflict arose in the eastern states as well, where rural communities were sometimes suspicious of urban youth. Potter has discussed this problem in New York: "The rural residents' mistrust of anyone from outside the immediate vicinity was especially evident during the first months of the Corps' existence when individuals attached to the camps encountered feelings of suspicion if not outright animosity."<sup>17</sup>

Accounts of this type, however, constitute only weak evidence. For every tale of

strained relationships between non-local enrollees and community citizens, there are dozens of tales of harmonious situations. Also, Potter's comment above that mistrust "was especially evident during the first months" is instructive. As with black enrollees, fear of out-of-state or urban enrollees was a prejudice soon forgotten by community residents.

It is useful to look at a more systematic measure. Turning to "complaint" letters from community residents which reached the CCC director's office in Washington, not a single letter discussed out-of-state or non-local enrollees as a central concern (Table 2). Six letters were devoted to inappropriate selection of enrollees, but none of these was concerned with the issue of non-local enrollees. Overall, there is little evidence that the issue of non-local enrollees was significantly related to camp-community relations once camps were established.

**Behavior in Town.** The behavior of enrollees when they visited town probably influenced camp-community relations. Comments of many observers of the CCC support this view. Hanson, for example, has suggested that enrollee behavior was the "usual" reason for bad feelings between a camp and the nearby community. Disruptive incidents were almost common. For example, a letter addressed to Eleanor Roosevelt from a Mrs. Chambers of Sussex, New Jersey, was typical:

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My Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

I know the President is much too busy with greater problems. So, I as one mother to another beg of you to take this matter up with him if he has a spare moment.



About four and one half miles from Sussex, N.J., and very near our little farm is a camp of re-forest workers, young men from 18 to 25, and sorry to say the roughest kind. Up until three weeks ago our daughters were free to go to and from the village unmolested. These fellows have been to our door and neighbors trying to sell over-alls, bits of jewelry or work in the garden for a little money.

Last Friday our High School at Sussex gave a dance for the graduation class. Four of these chaps in over-alls and work shirts walked in and demanded admittance since it was public. It ended in a fight and the town policeman had to be called.

Saturday night our little movie house, only open Friday and Saturday for our children who can only see pictures seldom. Again a crowd of them got in the house and because it was an old picture, they hissed and made all sorts of remarks about it. They were asked to leave and the language from them was terrible.

Now I am sure you will understand what we are suffering. Our community has never been so upset. Any hour of the night, Saturday and Sunday groups are on the road from the camp to Sussex and it isn't safe for women or girls to be driving alone. Last week one of my neighbors daughters was driving alone and two of four fellows asked for a ride and she refused, of course, so they stood in her way where she couldn't turn out without going in the gutter or hit them.

Now please Mrs. R. won't you intercede for we Mothers here. And we shall be more than grateful.

Mrs. Chambers  
R.F.D. 1

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Note also the following telegraph from the Judge and Sheriff of a California community: "ADVISE WHY MEN FROM THE CCC CAMPS ARE ALLOWED TO COME INTO TOWN TO PILFER AND STEAL INSULT OUR WOMEN DISTURB CHURCHES AND TO BE ALTOGETHER A MENACE TO THE COMMUNITY PLEASE LOOK INTO THIS MATTER AS THE PEOPLE ARE GETTING MIGHTY TIRED OF SUCH CONDUCT."<sup>19</sup>

Such letters and telegrams were typical. Of 234 total negative letters from community residents, 36 (15.4 percent) were related to enrollee misconduct (Table 2). Enrollee misconduct was the fourth largest category of complaint correspondence. The frequency of references to enrollee behavior

and community relations from a wide variety of sources is striking, for example: "The Chaplain said he would like to bring one matter to the attention of all -- the conduct of boys in town when on recreation trips. He thinks that this conduct has improved but that we should all work toward still greater improvement. The Officers, the Technical Service, and the Advisors should carefully watch their language as they associate with the boys."<sup>20</sup>

The chaplain's comment warning staff to "watch their language as they associate with the boys" was naive. The CCC "boys" were, for the most part, not so young and innocent. On occasion enrollees were implicated in serious crimes, including arson, grand larceny, and murder. By today's stand-

ards, a great deal of violent behavior was absorbed in many communities. Accounts of fighting at town dances were characteristic. Clare Hendee, a former CCC administrator, has verified the prevalence of these incidents.<sup>21</sup> Fights were often taken in stride by the town, looked upon as normal behavior for a bunch of young men who had been out in the woods all week. But there were times when violence went too far and townspeople reacted. In extreme cases, CCC enrollees and personnel were no longer welcome in town.<sup>22</sup> As a national program, the Civilian Conservation Corps escaped serious consequences of enrollee misconduct,<sup>23</sup> but this variable nonetheless influenced camp-community relations at the local level.

**Local Staff.** With the scarcity of jobs during the Depression, the CCC's impact on local employment very likely played an important role in camp-community relations. CCC officials recognized this issue from the beginning: "Fechner, all members of the Advisory Council, and all cabinet members involved except the Secretary of War warned the President that unless the CCC provided work for these unemployed woodsmen, the local populace would resent the incursion of outsiders to do the work usually done by local men. Incendiarism, they feared, and even 'personal tragedies' might result."<sup>24</sup> To ameliorate this threat and help establish positive relationships between the camps and nearby communities, the CCC adopted a policy of hiring 'local experienced men' (LEMs): "To the 250,000 recruits a special group of approximately 25,000 older men was added. These were 'local experienced men,' residing in the immediate vicinity of the work projects and selected because of their special knowledge of the work to be done. It was expected that they would exercise a wholesome leadership over the younger men, and in general insure a hospitable local attitude toward the camps."<sup>25</sup> Local ties were established primarily through the hiring of LEMs. In the beginning, no quotas were im-

posed on hiring of LEMs and some CCC companies enrolled large numbers. One observer reported that "fifty companies were made up entirely of LEMs."<sup>26</sup> By 1935, LEM enrollment in the CCC was limited to 16 men per camp.

In spite of the effort to hire locally, complaints were heard about the CCC taking away local jobs.<sup>27</sup> In general, however, more local residents complained because of the political nature of LEM and other CCC appointments.<sup>28</sup> Still other complaints arose around the issue of employing unionized tradespersons to construct and maintain the camps. Altogether, issues related to jobs for local citizens represented an important variable in camp-community relations. Among complaints from communities received by the director's office, 27.3 percent dealt with employment of local citizens (Table 2). This was the largest single category of complaints. Moreover, many of the positive letters from communities which requested to keep or obtain a CCC camp (Table 1) cited the beneficial impact of the camps on local employment.

**Work Project.** The CCC was not a "make work" organization; the camps generally engaged in useful work projects. Overall, the contributions of the CCC to conservation of natural resources and park development were impressive. And there is reason to believe that local community citizens recognized the impact of these projects -- usually positive, but sometimes negative -- and that the work projects themselves influenced camp-community relations to a significant extent.

In the sample of community correspondence (Table 1) it is striking that over 12 percent of the letters were devoted specifically to suggestions of work projects. An additional 64 percent of the correspondence requested to obtain a new camp or keep an existing camp and these letters almost invar-

ably discussed the importance of a particular work project. Community complaints (Table 2) provide further evidence. Over ten percent of complaints were related to negative effects of work projects, the fifth largest category of complaints. In general, evidence is consistent and fairly strong that work projects were associated with camp-community relations.

There is another aspect of this variable which merits attention -- emergency and disaster relief projects. CCC camps engaged in emergency projects as needed, including fire fighting, winter storm rescue, and flood clean-up efforts. According to CCC records, six million man-days were devoted to fighting forest fires and two million additional man days were devoted to emergency work other than fighting forest fires.<sup>29</sup> The public was favorably impressed by these efforts, for example: "Southeastern Oklahoma sustained great loss during the past summer as a result of forest fires. The personnel of the CCC camps located in that section of the state rendered valiant service in controlling such fires."<sup>30</sup> "The CCC was relied upon as a great search and rescue organization and constantly received requests to help law enforcement officials in one way or another . . . As might be expected, the emergency activities of the camps did much to create enthusiasm for the program."<sup>31</sup> "The CCC was always ready in time of need to lend the aid of both men and equipment whether the emergency took the form of a lost hunter or child, flood, hurricane or fire. It was the emergency service as well as work on projects large and small, which played an important part in gaining approval for the enrollees by the people of the nation."<sup>32</sup> Also, many of the regular work projects were aimed directly at community needs. In this regard, CCC camps had some flexibility. "There were few handcuffs on project selection,"<sup>33</sup> which served ultimately to enhance camp-community relations.

**Camp Spending.** As former CCC administrator Clare Hendee has observed, "Money for local business was the most important factor. The towns needed the money."<sup>34</sup> There is convincing evidence that camp spending in the nearby towns had a very significant influence in camp-community relations. Estimates of the total amount of spending by a CCC camp in the surrounding area have varied. Two estimates are shown below:

- (1) "An estimate of about \$25,000 to \$30,000 is conservative for the amount pumped annually into the economy in the vicinity of each camp. The total payroll at each installation, the major portion of which probably was spent nearby, was over \$16,000 annually, while over \$13,000 per year was disbursed for food."<sup>35</sup>
- (2) "An average camp cost nearly \$20,000 to build and at least \$5,000 a month was spent in the nearby towns to maintain the camp. Money spent by the officers and enrollees could easily yield another \$2,000 to the coffers of the business communities each month."<sup>36</sup>

Thus, an individual CCC camp directly generated between \$25,000 and \$85,000 annually in local spending. The larger figure is probably more accurate. The direct and indirect effects of this amount of money during the Depression years was substantial. "In some of the smaller rural communities . . . the money circulated as a result of the CCC was about all that was available."<sup>37</sup> "Small towns, especially isolated ones, enjoyed a spectacular boom in sales and employment when a camp was established nearby."<sup>38</sup> Researchers who have taken a close look at the CCC in limited geographical areas have noted the central role of the Corps' impact on the local economy. The following example captures the essence of the reaction to the CCC on the part of many communi-

ties: "Although some Provo citizens showed reluctance to accepting a camp in Provo, the majority agreed with County Commission Hilton J. Robertson who reminded his colleagues of the cash benefit of the enterprise."<sup>39</sup>

Correspondence to the director's office emphasized the importance of camp spending. Some of the letters which requested to obtain or keep a camp mentioned the importance of the CCC to the local economy. But it is more instructive that most requests for camps came from local Chambers of Commerce, commercial clubs, or other alliances of business persons. A typical example is a letter from the secretary of the Albia, Iowa, Commercial Club to Senator Murphy. This letter was devoted entirely to the need for soil conservation work in the area, but the Commercial Club letterhead more accurately revealed the writer's primary interest -- local commerce.<sup>40</sup>

Looking at complaint letters from communities, 17.5 percent of such letters dealt with some issue related to camp spending, such as not purchasing supplies locally, damage to local business, camps not taking competitive bids, or businesses not paid for services to the CCC (Table 2). This was the third largest category of complaints, ranking above enrollee misconduct and work project complaints. The large number of complaints related to business matters further supports the view that camp spending was strongly related to camp-community relations in the CCC.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The variables most clearly associated with camp-community relations in the CCC were the two economic variables -- hiring local staff and camp spending in the community. The effects of these variables were direct, unambiguous, and usually strong enough to overcome other influences. In the

case of new camps, the positive effects of the economic variables were sometimes delayed a few months, but once a community began to feel the economic impact of the CCC, a cooperative attitude generally developed. Both employment and increased commerce were important. The CCC, above all else, was welcomed by local communities because jobs and cash flow were desperately needed. Economically, the local response to the CCC was exactly what Roosevelt intended and John Maynard Keynes later recommended: government spending served as a significant stimulus to the depressed local economy.<sup>41</sup>

Also influential, but at a second level of importance, were the CCC "activity" variables, work project and enrollee behavior in town. CCC work projects were valued when they addressed local needs, such as a new road, fire protection, or erosion control. Emergency and disaster relief projects were especially valued in this regard. Enrollee conduct--or misconduct--also influenced relations between the camps and nearby towns. By today's standards, a remarkable amount of rowdy behavior was tolerated, but crime and property damage led to strained relationships. Additional data in Table 2 support the importance of CCC "activity" variables. The second largest group of complaint letters was a category of complaints about camp conditions, enrollee welfare, and staff misconduct. Apparently local communities took a keen interest in CCC camp activities. Also, in the two variables--work projects and enrollee behavior--economic themes were again apparent. Public works projects and property damage were issues connected with economic well-being. The shadow of the Depression and the severe hardships felt in many rural communities inevitably caused events to be measured against this standard.

At a third level, only slightly related to camp-community relations, were the two enrollee variables, enrollee race and local en-

rollees. These results indicate that enrollee demographic characteristics were not of much importance once camps were established. This is best illustrated by the enrollee race variable. Although it often has been said that enrollee race was a critical community relations issue in the CCC, a close look at the evidence indicates that community prejudices were a problem only at the beginning of a black camp's existence. Just a few weeks, in most cases, was sufficient for nearby white communities to realize that racial fears were unfounded. With this issue defused, many communities began to discover the economic benefits of having a CCC camp in the vicinity and, in most instances, the stage was set for a mutually compatible relationship. Similarly, there is little evidence that having non-local enrollees in the camps made much of a difference. Overall, enrollee characteristics were superficial issues, while economic concerns were more at the heart of community response to the CCC.

Regarding more ideological interpretations, deep-seated agrarian values may indeed have been a foundation of the CCC's general popularity, but it is not very informative to rely on this conceptualization to explain day-to-day relationships between the camps and nearby towns. These relationships were governed primarily by jobs and cash flow. During the Depression years, economic matters were of immediate concern, while romantic visions of tree planting, although perhaps appealing, did not play a direct role in the relationships between CCC camps and rural communities.

Looking at implications of this study for present policy, two points are worth noting. First is the general point of economic stimulus during severe recession or depression. This study gives us a close-up view of such stimulus and how it was valued at the local level. Between 1933 and 1980, the wisdom of this approach was generally accepted.

With the election of Ronald Reagan, however, an opposing "supply-side" approach has influenced public policy. The supply side view holds that tax cuts and investment incentives are a better formula for recovery. To evaluate these approaches in the context of this study, one would ask what value tax cuts might have been to rural communities near CCC camps in 1933. The answer, of course, is not much. The nationwide unemployment rate was about 25 percent in 1933; and where there is little income, tax rates are of little relevance. Viewing this from the grass roots perspective, it is significant that so many communities wrote to Washington requesting CCC camps, and there was no simultaneous flood of letters pleading for reduced taxes. This is not by any means to say that economic stimulus was the only important aspect of the CCC. At the local level, however, economic effects were, at the time, very important.

Second, because the CCC idea persists in public policy,<sup>42</sup> we might ask what lessons this study offers for a future CCC. These lessons include the following: (1) hire local staff; (2) spend a large portion of the budget locally; (3) engage in projects with direct benefits to the local community; (4) be on good behavior in town; and (5) don't worry too much about initial opposition based on race or other enrollee characteristics; these issues are likely to be overshadowed by economic matters.

It is instructive that many of these same lessons have been relearned in the Job Corps program during the 1960s and 1970s. Especially in rural areas or small towns where economic impact has been more focused, local citizens have recognized that Jobs Corps centers have provided a welcome boost to the local economy. As with CCC camps, local communities has frequently protested when a Job Corps center have been closed or relocated.<sup>43</sup> In larger urban areas, the economic impact of Job Corps has not been as

focused. In this regard, the lessons from the CCC must be somewhat tempered if new programs are to operate in urban contexts. Nonetheless, it would seem to be prudent

policy design to economically integrate any such program at the local level, urban or rural.

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#### NOTES

1. A general summary of the CCC is by John Salmond, The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1967).
2. Arcadia Community Club to Duffy, September 18, 1933, Box 568, Series 300, Correspondence of the Director, General Records, Record Group 33, U.S. National Archives (Washington, D.C.).
3. Helen Walker, The Civilian Conservation Corps Through the Eyes of 272 Boys: A Summary of A Group Study of the Reactions of 272 Cleveland Boys to Their Experience in the Civilian Conservation Corps (Cleveland: Western Reserve University Press, 1938), p. 49.
4. For examples of the romantic agrarian view, see Kenneth Holland and Frank Hill, Youth in the CCC (Washington: American Council on Education, 1942); and Leslie Lacy, The Soil Soldiers: The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Great Depression (Radnor, Pennsylvania: Chilton Book Company, 1976).
5. Salmond, pp. 91-92. See also John Salmond, "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro," Journal of American History 52, no. 1 (1965): 75-88.
6. Kenneth Baldrige, Nine years of Achievement: The CCC in Utah, Ph.D. dissertation (Brigham Young University, 1971)
7. James Hanson, The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Northern Rocky Mountains, Ph.D. dissertation (University of Wyoming, 1973).
8. Barrett Potter, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in New York State: Its Social and Political Impact (1933-1942)," Ph.D. dissertation (State University of New York at Buffalo, 1973).
9. Potter, p. 156.
10. Hanson, p. 173.
11. Larsen to Blood, April 26, 1935, CCC, Blood Papers, Utah State Archives (Salt Lake City, Utah), cited by Baldrige, (1971), p. 338.

12. Kenneth Hendrickson, CCC historian, interview with author (Washington, D.C., May 17, 1978).
13. Johnson to Fechner, September 12, 1935, Box 598, Series 300, Correspondence of the Director, General Records, Record Group 35, U.S. National Archives (Washington, D.C.).
14. Woods to Fechner, August 14, 1935, Box 578, Series 300, Correspondence of the Director, General Records, Record Group 35, U.S. National Archives (Washington, D.C.).
15. George Imes, "Report on Colored Camps in the Fourth Corps Area", November 2, 1936, Box 952, Correspondence of Investigators, Division of Investigation, Record Group 35, U.S. National Archives (Washington, D.C.).
16. Baldrige, p. 136, citing interview with unnamed former CCC company commander.
17. Potter, p. 83.
18. Chambers to Roosevelt, June 11, 1933, Box 956, Correspondence of Investigators, Division of Investigation, Record Group 35, U.S. National Archives (Washington, D.C.).
19. Bonner and Sharp to Fechner, July 12, 1933, Box 568, Series 300, Correspondence of the Director's Office, General Records, Record Group 35, U.S. National Archives (Washington, D.C.).
20. Minutes of a Joint Meeting of Company Commanders, Camp Superintendents and Camp Educational Advisors, June 6, 1936, Camp Watersmeet District, Michigan, U.S. Civilian Conservation Corps, Bentley Library, Michigan Historical Collections (Ann Arbor, Michigan).
21. Clare Hendee, former CCC administrator in U.S. Forest Service, interview with author (Washington, D.C., October 2, 1978).
22. Captain "X" (psuedonym), "Civilian Army in the Woods," Harper's Magazine 168 (March 1934): 487-497.
23. Regarding enrollee misconduct and its consequences, the CCC experience stands in sharp contrast to the Job Corps experience. (The Job Corps is a job training program for disadvantaged youth which began in 1964). CCC enrollees were clearly more violent and committed more crime than Job Corps enrollees, yet the Job Corps has endured a great deal more negative publicity, often for events--such as a fight or a petty theft--which would have gone unnoticed had they occurred in the CCC. There are at least two reasons for this. First, standards of acceptable behavior have undoubtedly changed since the 1930s; in the 1930s fighting often was considered normal behavior for young men, while today it is generally viewed as deviant. Second, the Job Corps has been predominantly non-white and the response of the press to the Job Corps has been racially influenced. If the Job Corps were predominantly white, it is likely that the press would not have paid such careful attention to minor disturbances. Related to this point, it is remarkable that the Job Corps' successes in recent years--which have been substantial--have been virtually ignored by the press. In contrast, CCC successes were well publicized.

24. Charles Johnson, The Civilian Conservation Corps: The Role of the Army, Ph.D. dissertation (University of Michigan, 1968), p. 100, citing joint letter to Roosevelt, April 22, 1933, Record Group 35, U.S. National Archives (Washington D.C.).
25. "Selection of Men for Civilian Conservation Corps," Monthly Labor Review 40 (May 1935): 1162-1169.
26. Johnson, pp. 100-101.
27. For example, see Hanson, pp. 328-330.
28. Salmond, pp. 105-106; Potter, pp. 57-58.
29. U.S. Civilian Conservation Corps, Final Report of the Director of the Civilian Conservation Corps (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Civilian Conservation Corps, 1942).
30. Weaver to Fechner, Box 598, Series 300, Correspondence of the Director, General Records, Record Group 35, U.S. National Archives (Washington, D.C.).
31. Baldrige, p. 343.
32. Potter, p. 150.
33. Ralph Conroy, former CCC enrollee and Job Corps administrator, interview with author (Washington, D.C., May 17, 1978).
34. Hendee.
35. Potter, p. 77, calculating from information in CCC annual reports.
36. Baldrige, pp. 327-328.
37. Baldrige, p. 328.
38. Hanson, p. 312.
39. Baldrige, p. 77.
40. Lundy to Murphy, March 10, 1936, Box 568, Series 300, Correspondence of the Director, General Records, Record Group 35, U.S. National Archives (Washington, D.C.).
41. Roosevelt was essentially following Keynesian economic policies before Keynes published The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money in 1936.
42. The CCC idea is one of the more tenacious public policy ideas. The various youth "corps" created during the 1960s and 1970s have been political grandchildren of the CCC. These have included the Peace Corps, Job Corps, Neighborhood Youth Corps, Youth Conserva-



tion Corps, and Young Adult Conservation Corps. Several states also have experimented with conservation corps programs, the largest of which is the California Conservation Corps. At this writing, there is under consideration in the Congress a bill to establish an American Conservation Corps. (This bill is very actively lobbied by the National Association of Civilian Conservation Corps Alumni.) In a broader application of this idea, there recently has been renewed interest in a national youth service (or simply, national service), which would provide opportunities for a wide variety of service projects in areas such as disaster relief, social services, education, urban development, etc. A policy analysis is provided by Michael W. Sherraden and Donald J. Eberly, eds., National Service: Social, Economic, and Military Impacts (New York: Pergamon Press, 1982).

43. Vincent Jerome and Joseph Hines, Staff, Office of Youth Programs, Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, interview with author, Washington, D.C., August 11, 1978.