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MSU: History

Paper read by Dean R. C. Weems before an educational group, which gives rather fully what M. S. C. is doing during the period of war.

WARTIME ADJUSTMENT IN THE COLLEGES



I know that it is a disappointment to you that Dr. Humphrey is not able to appear before you this morning to talk upon the wartime adjustments in the colleges. He would undoubtedly have brought you a most important message because he has kept in close touch with developments in Washington, and for many months he has devoted much of his time to the study of the functions of Mississippi Colleges in war.

He has asked me to take this place here this morning because I have been connected in some ways with the war program of Mississippi State College and because I have been working with the Mississippi Association of Colleges as a member of their War Council in the preparation of a survey of resources available for war purposes of all Mississippi Colleges.

I must apologize for the fact that I am not well enough informed to speak in detail upon what colleges in general are doing to make wartime adjustments. I do know that Mississippi Colleges as a group are behind the war program a hundred per cent. While doing everything at their command to assist in the war effort, they have gone on record as a body as offering all of their complete facilities to the federal government for the prosecution of the war effort. Not content with that, they are at this moment conducting a survey of all their facilities so that they can suggest to the government what they can best do.

Indeed, Mississippi Colleges are doing so many different things that it would be well-nigh impossible to enumerate them in a brief talk. I believe a few minutes can be spent most effectively by telling you some of the things that have been done at Mississippi State College. I believe that the situation at our institution has been a typical one and that an account of

what we have done and are doing will serve to illustrate the programs in effect at other colleges.

By taking Mississippi State College as an illustrative case, I do not mean to infer in the slightest that other colleges have not done as much. Colleges as a group have been extremely alert to their obligations in war. Of course, in using Mississippi State as an illustrative case, we shall have to bear in mind that many institutions have their war obligations to fulfill in a different way. All girl institutions, liberal arts colleges, private, and denominational colleges naturally have followed different patterns. However, in general the colleges have responded similarly to the war emergency.

At Mississippi State College, as early as July, 1940, Vocational Defense Training work was established in cooperation with the State Vocational Board to train men in arc welding, machine shop, foundry, and drafting. This work utilized virtually all of the excess facilities of the college then available. The program has been highly successful and has since July, 1940, turned out over five hundred skilled workers for war industry and is today operating twenty-four hours a day in a continuous program.

As early as September, 1940, the School of Engineering began to establish training courses, both on and off the campus, for the training of engineering. These courses were offered with the cooperation of the United States Office of Education. This program was later expanded to include Science and Business Administration and to date has trained over 3,000 students.

Immediately following Pearl Harbor, Mississippi State College altered its policy of education as usual. Agreements were drawn up with the Navy for assisting in the training of naval flying officers, regular naval officers, and apprentice seamen. They specified certain courses which were to

be offered to these men who were members of the Naval Reserve. Similar cooperation was established with the Marine Corp Reserve. The Civilian Pilot Training Program which was already in operation in a limited way was expanded further. A war Service Committee, of which President Humphrey was chairman, was established. This committee consisted of representatives of all branches of the college including persons in charge of water, food, sanitation, power plants, dormitories, and traffic. The purpose of this committee was to cooperate with all local and area defense agencies and especially with the Office of Civilian Defense. Responsibilities for all types of emergencies were definitely established and, should the need arise, this organization can be instantly mobilized for the protection of the college and assisting in the protection of adjoining communities. War Bond Drives were conducted by the college in cooperation with Oktibbeha County, and the ten per cent quota was quickly pledged.

It did not take long to realize that these efforts, although extremely important, had to be supplemented by a more aggressive college war program. There followed the adoption of a twelve month continual education plan whereby a student by making use of his summer vacation, and his spring vacation, and a part of his Christmas vacation would be able to accelerate his education by approximately fifty per cent. Three semester's work could be taken in a year instead of the usual two. The additional semesters became a part of the regular college year. It was in no sense a "Summer School", the full staff remained on duty. The success of this plan has been demonstrated by the fact that at no time throughout the summer has the enrollment fallen below one thousand students. In January of this year, as many Mississippi State College students will be graduated as in a normal June.

Next upon the list of wartime actions was the establishment of compulsory physical education for all students, freshman, sophomores, juniors,

and seniors alike. The results have been most gratifying. Students, while complaining at first, now appreciate the fact that the training we are giving will assist them to become better fighting men. This physical education program bears little resemblance to the old freshman physical education classes which in many cases were too easy. Students engage in some form of hard exercise at least three days a week. Our own Military Department administers some of the classes upon a basis of regular army standards. Others are administered through the Department of Physical Education. Through its Reserve Officer's Training Corp unit, which has been established for many years, Mississippi State College is now graduating officers who are better fit physically at a rate of fifty per cent above that of previous years.

Through its established educational channels, professionally trained men in agriculture, science, engineering, business, and education are being turned out fifty per cent faster and in so much better physical condition as to lessen considerably the job of conditioning them in the armed forces.

During the summer months the college cooperated actively with the Army Enlisted Reserve Program in the recruiting and selection of officer material from among its students. The army will be saved much trouble in the selection of men for Officer Training. Through this ^{AN} automatically functioning committee, those outstanding students who in the opinion of the committee are officer material are recommended to the War Department. This is in addition to the regular Reserve Officer's Training Corps mentioned above which is continually turning out officer candidates. While it had been early foreseen that the war effort could make use of the physical plant of the college, including dormitories, classrooms, and dining facilities; and while invitations had been extended to war agencies to make use of our facilities, it was not until spring that visiting inspectors began to come in large numbers. During the

spring and summer, though, a great many committees and commissions representing all branches of the armed forces visited the college and from these visits there developed several worthy enterprises.

The first of these to be established was the Radio School for the United States Army Signal Corp, which is a joint undertaking among the State Vocational Board, the Civil Service, and the United States Army. Trainees are recruited through the Civil Service and all those in Class 1-A are automatically placed in the United States Army Signal Corp; others go into defense jobs. Approximately five hundred students are now enrolled, and this number will be increased to nine hundred within a short while. Students live in the college dormitories and eat in the college cafeteria and dining rooms. All classrooms are furnished by the college.

A second visiting board from the United States Army Air Corps reported favorably upon a Glider Pilot's School. Already a considerable number have reported and a total of one hundred and fifty glider pilots will be in training within a few days at the Starkville Airport about three miles southwest of the campus. College dormitories, classrooms, and dining rooms will be used by these students.

A third visiting commission representing the Adjutant General's Office worked out plans for an Officer's Training School which will accommodate 750 men and which will open within a month. College classrooms, dining facilities, and dormitory facilities will again be utilized. In these cases just mentioned, all teaching personnel and administrative personnel is provided by the agencies coming to the college, thus leaving the regular college students the same type of instruction to which they have been accustomed. College students will have first choice of dormitory rooms, but those not

needed are made available to members of the armed forces, or to defense training classes. Contracts with some of these agencies call for their taking over the rooms as the college enrollment is reduced by draft and volunteers.

Within the last few weeks as the national policy has become more and more one of a large scale early offensive action, still further steps have been taken by Mississippi State College to make its course of action conform to the pattern. Beginning immediately, all able bodied male students will be required to take eight hours per week of military classes and drills instead of five hours required before.

Students not taking military science will be required to schedule an additional class of a defense nature. Other steps toward cooperating with the new national pattern are being taken. Already, our plans are under way for the elimination of all motions not contributing directly to the war effort. Courses that cannot justify themselves upon a war basis will be dropped from the curriculum. The time for the turning out of a finished soldier or technical man must somehow be shortened still further, and yet we must also find time to give him a larger amount than ever of military training, experience, and body building exercises. Just how we shall meet these additional problems remains to be seen, but if past experience is an indication, I am sure that they will be met by Mississippi State College and our other Mississippi Colleges.