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Constitution

SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM



ITS AIMS *and*
ACCOMPLISHMENTS
ITS FUTURE

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AIRMAIL

TO THE
LOCAL AND DISTRICT BOARDS.

LAST July we were confronted with the necessity of placing 687,000 recruits in mobilization camps just as fast as the factories of the country could furnish uniforms and arms and the building enterprises of the nation could erect the 16 great cantonments to receive them. The time limit was clearly defined. The necessity was pressing. We were committed to the principle of selection. The field of selection comprised nearly 10,000,000 men. Unquestionably, of these 10,000,000 there were some particular 687,000 of them whose taking would least interfere with the industrial and economic life of the nation. But, in the very nature of things they could only have been searched out by examining the whole 10,000,000.

There were two ways to do this. One was to make a graduated classification of men placing in the first class those who, of the whole 10,000,000 could best be spared, in the second class those who could next be spared, and so forth through all the classes. Another way was to make only two classes, but to so liberalize exemptions from the first class as to make it comprise only about 687,000 men. Both methods required more time than we had at our disposal, for we were warned that at about this time of the year the camps would be ready to receive, arm, and equip the first draft. It was very apparent that under

no new and untried system could 10,000,000 men be examined in such a short time. In this state of affairs there was but one thing to do and that thing we did. We established rules for exemption restrictive enough to permit us to produce 687,000 selectives in 10 weeks' time and yet liberal enough to protect industries, farms, governmental organizations, and families from any very great hardship.

Moving breathlessly, supported by the governors of the States and by the members of our selection boards with a patriotism, devotion, and unselfish zeal that remains an inspiration to the Nation, we have accomplished our purpose within the time limits at our disposal.

We are in this war to attain victory. We have taken one great step, but it is only one step. As our military need for men grows so will our industrial need for labor grow. We have hacked the first increment of our armies out with a broadax because there was time for no greater refinement. We must pare future increments away with greater discrimination. The selective principle must be carried to its logical conclusion and we must meet Prussian efficiency with a greater American effectiveness. We must consider the circumstances of all registrants. We must arrange them in the order in which they can be taken with the least disturbance and thus place behind our battle lines sources of recruitment that will furnish men as they are needed. This means a segregation of registrants in classes arranged in the order of their availability for military service.

Scientifically the greater the number of classes the less would be the disturbance to our economic life. Practically and after an exhaustive study of our experience, we

find that the circumstances of registrants cause them to fall quite naturally into five classes.

By the great drawing in Washington the order of availability for all men whose circumstances were equal was determined. We shall not disturb this order unless some great need of the Nation requires it. We shall make four classes of temporary and contingent discharges, but within each class (including the class of those immediately available) men shall stand in the order determined by the drawing.

The unit for classification is the jurisdiction of a local board. The first class in any jurisdiction will meet all calls until it is exhausted, whereupon the second class becomes available.

You have before you a sheet showing the classification that must be accomplished. Without permitting yourselves, for the moment, to be appalled by the magnitude of the task, I ask you to suppose that the 10,000,000 registrants in the United States have been segregated into these five classes. In CLASS I we shall then have, in every community, immediately available for military service single men and a few married men whose removal will not disturb the reasonably adequate support of their dependents. In the industrial and agricultural aspect, we shall have segregated into this class, men who have not especially fitted themselves for industrial or agricultural pursuits so that our only incursion into the labor supply will affect but a small percentage of unskilled labor.

In CLASS II we find men who can be taken without disturbing the support of any dependent and, as I shall presently show you, if the necessity of drawing on CLASS II arrives, we must demand even from agriculture and

industry an adjustment to replace a small percentage of skilled labor affected by the draft—men who, while occupying no pivotal or important position, can serve industry or agriculture better than unskilled men.

Should the pinch of military necessity increase beyond CLASS II, it would mean that the Nation would have to begin to commit itself to hardship and to an adjustment in agriculture and industry to meet the paramount necessity. We take in CLASS III a very small class of persons upon whom others are dependent for support, but we do not break up the closest and most sacred of the family relationships. We also invade the field of agriculture and industry to the extent of taking, in the small percentage affected, men who have specialized themselves or who occupy rather pivotal positions.

In CLASS IV we find the men whom we shall take as a last resort. Before that class is reached it is perfectly safe to say that by the addition of other classes as to age, say those who have attained 21 since registration day and perhaps adding the classes of 18 and 19 and 20 years' old, men, we shall have included two or three million men in our available list, and thus have saved CLASS IV.

CLASS V comprises the field of absolute exempts.

There is one thought that I must impress to eradicate an erroneous view that may be taken of this classification:

We are dealing in the field of labor supply. Presuming that the labor supply of industry and agriculture comprises men between the ages of 18 and 50, and assuming, for the purpose of this exposition, that there are 1,000,000 men of each of these ages, we are dealing with 32 classes, appurtenant to agriculture and to the various industries. The draft affects ten-thirty seconds of this supply or only

about 31 per cent. Therefore, turning to CLASS II, when we find skilled farm labor listed there, it does not mean that when CLASS II is exhausted all skilled farm laborers will have been taken. From these figures, it would seem to mean that 31 per cent of all skilled farm labor will have been taken. But even this figure is misleading. Without the definite statistics that the present draft will eventually afford I can say, I think, that within this class of skilled laborers at least 62 per cent of those liable to draft will be found in classes more deferred than CLASS II by reason of dependents, alienage, and the like. The result is that when we have exhausted CLASS II, we shall have taken only 12 per cent of the skilled labor appurtenant to agriculture. The same figures apply to other industries.

To raise an Army comprising hundreds of thousands of men necessitates an inroad into the man power of the Nation. We are committed to this war and we ought to fight it in the most effective fashion possible to us. The necessity of raising an Army is paramount. The decrease in labor supply must be adjusted in some way other than by shutting off recruitment. That it can be adjusted there is no question. We see what England has done, what France has done, and most of all what Germany has done. The problem is not to maintain the labor supply of agriculture and of every industry intact. It is to make the withdrawal of men in the most scientific manner possible. I think we have done that, and that what is offered here is the basis for a nice balance between our two necessities. I feel that we can go no further. There are those who say that we must win this war in the economic field, with an inference that the raising of an Army is a side issue. I say to you that with any

greater inroads into the field of recruitment of our Army, we shall be sending inferior men to the field. That, if this Nation is not competent to make the slight adjustment necessary to compensate for this scientific selection, then it is not competent to enter this war. A vast production in our farms and factories is necessary. It is necessary in order to support military operations on the field of battle. But certainly no man can urge in this day of trial and sacrifice that this Nation should deliberately neglect to make itself effective in the field of military operation on the plea that our greatest contribution to the cause of humanity is in attaining an economic supremacy. To do so would be to relegate the United States to the rôle of sutler of the fighting nations. We shall, of course, increase our production. We shall become more and more effective as a Nation and we shall supply our new armies and do all that can be expected of us to supply the armies of our allies. But we shall not, under that guise, confine our participation in this conflict to the baking of bread and the sharpening of the swords of other men. This war will be won militarily on the devoted field of France. Doubtless it will be won by the side which is able to place behind its army the prevailing ounce of provision. But the blow that shatters the German line and extinguishes autocracy from the face of the earth will be the blow of man's right arm and not the insidious stroke of a shrewd trader.

Our Selection Boards have done a great thing for this Nation, but they must do a greater thing. The task accomplished is scarcely one-tenth the importance of the task which remains before you. For this great work there stands here a national system, called into being

three months ago and erected almost like Aladdin's palace, in a night. There are nearly 15,000 members of local and district boards. With their assistants there are considerably over twice that number of persons engaged—a greater numerical force than is contained in a combatant division of soldiers. They are pioneers. They have blazed their own path. They are trained in the work and familiar with the law. They have become an essential and highly specialized and important part of the war organization of this Nation. The Selective Service System is as essential to that organization as is the Army which it produces. It is the balance between the military and the industrial need of the Nation and stands as a source of supply to one and a shield of protection to the other. It can not be replaced. Any break in its ranks would be an act of even greater harm to the Nation than accrues when a soldier abandons his regiment or a sailor his ship. It would be as inexcusable to dismiss, disrupt, or replace this organization as to attempt to replace or dismiss a division on the field of France. Most of you are without the military age yet you may canvas the field of all that you could have done to serve you country outside of the fighting forces and you will find no more valuable thing than what you are doing.

The examination of the first 2,500,000 registrants has taken you from your occupations and the winning of your daily bread. No one knows better than I the burdens you have borne under our new and necessarily crude system.

As we built and bolstered during the early organizational period I would shudder whenever necessity demanded that I send out to the overburdened boards

new rulings, amendments, orders, and yet it became clearer and clearer that we must retain the services of all for this new and greater task.

The conclusion was overwhelming. The whole system must be revised in the light of our experience. The burdens must be made bearable—the lives of members of Selection Boards livable. I called some members of boards from various parts of the country to Washington and went carefully over the situation. We evolved a new plan for the process of selection.

This brings me to the most pleasurable part of the message I have for you. With all the urgency of your country's call upon you, I feel that if I could not come here with a promise of your deliverance from the overwhelming demands we have made upon you, I should hesitate to ask you to continue, but I think I can demonstrate in a few words that we have removed the burden that you have hitherto borne.

In the new plan 182 forms which served to bewilder both you and the registrants and to increase your work have been abolished. Their place has been taken by 19 which you will be called upon to use. Even this statement gives no idea of the reduction of clerical labor that has been accomplished. For the use of registrants there is a single form, a Questionnaire. The registrant is called upon to answer a series of questions that searches his entire industrial, economic, and family relation. Each set of questions is integrated with the claim of classification to which it pertains. On the face of the Questionnaire is a summary of its contents that almost compels the conclusion to be drawn from it.

The scope of your labor will be reduced to a decision of facts which will be presented for your consideration without a great searching of papers and sifting of obscure and unsatisfactory affidavits. The Questionnaire practically classifies itself. In my opinion your task was rendered burdensome and exhausting by a vast necessity for doing purely mechanical and clerical work. We have obviated this. The burdensome clerical part of your task is absolutely removed from your shoulders.

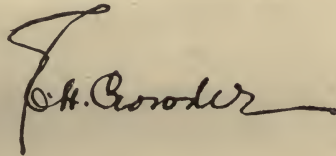
The new method of making physical examinations is another labor saver. Only those persons immediately needed, classified in CLASS I, are to be physically examined now. Others are to be physically examined only when the classes preceding the one in which they have been placed is exhausted. There is no double physical examination before the Local Board. If the examining physician rejects the registrant, or, if the registrant is not satisfied, or, if the examining physician is in doubt, the registrant is to be sent before a medical advisory board reasonably convenient to each local board and composed of about seven specialists who will conduct an exhaustive reexamination, of the results of which there need be little doubt. There is also to be established in each locality, a Legal Advisory Board comprising practically all the lawyers in the community, and this society is to furnish without compensation all information and advice that registrants may require. Local Boards should refer all requests for information and for assistance in preparing Questionnaires to these associations. This, I hope, will relieve one of the most tedious functions of the members of the boards.

I have consulted a considerable number of members of Selection Boards who advised me in the preparation of the new regulations. It is the estimate of all of them that the present method will reduce the work of members of boards by 70 per cent. In this state of affairs, it is hoped that members of boards can attend to this most important duty without making too great an inroad upon the time necessary for them to attend their respective callings.

As I have said, the Selective Service System is an integral and necessary part of this Government, and you, as members of it, are as essential in the places to which it has best served the common good to call upon you as are the soldiers whom you have sent to camp. You are, in effect, a part of the Army of the United States in that you are the sources of its supply. The Nation is rapidly becoming a great system, and if this part of it were disturbed now it is not too much to say that that system would be shattered so effectively that it would take weeks, if not months, to repair the damage. That, I think, is too clear to require further exposition. But there is a further thought that has not yet been emphasized.

We, as a Nation, have learned much in the last few months. We have, in the words of the President, "drawn close in one compact front against a common foe" and we have found ourselves. We have learned the sacrifice that must be made to make our Nation safe from aggression. The duty of citizenship has taken on a new light for all of us and there has been no hesitation among our people in performing that duty. Whether Germany has taught us or whether we have learned it

ourselves, we know one thing so clearly and so well that we will never again have doubt of it. The volunteer method of raising an army for war is gone. It will never return. The principle of selection has been tried and proved by our people. I am led to believe that they approve it with substantial unanimity. If it is good for this time of peril, it is good for all future emergencies. The wonder is that a people so devoted to business efficiency should have hesitated to adopt it. It is of the essence of democracy and national effectiveness. The present method for its expression integrates with our political system so perfectly, responds so smoothly and so well to our dual form of State and National control that it would be calamitous to have it impaired. The principle of selection is established. The system for selection improved as we can improve it must become and remain a permanent part of our governmental system for war. It is a link which binds closer our Union of States and our resulting General Government. It is for this reason that I say that we are standing not at the portals of a past but rather at the threshold of a future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. H. Crowder". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

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