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## Shovels and guns: The CCC in action

James Lasswell

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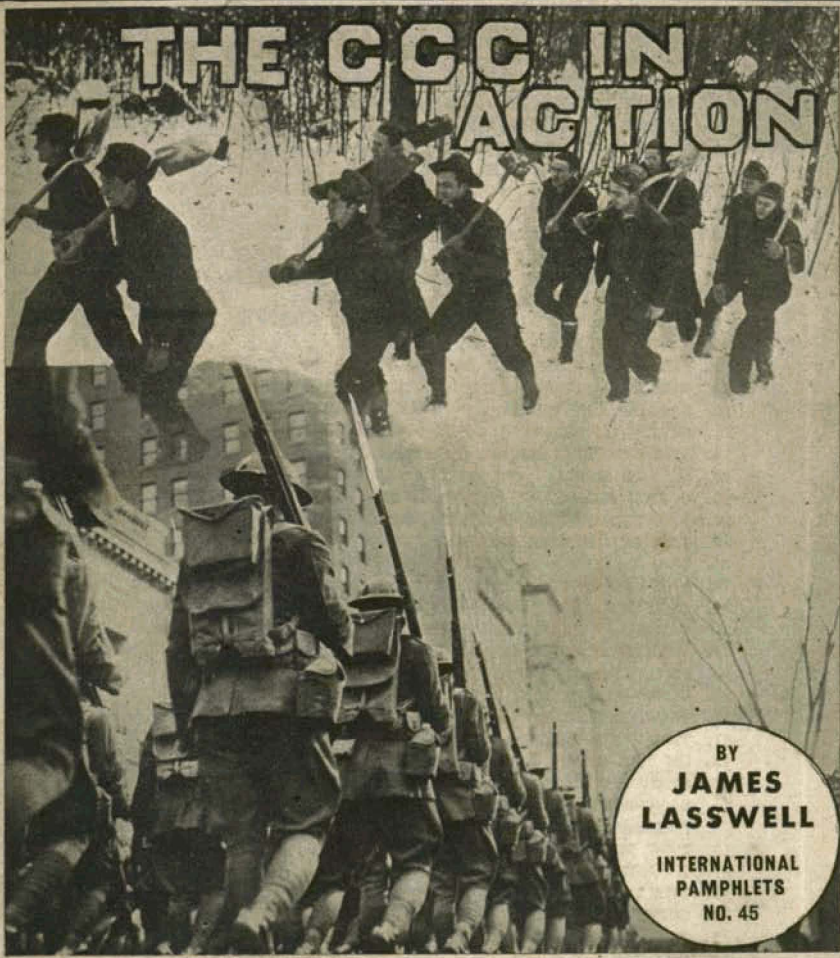
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# SHOVELS



## THE CCC IN ACTION

BY  
**JAMES  
LASSWELL**

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## SHOVELS AND GUNS

### *The CCC in Action*

BY JAMES LASSWELL

Preventing the decadence of American manhood is a problem of national military and economic concern.

—*Brigadier-General Pelham D. Glassford.*

The CCC is one part of the New Deal that we can all heartily approve and it can be made a most valuable aid to that "reintegration of our social life" at which the New Deal professedly aims. Let us make it part of our new social order.

—*Wall Street Journal.*

The CCC may be the embryo of a future system of compulsory economic service for the young men and women of the country.

—*The New Dealers.*

SINCE October, 1929, more than 12 million young Americans have reached the age of employability. This vast human reservoir has been allowed to waste itself under the brutalizing influences of a decaying social order. Unable to grant all but a few millions the elementary right to useful work at decent wages, our society has regarded this rising generation with fear and hostility. America's homeless youth have been described as "the type of sans-culottes who are the first gust of the revolutionary storm" and therefore a menace to the country's "stability."

In the dying days of the Hoover administration, Congress considered numerous measures for dealing with jobless youth. One proposed a chain of camps under Army supervision. There was nation-wide protest, and the project was dropped. It remained for Roosevelt's "New Deal" administration to revive the scheme and develop it to huge proportions.

Less than three weeks after his inauguration, President Roosevelt, in a special message to Congress, requested the creation of a Civilian Conservation Corps, "to be used in simple work, not interfering with normal employment and confining itself to forestry, the prevention

of soil erosion, flood control and similar projects." Things moved rapidly. Ten days after the message, the Unemployment Relief Act became law (March 31, 1933). The Act set up a bureau for Emergency Conservation Work with the CCC as its principal activity. In a few days the first recruits were ready for the conditioning camps.

With few exceptions only young unmarried men between the ages of 18 and 25 (the upper age limit was raised to 28 in Spring, 1935), whose families were on the relief rolls, were chosen. The wage for the vast majority (87%) was set at \$30 a month, of which \$25 had to be sent home. Originally limited to 250,000, the strength of the CCC was later increased to 350,000. Each man enrolled, according to *Fortune*, costs the government about \$100 per month: \$30 for pay, \$60 for food, equipment, maintenance and pro rata cost of camp construction, and \$10 for administrative overhead. The bill for the first two years of CCC came to nearly \$700 million.

Out of the \$4.8 billion work relief fund (created in April, 1935), \$600 million, probably to be increased later, has been earmarked for the operation of the camps during the next two years. Their total strength has just been increased to 600,000 youths and there is talk of enrolling a million ultimately.

The CCC is the favorite child of the New Deal. It has rarely, if ever, been attacked by administration critics. Rexford Guy Tugwell, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, hailed the CCC as "one thing in these troubled times of which not even the Republicans complain." At a time when every relief dollar for starving America is scrutinized by the American Liberty League, the Republican National Committee, and the scores of reactionary economy leagues, the steady flow of millions into the CCC has caused hardly a ripple of protest.

Why this special consideration?

### *Breaking Down Prevailing Wage Standards*

The low CCC wage was the first attack of the New Deal against the practice of paying prevailing wages on work relief projects. Business was quick to see the implications of this move. The Whaley-Eaton Service, confidential Washington research bureau serving business men, told its subscribers, March 25, 1933, that "nothing could be more significant than the President's plan to pay a dollar a day

only to unemployed in the reforestation program. It kicks over the whole practice of wage maintenance as applied to relief work. This tends to make a relief scheme practicable, not only from the viewpoint of cost, but also in regard to drawing men from other work into government employ. It is one of the most important decisions the government has yet made."

Vigorous opposition to the low CCC wage developed at the Joint Congressional Committee hearing on the Unemployment Relief Bill. The American Federation of Labor was at first inclined to regard the CCC favorably because it was "stipulated that these workers will take no jobs from skilled men." But as the main feature of the project, including the part to be played in it by the Army, became clearer, the A. F. of L. changed its stand overnight. William Green declared that:

military control and military domination, with its segregation plans transgresses in a very large degree upon the free exercise of labor, and in itself is repugnant. . . . In addition, labor will be greatly alarmed because it will fear that the imposition of a form of compulsory service under military control and army rate of pay will depress and lower wage scales and wage standards paid and established for similar work. . . .

Other spokesmen presented the case of organized labor in similar terms. A. F. Whitney, president of the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen, said that Roosevelt's work relief program "proposes wages that are wholly inadequate and is a vicious attack upon decent standards of living. In other words, it would place the government's endorsement upon poverty at a bare subsistence level."

In the face of this somewhat unexpected opposition, the Administration executed a master stroke. On April 1, Secretary of Labor Perkins appointed Robert Fechner as director of the CCC. Fechner, at the time of his appointment was General Vice-President of the International Association of Machinists of the A. F. of L. His appointment was intended as a move to "smear Green's grandstand play" and to assure the masses that labor standards would be safeguarded in the camps. The American Federation of Labor ceased its campaign against the CCC.

The events of the past two years have proven conclusively that the \$30 a month wage for CCC workers was in effect a declaration of the government's intention to place its "endorsement upon pov-



erty at a bare subsistence level." It is only necessary to mention the hasty abolition of minimum hourly rates on relief projects, and now, with the new \$4.8 billion works program, the fixing of a basic wage scale as low as \$19 a month! The FERA is settling about 1,000 colonists in Alaska and their wage will be "the CCC basis of pay"—\$30 a month. Near-starvation wages for workers on relief is a fundamental policy of the "New Deal."

### *The Army Steps In*

Fechner's appointment still left the question of the Army's part in the direction of the CCC to be decided. The drafting of a quarter of a million men for labor service was a huge task for an administration hardly a month old. There was a good deal of opposition in pacifist and liberal circles to the suggestion of Army control, and the Administration proceeded cautiously.

Under the plan first outlined by the President, the Department of Labor was charged with the responsibility of selecting and certifying recruits while the War Department was to receive certified applicants, give them the usual immunizing treatments against disease, initiate records, issue necessary clothing and organize companies of approximately 200 men each. Thereafter the Army's duty was to transport each unit to the railhead nearest its particular forest project "and there turn it over to the proper Agriculture or Interior officials." The Department of Interior and Agriculture "were placed in control of all other functions, including those of establishing and maintaining work camps and supervising forestry operations."

The preparation of CCC recruits for a two-weeks' stay at conditioning camps began April 7, 1933. Meanwhile the Administration continued to assure the country that the CCC would not be militarized. Frances Perkins was especially vehement in denying that any such illiberal purpose was back of the camps. The U. S. Department of Labor published a pamphlet entitled, "A Chance To Work in the Forests," which replied as follows to the question, "Will the men be under military discipline?": "No. The men will be civilians and will be treated as civilians." Then it added, "there isn't any 'catch' or any 'joker' about it."

But by April 10, says Secretary of War Dern in his 1933 Annual Report, "the President made radical changes in the original plan.

By that time it had become apparent that the establishment and administration of hundreds of camps and cantonments in our national parks and forests represented a task of greater magnitude than could be handled effectively by agencies not specifically trained and equipped for such work. Thereupon the Army was called upon to assume, under the general supervision of the Director, *complete and permanent control* of the Civilian Conservation Corps projects, excepting only the functions of selecting recruits and of supervising technical work in the forests." (My emphasis—J. L.)

It took the Army less than two weeks to realize the vast potentialities of the CCC. The Administration's about-face is said to have followed a "bitter row" and came as a great disappointment to Fechner and to the considerable number of unemployed professional foresters. Here is how *Federated Press* described the Army's "coup d'etat":

While the civilian officials who were in charge of establishing the camps were in conference, discussing details of location and construction and maintenance of the camps under direction of the professional foresters, General Drumm, of the Army general staff, walked in and announced that the President had scrapped all their plans and given the job to the Army. Drumm explained that the military had won control of the camps because they were equipped for the job.

So eager was the Army to get a stranglehold on the CCC that an early graduation at practically all Army service schools was ordered and there was a considerable withdrawal of commissioned personnel from their normal duties. The CCC proved to be a godsend to the Army. The *Army and Navy Register* stated editorially on May 27, 1933, that "the fact that some 5,000 officers are to be employed on the work may prove to be a lifesaver for the Army, and eliminate the reduction in officer personnel which has been impending for some time." To handle the 1,600-odd camps which were established by July 1, 1933, approximately 5,400 regular army officers, including medical officers and chaplains, and 8,000 enlisted men were withdrawn from their regular duties and assigned to CCC activities. This, Secretary Dern says, "necessitated the suspension of much of the peace-time training and of other routine tasks." But the President soon remedied the lack by granting the Army "authority for calling to active duty reserve officers of the junior grade." The



doubling of the number of existing camps has made room for 3,000 additional reserve officers.

### *A Proving Ground for the Army*

There is nothing the Army likes better than to picture itself as a "great peace-time agency." It is therefore important to bear in mind the primary function of the armed forces in the capitalist state—the protection of property from foreign and domestic "enemies." In a revealing and much-quoted article, "The American Army Stands Ready," which appeared in the January 6, 1934, number of *Liberty*, Assistant Secretary of War Woodring made this very clear.

Let me speak frankly! If this country should be threatened with foreign war, economic chaos, or social revolution, the Army has the training, the experience, the organization, and the men to support the government and direct the country in the national interest. . . . Our Army happens to be the only branch of the government which is *already organized and available not only to defend our territory but also to cope with social and economic problems in an emergency*. It is our great insurance against chaos. (Woodring's italics.)

In this work the CCC would have its proper place.

If the Army were so directed, it could organize the veterans of the World War, the CCC men, and through them the administration of emergency relief, into a system of economic storm troops that could support the government's efforts to smash the depression.

This statement has never been openly repudiated by the President, and Woodring is still going around the country advertising the virtues of the Army to Chambers of Commerce.

The War Department protests loudly that the CCC is non-military, but it never fails to justify its control over the camps by linking it to national defense plans. Secretary of War Dern, for example, stated:

Employment of the Army on tasks incident to the emergencies of peace, no matter how great their importance to the general welfare, cannot justify continued neglect of fundamental defense missions. . . . It is true that certain benefits have accrued to the Army through its administration of the Civilian Conservation Corps project. Junior officers in particular have obtained valuable training in mobilization processes and in leadership. Staffs have been enabled to test in a practical way certain phases of theoretical plans. The procurement services have been afforded

opportunity to meet and solve many problems incident to emergency expansion.

To Woodring, "this achievement, the organization of over 300,000 men in the more than 1,500 Civilian Conservation Corps camps, was the first real test of the Army's plans for war mobilization under the National Defense Act as amended in 1920. . . . The CCC *mobilization* is thus more than a great military achievement; *it is a dress rehearsal of the Army's ability to intervene, under Constitutional authority, in combating the depression.*" (My emphasis—J. L.)

Army control of the CCC is only one example of its "ability to intervene, under Constitutional authority, in combating the depression." Under the New Deal the Army has experienced an amazing extension of its power. Army officers sat as government representatives on the code authorities of no less than thirty industries; the Army is in absolute command of several hundred PWA millions; in six states Army officers were put in charge of CWA projects. The power of the Army is growing by leaps and bounds. In Spring, 1935, the Senate voted a record appropriation of \$400 million for the War Department, with authority to increase the standing army from 118,750 to 165,000. The chairman of the House Appropriation Committee, Representative Parks, spoke very candidly in introducing the measure on the floor of the House. "We are sitting on a volcano at home and abroad. We cannot blind ourselves to the menace of radicalism within our borders and to warlike foreign activities."

In these headlong preparations for war or "social unrest"—protection against "internal enemies"—the CCC occupies a major role. The Washington correspondent of the New York *Herald Tribune* was not revealing any secrets when he said on February 10, 1935, that the billion dollar defense outlay for 1935 did not "include the \$600,000,000 for the CCC for the next year."

### *"You're In the Army Now"*

The truth about conditions in the CCC is carefully kept from the American people. Everything possible is done to convince the masses that the camps are virtual playgrounds. After visiting some of them, Roosevelt announced that he wished he could spend a couple of

months in a camp himself. Fechner reported to the President that during an inspection of 125 camps he "did not meet one individual who expressed a derogatory opinion of the organization or its accomplishments. On the contrary, everyone with whom I came in contact made an urgent plea for more CCC camps."

Many boys have a different story to tell. "I've been in jail twice," one of them told the author of *Boy and Girl Tramps in America*, "and three years in a reformatory, and I've lived three months at Sally's [Salvation Army] in Chicago, but that army chain gang was worse than any."

Faced with the insecurity and misery of their homes, many of the unemployed youth of America at first greeted the CCC with enthusiasm. "None of us who joined," a CCC graduate wrote in a recent issue of *New Masses*, "realized just what the CCC was or why it was formed. Many joined as a lark—it would be great fun, and if it got too tough you could always 'go over the hill.' Others needed the dough, while pressure brought to bear by relief authorities caused many to sign up against their better judgment." The military aspect of the project was camouflaged by the government, the servile press and by most social service agencies. More than that. The CCC recruit found himself something of a hero overnight. He was regarded by some admirers as a sort of twentieth century Daniel Boone, forsaking the "cruel city streets" for adventure in the great American outdoors.

W. Frank Persons, World War director of Red Cross home relief and now in charge of the selection of CCC recruits, told a group of relief representatives in Washington that "these peace-time volunteers should be made up of young men of character, men who are clean-cut, purposeful and ambitious—the finest young men that can be found in all the eligible group. Participation in this emergency conservation work is a privilege; the undertaking is one of the most significant experiments ever entered upon by the American government, the best men available are wanted."

Families on relief, who were virtually forced to send their sons to the camps on pain of being removed from the rolls, were lulled into an acceptance of the project. The *Survey*, liberal social work organ, announced in its June, 1933, issue, that "approval of the 'forest expeditionary force' method of handling the problem of the unmar-



ried young man with dependents has been widespread among the relief agencies of states and cities. The greatest difficulty—for there were bound to be some, of course—has been the fear of parents that the project was a new and disguised form of militarism.” How easily people misunderstand! “In a series of bulletins issued throughout April and May, the United States Department of Labor has taken pains to dispose of the bogey.”

The boys get their first taste of army leadership in the conditioning camps, where they drill, march, fall into squads, platoons and columns. At the end of two weeks they are sent to their permanent stations which are usually far removed from their homes. Each camp has four reserve officers, including a physician. There is a civilian work superintendent and an educational adviser, but everyone is completely under the thumb of the Army commander. A bugle calls the boys from their army cots at 6:30 a.m. After roll call, there is breakfast and then they are off for eight or nine hours of work. They are back in camp at 5:00 or 5:30 p.m., and go to bed at 10 o'clock in most instances. No phase of activity escapes the control of the military commander and his assistants.

### *How the Army "Builds Men"*

The Army expresses extreme solicitude for the men in the CCC. “With no desire to inculcate a military discipline,” Secretary Dern wrote to the President last year, “the understanding leadership of Army officers has lifted the head, quickened the pace, given assurance to the approach of practically every member of the corps.” And Robert Fechner, civilian puppet director of the camps, had early made his peace with the military bosses. “Despite the enormity of the work,” he wrote in his recent annual report, “the Army’s tasks were so quickly and efficiently performed that from the first enrollees, for the most part, were happy and enthusiastic over their new life.”

What has been the real nature of Army leadership in the camps? Commanders by and large have ruled and continue to rule by force. To teach obedience is their primary task. Every attempt on the part of the boys to voice their grievances against bad or insufficient food, against back-breaking work under any conditions, against arbitrary actions by camp officers, has been ruthlessly suppressed. The

Army does not know any different methods of dealing with men and it is not likely to learn any.

In an illuminating article in *Harper's* (March, 1934), "A Civilian Army in the Woods," Captain X, the author, describes the handling of a typical case of "insubordination." Instructions were given one day to move bunks in order to separate boys hailing from the same town. Seventeen, led by three enrollees, objected and told the Captain as much. His reply was:

There are a lot of good reasons, but I am not going to give any of them. I am simply telling you to move. If you don't want to move, you can have your discharge right off and go home on the train this afternoon.

The boys decided to stay and the bunks were moved. But the incident was not over.

Beginning next day, for three days in succession, one of the three ring-leaders was assigned work in camp as the others went out into the woods. He was then called to headquarters, discharged, put on a truck, sent to the train, and started home. As each succeeding day, another man was missing when crews returned from work, the peril of the administrative axe became very impressive. Suspense was acute, who would be next? Reformation was complete. There was never again any insubordination in Camp. Discipline had come to stay.

The Army's insistence on obedience and duty is supposedly justified by the long-awaited emergency for which the boys are being "conditioned." The commanding officers cannot forget for a moment that today's "civilian" camp unit may tomorrow be turned into a squad.

The citizenship training which the boys receive as part of the educational program is directed toward this end. It is significant that the educational work in the camps is under the direction of the War Department. The Office of Education merely serves in an advisory capacity.

#### *Food at 37½¢ a Day*

The daily food allowance for each man in the CCC is figured at 37½¢. Considering this measly allowance and the fact that the camps are usually in isolated spots, it is easy to understand why

the boys are unanimous in their condemnation of the food they receive. Here is a typical statement by one of them:

"How do they feed you?" That's the first question I always get. There is one word that accurately and adequately describes the food—lousy. Despite the fact that the ration allowance per man is 35 cents, there are flop houses in Pittsburgh that serve better meals than the mess sergeant puts out. . . . They are always the same, and after you get used to them you don't notice whether they're good or bad. You accept them as a matter of course. . . . If anyone ever attempts to tell you that the CCC boys are well fed, *ask them why the officers don't eat the same food.*

A worker who spent some time in a North Carolina camp declares that the food "is putrid and when we had oyster stew only 75 of the 250 in the camp went in to eat. Many of the fellows have a disease called 'whirl-worm' and we are given no treatment for it. I have it on two of my fingers and it is starting to break out on another."

One of the sorest spots in the experience of the boys is the matter of lunches. George Scudder, co-author of "The Young Go First," a realistic play of life in the CCC, tells us in *Fight*:

Half the camp would be on a long-distance work job. Cold lunches were prepared to take along. The other half of the camp worked nearby and came in for a hot meal. State superintendents, greedy for more men on the job, cut the kitchen squads to the bone. The kitchen squads as a result found it difficult to prepare two separate lunches. One lunch was thrown together haphazardly.

Food being what it is and with medical service inadequate, the boys have a dread of taking sick.

Regardless of how bad the food is, regardless of how miserable working conditions are, every CCC learns one fact early—don't get sick. Why? Because regulations may look very strict in *Happy Days* (the official propaganda organ of the CCC) but in actual practice there is really no care at all given to safe-guarding the health of the boys. Aspirin tablets and salts are the only remedies on hand. Every camp has a doctor, but he's seldom around. The main work is done by two first-aid men—CCC's whose medical experience, to say the least, is extremely limited. Colds, diarrhea, cuts, bruises, frozen feet in the winter, are perhaps the worst ailments. Pneumonia is also common, resulting directly from poor care given to patients with colds, grippe or other illness.



## *Hazards on the Job*

Although the CCC boasts about the good health of the men and the sanitary measures introduced, we learn from Harry Barrett, CCC Commissioner, that "the death rate reported at this time (December, 1933) is probably nearly twice as great as that in any other service of the government." He explained it by saying that "young men take chances." Up to December, 1933, 234 fatalities occurred in the camps.

Is the high death rate caused by the fact that the "young men take chances" or by the unusual hazards on the job? Let the boys testify on this:

At first no one was expected to do any great amount of work. Not for a buck a day. But little by little, bit by bit, the bosses (state foremen) began to put on the screws. Each day we were pushed a little faster and expected to do a bit more than the day before. Rivalries between the crews were encouraged in order to get more roads built, or more brush cut and burned. When I left the speed-up was just as much a part of the works program of Company 329 as it is in the mills and factories. In order to get more wood building done the double shift was inaugurated.

And this from another enrollee:

In the beginning work consisted of building fire-breaks, trails, tree planting and fighting forest fires. Most of the boys had never handled axes or mattocks before. Accidents began to happen. Boys were brought in to the first-aid tents with ugly gashes in their legs, ruptures galore, broken arms and fractured skulls. Base hospitals had to enlarge their quarters to take care of them. I visited one, and wandered down row after row of sick and battered boys, moving restlessly under the covers and exchanging sad reminiscences. Forest-fires brought new injuries. We were singed, splintered and sometimes caught under trees. For a straight shift of thirty-six hours we were rewarded with six hours off! When complaints arose we were put off with promises and lies.

The Act creating the CCC provides that no "discrimination shall be made on account of race, color, or creed." Jim-Crowism is practiced widely in the camps. This is done, in part, to forestall the building up of solidarity among the white and Negro workers. Following a strike of Negro and white youths against conditions in a Kentucky camp a separate camp for Negroes was immediately

set up. One Negro worker was discharged from the CCC in September, 1933, for refusing to fan a white Army officer.

Such is one picture of conditions in the camps as it emerges from the accounts of the boys themselves. The aim of the Army is to run the camps as cheaply as possible and to train the boys to live under any conditions. George Durno, a Washington newspaperman, makes this clear:

The boys in the forest army do not drill, but they get vitally important physical training and discipline under the direction of army officers. They learn how to live together in large numbers under all conditions, which is the vital point of military training.

### *Revolt in the Forest*

In spite of the iron hand ruling most camps, the CCC boys have struck back at their military masters. Their struggles have taken many forms. In most cases they have been of a spontaneous and unorganized character and represented the natural reaction of the boys against military discipline, bad food, and inhuman working conditions. Desertions were extremely frequent during the first period of the camps' existence. It is reported that practically 100,000 of the first recruitment left the work camps and army bases before their term of six months was up. In some cases as many as one-half of a camp's population deserted. "There were 206 in the camp when I came," a worker writes. "Inside of only two weeks there are only 100 left. Most of the men either deserted or were discharged for protesting bad conditions." A large number of boys deserted from Camp Devens, Massachusetts, after refusing to pledge to bear arms in the next war.

Thomas Minehan, author of *Boy and Girl Tramps in America*, met some of the deserters on the road and got their reactions to the camp. "In March, 1933, all boys would have enlisted with enthusiasm—save for the objection to war service. Three months later the conservation camps were being called 'prisons'; five months later they were referred to as 'army chain gangs'; ten months later as 'Roosevelt roosts.'"

Strikes have taken place in the camps in nearly every section of the country. These have in some instances succeeded in forcing concessions from the military administration. One of these concessions

is the recent introduction of Camp Councils "freely" elected by the boys. A policy of ruthless suppression has been followed in dealing with protests and the military knew only too well how to raise the Red scare. Every attempt to bargain collectively is interpreted as a "mutiny" instigated by outside "agitators." Expulsions have been extremely frequent. But this has not kept the recruits from standing up against the bosses in uniform.

One of the most significant concessions won was the improvement in the food in Summer, 1934. Since that time, however, there has again been a turn for the worse in the food situation.

At times the action of the boys takes a desperate form, showing the depth of their resentment against their peonage. An incident like this occurred in Worcester, Mass. Two hundred and fifty workers were being transferred from Maine to Virginia and Maryland camps. As the transport train passed through Worcester, the youths, in protest against their forced removal, "belabored their officers, locked them in the baggage car and thwarted all attempts to move the twelve-car troop train for three hours. . . . A riot call brought 150 policemen to the yards of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad. The arrival of police sobered the demonstrators, and the army officers, several of whom the train conductor said were badly beaten, asserted they could take care of any further trouble." (*New York Times*, November 7, 1934.) Following this, the press clamored for stricter discipline in the camps. The Worcester *Telegram* commented that "such a riot could not occur in any military organization."

A number of strikes have been led by the CCC Boys Protective League which was organized in 1934 as a mass organization within the camps. Since its establishment it has developed five camp committees, of which three remain today. The CCC Boys Protective League has led camp struggles and issued leaflets and camp papers. Its program includes the following points:

1. Increased base rate of pay to \$45 a month; trade union wages for skilled workers (chauffeurs, plumbers, electricians, etc.).
2. Fifty per cent increase in food allotment.
3. The right to organize and to elect committees. These to be recognized as representative of CCC boys by camp officials.
4. Equal rights for Negro boys in camps and end of Jim Crowism.



5. Compensation for death—\$10,000 to families of deceased. Full wages for permanently disabled, whether received on or off the job.
6. Removal of military officers and military discipline, training and drill in the camps. Against bosses' wars and any military training of CCC's.
7. Proper medical equipment and prompt attention by doctors. Safeguards against accidents, adequate compensation for injuries.

Another effort in this direction is the publication, in the interest of the CCC boys, of a new monthly organ, *Reveille*. The first issue made its appearance in June, 1935, with a national circulation of 25,000.

Although removed from the civilian population, the boys have often attempted to enlist the sympathy of the people in the neighborhood of the camps. At camp 1281 in the South Mountain Reservation, New Jersey, 125 enrollees mutinied against the "degradation of not being treated like responsible human beings" and against being "put to bed like children." They marched into town and appealed for assistance to the citizenry. The revolt was quickly suppressed, but the lesson of mass solidarity could not have escaped the 200 recruits in the camp. The officers blamed it all on "Communism and insubordination," expelled forty who were dubbed ringleaders and fined the others \$3 and \$1.

The general feeling among many of the boys is that they would be the very first to be drafted. As one of them put it: "that's the logical thing. The Army has complete records on us, we are entirely in their hands." It is important to bear in mind, however, that the CCC is not yet completely militarized. The collective strength of the boys has asserted itself successfully again and again. There is need for thorough organization among the boys to push their immediate demands and to oppose all attempts to chain them to the military machine of destruction. The Camp Councils, at present serving in an advisory capacity, should be made truly representative of the rank and file, with full recognition by the camp administration. Similarly, the camp papers can be turned into organs in the interests of the boys, without benefit of the educational adviser.

### *Give Him a Gun!*

Army drill and target practices are forbidden in the CCC, but numerous violations have been reported. One boy writes from

camp: "We are being taught how to shoot. . . . The sergeant told us last night that we might as well get used to the idea that the military training we get will soon be very useful." Another reports: "On the days when there is no work detail, we have to go through army drills which comprise squad movements, flank movements, company movements and some manuals of arms." At Fort Knox, Ky., some 2,000 boys were asked to participate in war games. In a recent issue of *Happy Days*, official organ of the CCC, a sergeant stationed in a California camp writes: "I have a class in shooting every Monday night. We also have different guns for the enrollees to examine. Over the week-end our rifle and pistol range is kept busy by the enrollees."

Meanwhile a section of the press has been preparing the American people for an acceptance of full military training in the CCC. The New York *Daily News* has taken the lead in this campaign. Editorials and articles are written to develop the theme that "normal boys and young men like guns." The government is urged to take the "second step with the CCC"—the introduction of target training.

The CCC has been under Army management. But it has no guns—chiefly because pacifist sentiment when it was created was so strong. . . .

Why not target training for such of the CCC boys as want it? Plenty of them will want it, guns being something all normal boys like. And why not enroll such gun-trained CCC boys in the reserve, so we'll know where to find them when and if we need them?

The *Daily News* complains that it took "us a year to get really into the World War," a delay which could be avoided in the future "by laying the foundation for quickly building up the Army from the CCC."

To bolster its demand for guns in the CCC, the *Daily News* sent one of its reporters to sound out boys in New York and New Jersey camps. The reporter brought back enthusiastic accounts of the men's readiness to learn the use of "rifles, shotguns, airguns—anything that fires real bullets." The articles pointed out carefully that although the conversations with the boys took place in the presence of the military commanders they did not participate in them. Each camp visit brought further proof that the CCC wants guns. But the

tabloid forgot to say that the boys of some camps literally drove the "enquiring reporter" from the grounds!

*Happy Days*, which goes into every camp, is also an ardent advocate of out-and-out military training. It is worth noting that this sprightly paper is edited by Melvin Ryder, *the same man who edited the official organ of the American Expeditionary Forces during the World War*. One of his editorials reads:

Everyone knows the value of military training, and who, recipient of Army discipline, should appreciate it more than the average CCC member. An inability to secure employment conduces to an unruliness, a feeling of unrest, that prevalent among the majority, gradually pervades the entire company. No training can possibly be of more advantage to the reforestation men than military training.

The *Army and Navy Register* agrees with the *Daily News* and *Happy Days* and urges Congress to order army discipline and army training in the camps for one or two hours a day. CCC boys have already been used in manhunts. How long will it be before they are called upon to put down strikes and demonstrations of the unemployed?

#### *After His Term in the CCC*

Over 106,000 men left the CCC during or at the end of the summer term of 1933. All but a thousand were investigated within a few months of leaving the camps, but only 92,000 were traced. The remainder had left their impoverished homes to join the army of homeless youths shifting from one part of the country to another. Many undoubtedly never went home. Some 40,000 out of 150,000 who left during or at the end of the second term could not be located.

What about those who were traced? It was found that 17,926 were working—many presumably in temporary jobs—71,495 were unemployed, and 2,890 were "otherwise engaged." Nearly 78% were thus without jobs after participating in America's "magnificent experiment." Of the 110,000 second-term men interviewed, 36% were working and 60% were idle. The seasonal factor partly explains the higher proportion of employed.

At a conference of CCC educational advisers, held at New York University, in 1935, S. S. Sargent, welfare liaison officer on the staff



of TERA, stated that Utica, N. Y., prospective employers are impressed with the "way the boys were trained." But despite the appeal well-disciplined workers make to employers, the vast majority of CCC graduates remain out of work. Said Mr. Sargent, "All this makes one wonder if we have the right system. What would happen if an American Hitler came along and appealed to the idealism of youth, what havoc he would cause!" The assembly of army officers and educational advisers understood.

At the same session of the conference Howard W. Oxley, second corps area educational adviser, and former director of personnel training for Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey, declared: "I know what they want down in Wall Street," ("This is not for publication"). There they tell him:

We'd rather have your men who've been in camp fifteen months. They work under discipline. When they come to us they don't ask, How long do we work? Not the young men from the CCC, they're tough, these men. Ask Dooley, personnel man for Standard Oil. He'll tell you. So many men today come out of school and they're soft. They say, How long do I work? But not when they go through the CCC.

And he concluded: "The testimony of the camp commander, the camp superintendent and the educational adviser will mean a lot to the youth of America. *When you recommend a man be sure of your recommendations.*" (My emphasis—J. L.)

How long will it be before CCC graduates are hired out to employers as strike-proof workers, with an employer's understanding of "loyalty"—and above all with modest wage demands since anything over a dollar a day would be an increase. Many CCC boys have never known a different wage scale. One of the functions of the educational adviser is to teach the enrollees "job-keeping technique." It is pointed out, said one of them, "that technical skill is not the sole requisite for keeping a job. *Attitude toward the employer and work are just as important.*" (My emphasis—J. L.)

But if our economy has no place for the CCC veterans, the War Department has. General Douglas MacArthur, Army Chief of Staff, thinks they would make excellent cannon fodder. According to an *Associated Press* dispatch, the General told the House Military Affairs Committee that "the young men of the CCC, toughened by work in the forest camps, would make ideal recruits for a short,

intensive training course." It is no longer possible, he said, to consider the young men of the World War suitable for an emergency army. New blood is required. Therefore:

I think there would be nothing finer than that the men in the CCC camps should be used as a nucleus for an enlisted reserve.

I think no method would be finer than to take these CCC men who have had six months in camp and give them, perhaps, two months more, in which they would receive military training. We could enroll them in the enlisted reserve for a certain number of years with, perhaps, a small stipend—say a dollar a month.

The cycle is now completed. Enlisted in a great national re-employment project, the boys are first "toughened" and taught how to exercise "self control" and upon completing the conditioning period they are permitted to join the enlisted reserve. All that is necessary is the "national emergency."

### *A Step Toward Fascism?*

During the past two years the CCC has been an instrument for two related measures: (1) the immediate militarization of a large section of the working class and (2) the creation of a vast training ground and human reserve for the Army. How does the militarization of labor express itself? Through the separation of workers from their families and communities, their segregation in camps where their actions and thoughts are directed by the military, the elimination of all political and concerted economic activity, and lastly the payment of coolie wages. The Army won control of the CCC because the imposition of these conditions could not be entrusted to civilian authorities. Today labor is drafted to work in the forests; tomorrow it may march in companies to work on other projects under the lash of army officers and for the same dollar-a-day.

The purely military phases of the CCC are plainly evident to the most casual observer. Enrollees are unmarried and of military age (18-28). The 33,000 veterans were admitted because they were "demoralized" and because some might be trained as leaders. In constructing 1,700 camps throughout the country at a cost of \$3,000 to \$18,000 each, the Army provided itself with adequate training quarters for the war to come. Much of the "civilian" work done—

harbor and airport construction, etc.—has not been purely for the purposes of fire fighting! The military values of the CCC job are not underestimated by the War Department.

Woodring's statement about the ability of the Army to develop "storm troops" against economic chaos was no empty boast. It is being done under our very eyes and involves not only the 600,000 CCC men, but those in the R.O.T.C., the C.M.T.C. and even the Boy Scout movement. The CCC constitutes to date the largest human reservoir placed in the hands of the Army in time of peace. The Army has been able to work effectively because a smokescreen of demagogy has been thrown about the whole project. The "New Deal" philosophers are doing their utmost to convince the American people that the CCC is—a moral equivalent of war! The CCC boys are invariably described as victims of the city. Their entrance into the camps is referred to as a "renewal" and a "truly American experience." The city is a dangerous place for the youth. Dr. Feder, Germany's Commissioner for Land Settlement, thinks so too. "The modern metropolis," he said on one occasion, "leads to the accumulation of anti-social elements, becomes the breeding place of Marxist agitation." This gives us a better understanding of the diatribes in the CCC propaganda literature against the big, bad cities and the wholehearted praise of the American land.

Is the CCC a step toward Fascism?

Both elements, the militarization of labor and the tremendous extension of the Army's power, are found full blown under Fascism. Nazi Germany too has its CCC. So has Italy and Austria and now France. The Voluntary Work Service, which has now been made compulsory, was begun in Germany in 1925 and "met with a great deal of enthusiasm," according to a prominent social worker. Any young unemployed person from 16 to 25 was eligible for service. In pre-Nazi days the Voluntary Work Service engaged in activities very similar to those of the CCC. But under Hitler the boys drafted for service have become a part of the labor corps of Nazism. This is how the author of *Hitler Over Europe* describes this "corps of semi-slaves":

[It is] robbed of its personal liberty and of its wage, interned in camps, and fed only for the maintenance of its capacity to work, it is the army of semi-serfs. . . . The entire category that here comes into being



is no longer the old working class and no longer a class at all. It is a *corps of semi-slaves* without liberty, without property, without wage, and without the right to think. That is the Fascist solution of the unemployment problem. . . . It has no trade union. . . . It has no ideology of its own and no ideas, but only the service-regulations and the slogans of its overseers. It does not go in for politics, but obeys, works, and amuses itself at official places of amusement. And if it revolts then it comes under mass terror. It cannot defend itself. . . . (Emphasis in original.)

This is a terrifying picture of the degradation of human labor and of humanity itself. But that is Fascism. The CCC has not yet been pushed down to these lower depths. Nothing, however, will prevent the inevitable development except the organized strength of all who are willing to fight for the dignity and liberty of labor as the most essential requisite for a true civilization.

The fight against the militarization and forced labor phase of the CCC is a fight against the growing menace of Fascism in this country. The Youth Section of the League Against War and Fascism has taken a leading part in the campaign against the CCC's military set-up. Other groups which have participated are the American Youth Congress, the National Student League, the Epworth League, the National Council of Methodist Youth, the Young Communist League, and others. The truth about the CCC, which is merely the forerunner of similar projects for the *entire unemployed youth* of the country, must be brought home to every worker, farmer, professional and intellectual. The fight against the CCC is an essential part of the struggle against War and Fascism.

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