

AMERICANIZATION: A CONSERVATION POLICY FOR INDUSTRY

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The appointment of the Naval Consulting Board signifies a new departure in the preparedness campaign which has been thrilling the country for many months. It signifies the wane of the propagandist movement and the dawn of a constructive program; the supplanting of agitation by action; the routing of denunciation by cooperation.

We are in the future to hear more of industrial preparedness than of military preparedness. We are not only to have more battleships, but to conserve men; not only to increase our production capacity for ammunition, but to steady our labor market to make this possible. No other nation in the world would think itself equipped to give battle, to endure the strain of long campaigns and sieges, to mobilize and train an efficient army, that had the seasonal occupations, the heavy labor turnover, and the employment system that prevails in America. No other nation would be considered efficient that had millions of men in its midst not speaking the national language, not of its citizenship, from whom it asked nothing but manual toil and to whom it gave little but the pay envelope.

We hear much these days of a new term. It is called *Americanization*. We use it rather glibly—it sounds well, but what does it mean? It means somehow or other that America shall profit by what immigrants bring in addition to their labor; it means that along with rights go duties; it means that Americans must give more to the foreigner than a job and a bunk to sleep in; that in some way we must all have a more common understanding of the opportunities and ideals of America; of the meaning of her institutions and liberties; and that we can converse in a common language and stand up under one flag.

Americanizing America is the task and responsibility of Americans. There is no subterfuge, excuse, or sophistry by which



native born sons can escape this duty. Like Mr. Ross and Miss Repplier, many bewail the fate of the American who lives in a tenement or town made unendurable by foreigners, but the custody of America's institutions, liberties and destinies belongs to native born Americans. The trouble is they have found it easier to retreat than advance, easier to move than to change their environment, easier to ostracize than to tolerate and educate their foreign born neighbors. Making money and being comfortable and not seeing the other side of American life has been the easiest way out.

We are face to face with two fundamental propositions in our Americanization movement. Our citizenship toll is heavy in our waste of men. The very essence of preparedness is to keep every man in America in the best possible physical and spiritual condition, and the place to do it is the industry, and the industrial community.

Important as the cities are, the strength of this nation does not rest in the greatest cities. There are east of the Alleghenies some 500 so called munitions plants, upon which we must rely mainly in time of war. Not one is in New York City or Boston. The most vulnerable point in our transportation system is not at the terminal; it is at the various points from which supplies and men must be started with ease and rapidity and carried along, and the coördination of the interlocking systems throughout the country. The Lake Superior copper region may in a moment become more important than any seaport city. We must therefore look to our thousands of industries scattered throughout the land for our fundamental preparedness.

Americanization which looks to the unity of all peoples in America behind America's flag on American soil, so far as it relates to industry, covers three main subjects. Our existing industries have so overgrown themselves and everything else that we have to arrive at our goal chiefly by processes of elimination. In our response to war orders and building of plants we seem in some instances to have forgotten every standard of health, decency and comfort. We build plants without houses for workmen; we build houses without sanitation or comfort; we build towns without streets or government almost over-night; we work men overtime until the symbol of America is the dollar—therefore we have to build our Americanization platform by *elimination*.

The first fundamental proposition in industrial preparedness

is the elimination of the physical toll by such physical construction of the plant as will give the best possible conditions in light, air, freedom from dust, wash and lunch rooms and appliances for preventing and for dealing with accidents.

The second fundamental proposition is the elimination of production tolls by economy in administration, elimination of waste, etc., by the adoption of so-called efficiency methods.

The third fundamental proposition is the elimination of citizenship tolls (because in the last analysis the country pays the bills) by the adoption of methods which will conserve workmen and stabilize the labor market.

The labor turnover in this country in various industries is appalling. Germany would consider it military suicide and France would deal with it as a national disgrace. With our seasonal industries, our indifference to responsibility for dovetailing, our methods of employment, we find the average industry employing anywhere from two to five men to keep one at a cost of \$30 per man for every one employed. I submit as a fundamental proposition that we cannot use to any great advantage any of our chief Americanization agencies—the school, the naturalization court, the home, the community responsibility, personal friendships or a stake in America—with the man who goes from industry to industry, from town to camp, and who finally comes to regard the saloon as the one agency adopted to his needs and always open. By our present system the immigrant peasant who has lived all his life in his home village, becomes the itinerant workman of America and the greatest of our state “trotters.”

We shall never stabilize the labor market by legislation. We may facilitate it by a national system of employment exchanges which may also point the way, but the task is to be done in every small industry and every large industry under the spur of economy and in a spirit of national preparedness. The industry must install an employment department under capable management which will enable it to know its men and place them in the first instance effectively throughout the plant. This must be supplemented with a fair system of promotions and transfers based on efficiency records; and dismissals should not be made without giving the employe a hearing and attempting adjustment.

Most important in stabilizing the labor supply is the wide ex-

tension of insurance to include accidents, industrial diseases, health, sickness and service annuities. The basis of securing these is the widest possible education upon the subject of labor turnover—its cost and causes. We need first a campaign on labor turnover as a menace to preparedness which will cause every employer to look into his own status on this subject.

The Naval Consulting Board through its sub-committee on Industrial Preparedness is to secure a census of the industries; to find out what American industry can actually produce in munitions of war; to apply that knowledge in a practical way which will put the plants of this country into the service of the government behind the army and navy; to form "such an organization of skilled labor as will not get off the job when war comes, that will not allow skilled workers to go to the front only to be pulled back later, more or less demoralized, to tasks from which they should never have been taken."

If we agree that with the reduction in waste in employment should go increase in citizenship then we must also know our present resources in men, in terms of how many are unable to use our language, how many are illiterate, how many are ineligible to service because they owe allegiance to another country, how many are below par because of bad housing and other remediable living conditions. Knowing this, we can proceed to the constructive side and find out our capacity for expansion and increased power, measured by the extent to which we change these conditions.

The stand already taken by the Packard Motor Company and other concerns that a knowledge of English or willingness to learn it and to acquire citizenship are conditions precedent to employment marks the beginning of a new era. To the answer that this forces citizenship without preparation I desire to point out the precedent long established by law by which men cannot get employment without their full citizenship papers in Arizona, California, Idaho, New Jersey, Louisiana, Pennsylvania and Wyoming, to say nothing of restrictions in many or most states requiring citizenship for owning a dog or a rifle, for profiting by insurance provisions and for a number of other rights and privileges which we are accustomed to consider open to all.

It is the essence of justice that no man be deprived of the opportunity to earn his living because of lack of knowledge of

English and citizenship unless every facility be provided for learning these and fitting himself for citizenship. It is, however, true that our schools will remain empty, even with compulsory education laws, as in Massachusetts, that our citizenship preparation and examinations will remain in most instances a political farce, until industries make American citizenship their immediate responsibility.

This done, I think we shall find that we need a second melting pot—the civilian training camp. We have found that the industry creates an immigrant colony, and class and social distinctions. The workmen frequently never meet or shake hands with a “real American.” The day’s drill, the camp drudgery, washing the dust off alongside a stream, the dog tent, with their magnificent opportunity for formal team work and informal fellowship may supply the melting pot we have missed. They will certainly give back to industry men of greater value as workmen, and to the country incomparably better citizens.

SOME IMPROVEMENTS IN EXISTING TRAINING SYSTEMS

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“When in doubt blame the public schools.” It is a much easier thing to do and one gets so much larger an audience than when we take up the question—“How about our own training systems in business?” The fact that there is already some appreciation of the need of comprehensive training systems in business, is excuse for the prophecy that they will find their definite and proper place.

Of course some still insist that their training work is only temporary because of the failure of this or that agency to furnish the necessary supply of trained employees. But there are others, and we are finding them more frequently in business today who are constructively answering the question—“Is there not now and will there not always be definite training work for business which