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ORGANIZED LABOR AND ITS FIGHT AGAINST MILITARY AND INDUSTRIAL CONSCRIPTION, 1917-1945

by

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I hereby recommend that this dissertation prepared under my direction by James Russell Sperry
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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

ABSTRACT ................. vii

CHAPTER

I. A WARTIME DILEMMA: THE UNION WORKER AS SOLDIER OR INDUSTRIAL PRODUCER .... 1

II. ON THE PERIPHERY: ORGANIZED LABOR AND DEFENSE STRATEGY BETWEEN THE WARS .... 64

III. THE 'SOWING OF DRAGON'S TEETH': AMERICA EMBARKS UPON PEACETIME CONSCRIPTION .... 123

IV. THE CRUCIAL YEARS: AMERICA WEIGHS NATIONAL SERVICE, 1941-1943 ............ 178

V. LABOR'S GREATEST BATTLE: THE CHALLENGE OF NATIONAL SERVICE, 1943-1945 ............ 230

ANNOTATED LIST OF REFERENCES ............. 287
ABSTRACT

Organized labor in the United States played a unique, but sometimes baffling role during the Second World War. Union workers, affiliated with either the American Federation of Labor or Congress of Industrial Organizations, served in two primary capacities during this twentieth century crisis. They worked to supply the weapons and materials needed to carry out the successful completion of the conflict, and at the same time provided a continuous supply of manpower for the battlefields. Many complex problems developed from this situation which basically revolve around the question of where the American worker could best be utilized, and whether or not the worker would serve his country voluntarily or be sent to defense plants through industrial conscription.

Organized labor feared military and industrial conscription because it believed the draft could be used to destroy trade unionism in America. The problem emerged in 1917 when the AFL opposed Selective Service. Samuel Gompers took the lead in directing labor's opposition, indicating that voluntary recruitment would meet the nation's manpower demands. After Selective Service was enacted, organized labor accepted this as a necessary evil, but
attempted to assure labor rights by fighting for labor representation on local and district draft boards, and preventing the extension of the draft to include the manipulation of America's workers by national service. As the war progressed an informal conscription policy was adopted by Enoch Crowder, Director of Selective Service, when he instituted General Hugh Johnson's controversial "work-or-fight" plan -- a development vehemently opposed by organized labor.

In the decades between the wars labor was primarily concerned with domestic problems. However, the major catalyst for labor's increased isolationism was the fear of conscription. This became particularly evident in the 1930's when the army began unveiling its various Industrial Mobilization Plans, which the trade unionists interpreted as an attempt to destroy organized labor under the guise of defense necessity. Labor-military relations were strained during this period. This was unfortunate because such distrust harmed the effectiveness of defense cooperation in the early stages of the Second World War.

In 1940 organized labor found itself confronted by the Burke-Wadsworth Selective Service Bill, the first peacetime conscription bill in American history. The Burke-Wadsworth Bill, the creation of Grenville Clark, was solidly opposed by organized labor. Eventually Selective
Service was passed when President Roosevelt and his worthy Republican challenger, Wendell Willkie, supported the measure. Labor had decried peacetime conscription as "undemocratic" and a break with American tradition, but its effectiveness was hindered by the fissure between the AFL and CIO.

As early as 1941 leaders of organized labor anticipated that the "logical" extension of the military draft, national service, would soon be pursued. In late 1942 Grenville Clark presented to the President a preliminary draft of a national service bill which could be used to control American manpower. Roosevelt, as was the case in 1940 with the Selective Service Bill, at first refused to endorse industrial conscription. The President followed a voluntary policy, approved by labor, which attempted to utilize Paul McNutt's War Manpower Commission. Extreme pressure was placed upon Roosevelt to change his position. Finally, much to the dismay of labor, the President, in his State of the Union Addresses in 1944 and 1945, endorsed industrial conscription. This time, however, labor presented a united front in its opposition to this form of conscription. A split within the administration, the President's timing and labor opposition all combined to thwart the bid for industrial conscription -- a plan opposed by organized labor from 1917 through 1945.
CHAPTER I

A WARTIME DILEMMA: THE UNION WORKER AS
SOLDIER OR INDUSTRIAL PRODUCER

Organized labor in the United States played a unique, but sometimes baffling role during the Second World War. Union workers, affiliated with either the American Federation of Labor or Congress of Industrial Organizations, served in two primary capacities during this twentieth century crisis. They worked to supply the weapons and materials needed to carry out the successful completion of the conflict, and at the same time provided a continuous supply of manpower for the battlefields. Many complex problems developed from this situation which basically revolve around the question of where the American worker could best be utilized. Eventually the key leaders of labor, business, government, and the military became involved in a series of attempts to settle the multitude of difficulties surrounding this facet of industrial mobilization.

The chameleon-like nature of the wartime problems of industrial mobilization include such diverse topics as industrial deferments, government contracts, governmental administrative machinery, defense considerations, and party politics. This study concerns itself with just two related
aspects of these many faceted considerations. Labor and its fight against the Selective Service Act of 1940, and the Unions' continuous struggle from 1942-1945 to prevent the enactment of a National Service Act which would have resulted in the drafting of workers for critical industrial occupations. In this battle for workers' rights the two major labor organizations exerted time, intellect and money to keep the skilled American worker on the homefront, serving in the locale and job he desired. It was under these circumstances that union leadership felt the organized worker could make his greatest contribution to the war effort. However, the desires of labor did not always coincide with the goals of American military strategy as interpreted by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his military advisors. These considerations form the framework for the remarkable events surrounding this episode in American labor and military history. Although this study deals primarily with labor's role in this conflict of purpose, a secondary consideration necessitates an examination of President Roosevelt as the major formulator of wartime labor policies. The strategic decisions with regard to wartime mobilization were sometimes humorous, often bitter, but always complex. Perhaps this is why after both the world wars the critics of American military and industrial mobilization have been so reluctant to offer specific solutions to the problems faced by the
nation at war.¹

The problem of which functions the worker should fulfill with respect to military obligations and production necessity was not unique during World War II. In various ways it has influenced military thought throughout American history. During the colonial period, for instance, workers in essential industries were not forced to serve in the militia even though in theory all of the Colonial governments subscribed to universal conscription.² As early as 1639 the Massachusetts Bay Colony exempted fishermen, ship carpenters, and millers from military service.³ This heritage was significantly strengthened during the period of the Revolutionary War. Workmen in essential war industries were exempted from military service, although this practice varied from colony to colony and never reached the proportions of a blanket deferment.⁴ Usually the deferments were the result of a military decree. In 1776 General George Washington ordered specific exemptions for workers in munitions


production and those men employed in powder mills. This policy proved adequate to the task. Whenever industrial deferments were not given for essential war tasks, as in the case of the famous Virginia Iron Works squabble of 1780, the consequences proved to be disastrous. Production declined markedly, and necessary weapons were delayed in reaching the front lines.

During the Revolutionary period manufacturers complained bitterly about the arbitrary selection of workmen for military service. They objected to the production time that was lost due to the use of unskilled laborers. To a much lesser degree workmen also protested such compulsory military service. There are no indications that there was industrial conscription during this era, but it seems likely that the deferment policy was similar to the "work or fight" orders formulated in World War I. That is, a worker must remain in an essential war industry in order not to be inducted into military service. It also should be

5. Ibid., pp. 280-281.
6. Ibid., p. 281.
7. Ibid., p. 303.
8. Ibid., pp. 300-301.
noted that wages of skilled workers rose steadily during the Revolutionary period, causing some dissension among the workers who had to serve on the battlefield. This situation was, of course, paralleled in both World War I and II.

In the years immediately following the Revolutionary War the country generally followed a policy of voluntarism that proved effective in the War of 1812 and the War with Mexico. The dictates of this volunteer policy were eloquently outlined by the great New England Statesman, Daniel Webster, in a speech delivered before the House of Representatives 9 December 1814. The 'godlike Daniel' stood with 'anxious and painful emotions' as he decried compulsory military training. The smoldering ruins of the recently sacked lower House provided the setting for this remarkable speech which served in the twentieth century as a key rallying cry for the anti-conscription elements, including some segments of organized labor. Compulsory military service, proclaimed the Massachusetts Congressman, "is incompatible ... with the character of a free government ... a solecism, at once the most ridiculous


12. Ibid., p. 61.
and abominable that ever entered into the head of man."¹³
Military men of a later age condemned the post-Revolutionary
statesmen as incompetent leaders who "had inherited liberty --
not won it," and laughed at the efforts of those politicians
who worshipped "at the altar of voluntarism." But for all of
the shortcomings of voluntarism, the bounties offered men to
enlist in the armed forces and the short enlistment terms
proved adequate to the task.¹⁴ The charge of "characteristic
timidity" levelled at Congress and the Congressional leaders
of this era seems to be a giant oversimplification.¹⁵

During this early national period in American
history Congress passed only one major law dealing with
occupational deferment in connection with military service.
This was an act of Congress passed 8 May 1792 which organiz-
ed a uniform militia system in the various states.¹⁶ Defer-
ment from service in the militia under this bill encompassed
what today might be classified as civil service positions.

¹³. As cited in Emory Upton, The Military Policy
of the United States, Government Printing Office,
Washington, D.C., 1907, p. 87.

¹⁴. Backgrounds of Selective Service, Comment of
Lt. Col. Robert E. Jackson, Jr., p. 61.

¹⁵. American Selective Service, "A Brief Account
of its Historical Background and its Probable Future Form,"
Prepared under the supervision of the Joint Army and Navy
Selective Service Committee, October 1939. Government

¹⁶. Industrial Deferment, p. 5.
Laboring men were not among those deferred.  

The inadequacies of procuring the necessary manpower for military and industrial purposes did not become apparent until the outbreak of the American Civil War. A conflict of this magnitude proved beyond doubt the weaknesses of a system which relied upon state militias and volunteers as the means for recruiting men. Soon after the war began military leaders in the North and South realized these methods could not succeed in the recruitment of the manpower needs of the war. One year after the war began the Confederacy conscripted men, and by 1863 the Union had passed the Enrollment Act. According to most interpretations the Civil War draft was disastrous. This is particularly true when considering the experiences of the North. To call for conscription two years after the war had begun proved to be highly unpopular. The general public attitude was well illustrated by the famous New York draft riots in 1863. The Enrollment Act certainly did not insure an orderly mobilization of Union manpower. This was partly due to the fact that the measure was basically punitive in nature. It was primarily envisioned as a method of coercing those men who had not

17. Ibid. Also see Richard Peters, The Public Statutes of the United States of America Vol. 1, Boston, 1845, p. 272.

18. Industrial Deferment, pp. 5-6; American Selective Service, pp. 9-12.
volunteered for military service.\textsuperscript{19} This draft measure was handled by that branch of the military which also had the duty of apprehending deserters and spies, further stigmatizing the whole concept of conscription. However, the most discouraging factor about the draft was that it fell most heavily upon the poor. Draftees could hire a substitute or pay $300 and escape military service. Hence rich men and wealthy districts were able to fill their quotas by purchasing substitutes and offering large bounties for volunteers. Even more pathetic was the obligation imposed upon the poor districts to fill their own quotas. A sad commentary on the situation was revealed by a popular saying of the day which stated that the war was being fought with "the rich man's money and the poor man's blood."\textsuperscript{20}

Industrial deferments were not given in the North, but the Confederacy passed a draft exemption law in April 1862 which included such occupations as ferrymen, employees in mines, furnaces and foundries, telegraph operators, teachers and numerous governmental positions.\textsuperscript{21} This act was altered drastically as the war progressed, and by February 1864 most of these occupations were subject to the draft. This early attempt at industrial deferment should

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{20} American Selective Service, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{21} Albert B. Moore, Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924), pp. 82-85.
not be classified as a direct forerunner of the policies adopted in World War I or II. The circumstances in the latter situations were much more complex and controversial.

Out of the monumental confusion of the Civil War came a significant military report which influenced United States selective service policies in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{22} This was the analysis of the Union draft policies as formulated by Brigadier General James Oakes, Assistant Provost Marshal General for Illinois, and personal friend of President Abraham Lincoln.\textsuperscript{23} Key among the many recommendations made by Oakes was his observation that the government "Instead of . . . search (ing) out and hunt (ing) up every person liable to military service . . . the government should impose . . . directly upon the people themselves, and require them . . . to report themselves for enrollment."\textsuperscript{24} General Oakes also proposed selecting draftees from permanent residences, allotting of quotas to states instead of Congressional districts, ending of bounties, making draftees


\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p. 25.
stay in service for the duration of a war, and providing for medical and legal aids to help the government conduct the war. The Oakes Report provides one of the best analyses of the Civil War draft system, and its evaluations probably influenced the writing of the Selective Service Act of 1917.

The years following the Civil War brought few changes in the mobilization policies of the United States. Neither the Indian wars, nor the brief Spanish-American conflict forced the government to stray from the volunteer policy espoused by Daniel Webster. Nevertheless, many farsighted statesmen realized that eventually America would have to revamp her military system if she desired to accept her position as one of the major powers of the world. Instrumental in laying the groundwork for a revitalized military system in the twentieth century was Theodore Roosevelt's Secretary of War, Elihu Root. Although his handiwork, the Military Act of 1903, contributed immeasurably to the definition of American mobilization policy at the outbreak of World War I it did not prepare the public for the complexities of a war economy. Only one other attempt was made in the twentieth century, prior to American entrance into World War I, to provide innovations in defense

25. Ibid., pp. 23-36.
techniques. This occurred in 1911 when President William Howard Taft's newly appointed Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson, tried to supplement the Root defense system with a third line of defense consisting of an army of trained volunteers with "prearranged" plans for mobilization. Large-ly due to the efforts of the General Staff this "Stimson Plan" was pigeonholed. President Woodrow Wilson's Secretary of War, Lindley M. Garrison, reversed the trend started by Root and Stimson, aligning himself to the General Staff and their plan for an expansible standing army. They wanted a national volunteer force as opposed to the state controlled National Guard units developed at the turn of the century by Elihu Root. Under mounting political pressures President Wilson finally intervened in the dispute. In an address to Congress 8 December 1914 the President declared, "We must depend in every time of national peril . . . not upon a standing army . . . but upon a citizenry trained and accustomed to arms." 

In 1916 President Wilson gave his support to the National Army Plan which was opposed by Secretary of War Garrison. Because of this rebuke the Secretary resigned. The legislation which embodied this Plan, the National Defense


Act of 1916, provided for an increased regular army of 700,000 by 1920 and a greatly expanded National Guard. However there were no provisions for general mobilization. Wilson's intervention in this affair was probably motivated by political reasons. He had earlier admitted to a lack of knowledge in the field of mobilization, but the National Guard was quite popular in the various states. The political pressures from Congress were overwhelmingly in favor of preserving the National Guard. But once again the potentially explosive issue of mobilizing the nation during time of war was ignored much to the dismay of those prominent formulators of the "Plattsburg Idea." If the government and military leadership showed hesitancy about mobilization, the innovators of the famous Plattsburg concept did not. This group was one of the many organizations which sought to strengthen American national defenses after the outbreak of World War I. Although such groups as the American Defense Society, the League to Enforce Peace, the American Rights Committee and the National Security League had an impact upon defense considerations,

30. Ibid. The National Defense Act of 1916 can be found in the Appendix, pp. 204-265.


32. Backgrounds of Selective Service, p. 73.
it cannot be denied that the Plattsburg idea of training civilians for military leadership was the most dynamic. The Plattsburg idea had particular significance for organized labor since one of the central themes of the Plattsburg proponents was a demand for total mobilization. Union leadership interpreted this as a direct attack upon the laboring man, and an outright attempt to destroy recent union victories.

According to a later generation of military writers, however, the two major figures in the formation of the Plattsburg plan, General Leonard Wood and Grenville Clark, a prominent New York lawyer, awakened the "soul of a great people" to the "inexorable facts of war." One of the most successful of these civilian training camps was carried forward during August 1915 when more than 1200 men trained for a period of four weeks. It was at this time that General Wood, in one of his most candid interviews, expressed his displeasure with the General Staff and its plan for an expandable army. He indicated that any type of volunteer system would leave American military defenses unprepared for defense mobilization. General Wood believed

33. Ibid., p. 72.

that the most significant thing about the participants in the camp was the large number who were "business or professional men and saw their "obligation to serve." He felt that men of this calibre would make excellent officers, philosophizing that if they were not trained until the last moment it would mean "the wanton sacrifice of volunteers in the first shock of battle." A contemporary of Wood's who evaluated the Plattsburg program could state "This, therefore, -- the providing of officers for the training of men, -- is the great purpose of such institutions as the Plattsburg camp last month." Military observers of the post World War II period believed the significance to be something completely different. Thus the "greatest contribution" and the "real" Plattsburg idea "was a gospel of national service in which each man and each woman must be prepared to do his part." The consensus was that one month could not make any man a good soldier, but it would make him "a missionary of national defense" -- a missionary who proclaimed that everyone should bear the burdens of war, and "every man and every women and every

35. Ibid., p. 307.
36. Ibid., p. 308.
37. Ibid.
dollar should be mobilized if America should go to war. 39

The preparedness movement struck a chord of fear in the very heart of the labor movement. War, or the fear of war, could bring an end to the steady advances made by the American Federation of Labor since its inception in 1886. National mobilization might bring a halt to organized unionism, a reduction of wages, the destruction of the union by the conscription of its members, a stopping of strikes and the right to bargain, and give to business an advantage which they could parlay into total domination of the business-labor relationship. 40 Samuel Gompers, founder and president of the American Federation of Labor, struggled with these questions, trying to analyze the best method for combatting the possible dissolution of the gains made by labor during the first decade of the twentieth century. Obviously the decisions to be made in resolving these complex problems weighed heavily upon the shoulders of this titan of the labor movement. The vacillating course of the AFL during this period is a reflection of the inability of the executive leadership of organized labor to formulate a cohesive union policy after America entered World War I.


Organized labor, under Gompers' direction, absolved itself from the prolonged and bitter debate whether America should or should not participate in the Great War. Instead the trade unions decided to oppose the various conscription proposals which were being considered by Congress in the early months of 1917. It was felt that there was a better chance to defeat conscription than to prevent the United States from entering the war. There was also a deeper and underlying reason for this stand. This was the growing conviction of the AFL that industrial conscription would follow upon the heels of military conscription.

Immediately after President Wilson signed the declaration of war 26 April 1917 the American Federation of Labor issued a statement giving its "whole hearted support to our country in this time of national crisis . . ." At the same time, however, a carefully planned attack against selective service had been launched by labor leaders in the


43. AFL Papers, Office of the President, Samuel Gompers Correspondence, Box No. 24, March 1 - May 10, 1917. Wisconsin State Historical Association. Hereafter cited as AFL Papers.
hopes of influencing the outcome of the legislative donnybrook which was certain to erupt over this issue. In this same month, the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor meeting in Washington, D.C. sent a letter to Champ Clark, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Thomas R. Marshall, Vice President of the United States, indicating the opposition of labor to the draft bill. Both letters quoted extensively from the resolutions adopted by the annual AFL convention held the previous month. But of paramount interest is the statement recognizing the decidedly close connection between military and industrial conscription. "We recognize," stated the Executive Council that "this service may be either military or industrial, both equally essential for national defense." However the Council was quick to indicate that neither it, nor the AFL representatives attending the annual convention, could condone any form of conscription at that time.

The executive council expressed its opposition in unequivocal terms. The whole concept of conscription, it declared "is repugnant to the Constitution of the United States and the genius of our Republic." These labor leaders contended that compulsory service was a drastic

44. Ibid., Letter dated 27 April 1917.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
departure from American tradition and certainly violated the "principle which was born of the spirit of '76." The letter closed with a candid expression of the basic concern of the union. "We need no legislation providing conscription for the industrial service so essential for war preparations," and since the AFL had "declared that industrial assistance is co-equal with military assistance, we are very apprehensive of any species of legislation which would call for conscription in military activities." In no other place is there such a concise statement of labor's attitude upon this point. One should note that attempts to block industrial conscription were a key union policy throughout the rest of World War I, between the wars, and indeed into the early 1940's.

Not only did labor leaders try to influence the outcome of the debate over conscription by directly contacting key legislative leaders, but they also used the Congressional committee meeting as a format for airing labor concerns. Grant Hamilton, legislative committeeman for the AFL, speaking before the House Committee on Military Affairs which was holding hearings on the Selective Service Act, commented that labor wanted to insure that America was maintaining her "faith in democratic institutions," by backing the volunteer

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47. Ibid.
army. Hamilton also argued that if men were going to be conscripted then the United States in all fairness should conscript wealth. On this point the AFL was echoing a familiar demand of many peace groups prior to the Great War. The focus for conscripting wealth centered around the desires to eliminate industrial profits from war by having the United States government take over the operation of essential war industries. This idea, too, was carried over to World War II.

The emotional opposition to conscription could not long withstand the practical barrage of facts and data hurled at the American Congress documenting the need for some sort of draft system. Eventually a compromise Selective Service measure was passed in Congress and signed into law 18 May 1917 by President Wilson. The President recognized the fears felt by organized labor, and one week after signing the Selective Service bill he issued a memorandum which did much to alleviate the dread of industrial conscription.


49. Ibid., pp. 237-238.


51. As illustrated by the famous Russel-Overton measure brought before the 3d Session, 76th Congress, 1940.
within the ranks of labor. Although the President did not specifically state that he would not call for industrial conscription, he indicated that mobilization problems would be handled with judicious care.

Two things are to be accomplished -- to raise armies; to maintain industries. As the war proceeds, more and more men will be required for the battle line, and yet there are certain industries that must be maintained to the end. Any considerable diminution of manpower must interfere to some extent with industry. The diminution must be made and hence it is self-evident that the problem is not absolutely to prevent interference with industry, for that is impossible; it is to reduce interference to a minimum. A balance must be struck and maintained between the military and the industrial needs of the Nation and the necessary sacrifice must be distributed with scientific accuracy and in such a way as to accomplish both purposes of the nation. 52

Perhaps the key statement in this memorandum is the stress upon "scientific accuracy" -- a laudable aim, but one, by the very nature of the problem, which can never be attained. Indeed, in neither the First World War nor the Second did labor leaders or military strategists reach a happy medium. What was a drastic infringement upon labor rights according to union leaders was a totally incomplete and inadequate program when viewed through the eyes of military men. Discussions concerning labor and defense mobilization have traditionally been viewed as an emotional and delicate subject. None realized this better than the working man.

52. As cited in Industrial Deferment, pp. 6-7.
With the passage of the Selective Service measure, and the conciliatory activities of the President, Samuel Gompers made what at first glance might appear to be a complete reversal from his former position. He agreed to make a four minute "educational" film to be shown in the nation's movie theaters as part of George Creel's program to unite the nation through the activities of the Office of the Committee of Public Information. In his patriotic discourse Gompers proclaimed that a people unwilling to fight and make the supreme sacrifice for the right to live in the United States was "undeserving" the privilege of living in a democratic republic. Moreover, "This is not a profiteering war, not a capitalist war; it is a war of the people." No war, according to the AFL president, in the history of the world had been so "truly" a people's war as the one engaged in at that time by the United States.

Gompers' desire to support the American war effort was sincere, and he certainly did not sacrifice the ultimate aims of labor as some of his colleagues would later charge. It is safe to assume that his patriotic gesture in 1917 was made to accomplish two things. To divorce the AFL from any

53. AFL Papers, Office of the President, Box No. 25, Memo dated 19 October 1917.

54. Ibid.
radical left-wing labor groups, and to insure favorable press and public support if the government promoted industrial conscription. On numerous occasions in the spring of 1917 Gompers reiterated his stand against the drafting of labor. At the same time he maintained that the labor unions would support the war effort in all possible ways.

An *American Federationist* editorial entitled "Voluntary vs. Compulsion," provided the first public format for the union chief's feelings on these matters. 55 He commented that at the beginning of the war a "mighty" drive was initiated to have conscription applied to all areas of American life, an idea "lightly and unthinkingly" believed to apply to every manner of service. Those individuals who were urging such a move, stated Gompers, should give way to "wiser council" and realize that the purposes of the war could best be served by voluntary cooperation. The key to this philosophy was the belief that the "people ought to determine the manner in which they shall give service and not merely consent to regulations imposed upon them." 56 As the war progressed Gompers elaborated upon his earlier ideas. By 1918 he was concerned about the increased powers of the government which then included the right to commandeer


industrial establishments if all other manner of cooperative ventures failed. If this would happen it would undoubtedly mean the "mobilizing of workers," and this could not be done "except through machinery by which human beings are controlled." Ultimately Gompers believed this practice could entail the crushing of the trade union movement which he asserted was the only logical organization which would fight for industrial freedom during the war. The labor chief concluded that if the government circumvented the labor movement "essential production for the war will suffer." This was an outright threat. Labor would not budge on the issue of industrial conscription.

Gompers' leadership during this difficult and complex period of the Great War did not go unchallenged. For a short time, particularly during the first few months of American involvement, the labor leader was under continuous fire from a number of union heads, and some union locals. But eventually Gompers' interpretation of labor involvement in the war was accepted for what it was -- a conciliatory, but realistic acceptance of the harsh realities of a nation involved in "total war." The unions' objectives were limited but specific. Gompers would sacrifice labor's


58. Ibid.
stand on military conscription and forfeit the right to strike if the government would allow the union to serve as the agency to carry out "voluntary" mobilization agreements between labor and business, and if the industrial conscription scheme were forgotten.

John P. White, the dynamic president of the United Mine Workers, was never able to reconcile himself to the course established for the AFL by Samuel Gompers. He continually opposed union involvement in any war preparations as well as any concept of military or industrial conscription. In a candid letter to Gompers, the Mine Union chief indicated he was "out of harmony" with the whole scheme of preparedness and demands for military training. He felt it was wrong for organized labor, even for "practical" union considerations, to support any of the proposed defense acts and to acquiesce in such emotional and empty phrases calling for the preservation of democracy because he could see "no humanitarian issues in the present war." He also contended that this was "distinctly a commercial war." White indicated that the rank and file of mine workers had gone on record against military compulsion in what he described as a "very pronounced manner." He felt there was little sentiment among working people for the war. This statement could be

59. *AFL Papers, Office of the President, Box No. 25, Memo dated 3 March 1917 from White to Gompers.*

verified, stated the Mine Union head, if the people were able to determine whether or not they wanted to enter into the war. White, of course, was referring to the demands for a war referendum which had been advocated by such political figures as William Jennings Bryan and Robert LaFollette, as well as numerous peace organizations. The United Mine Workers was one of the few labor organizations to support the war referendum concept during World War I, although by 1938 many labor groups had accepted this as a means to prevent war.

It was at this time that Amos Pinchot, one time progressive leader and violent opponent of American entrance into the World War contacted Frank Duffy, who was then serving as Secretary of the Carpenters Union. Pinchot explained to Duffy in a lengthy and provocative letter that "a new menace to labor and democracy" had arisen in the form of compulsory military service. As the leader of the "progressive forces" labor was the only group which could effectively fight the conscription plan. Two other

61. For some keen insights into public attitudes toward the war referendum see the Congressional Record, 64th Congress, 1st Session, 1916, Vol. 53, pp. 7451-7456; The Survey, "How Pacifists Mobilized Against War," Vol. 37, 10 February 1917, pp. 550-551; and articles in the NY Times and Cleveland Plain Dealer, 5 February 1917.

62. AFL Papers, Office of the President, Box No. 24, Letter to Duffy dated 10 March 1917; Letter from Duffy to Gompers 14 March 1917.
potential defenders of democracy, the political parties and organized church were now the protectors of the privileged and "sustainers" of the status quo. Pinchot indicated that labor must fight conscription at the military level before defense obligations destroyed labor advances. Conscription would "enslave labor, and build up the mastery of the privileged, military and official classes," according to Pinchot. The assertions of the National Security League that military service was necessary to defend the nation was dismissed by Pinchot as being "pure, unadulterated bunk." 63

However, his most effective point, and the one which prompted Duffy to send this correspondence to Gompers was his contention that "Wall Street" was behind the demands for compulsory service. The business interests, contended the progressive idealist, wanted a "meek and disciplined" labor movement which "will fight obediently to defend the American dollar abroad" and crush social and economic advances at home. Conscription is, declared Pinchot, "a great commercial policy; a carefully devised weapon that the exploiters are forging for their own protection at home, and in the interest of American financial imperialism abroad." 64 At this point Pinchot had certainly touched upon a sensitive issue as far as labor was concerned. The dilemma seemed obvious to trade

63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
union leaders. There was the real possibility that American business might use the emotionalism of defense mobilization to exploit labor gains and crush trade unionism. Yet labor must work cooperatively with business, or face the even greater danger of government intervention. Many things that Pinchot had said could be dismissed as "radical" or "unrealistic;" however, throughout the war American trade union leaders were convinced that Pinchot was correct in his assertion that Wall Street presented an "ominous threat" to organized labor.

Shortly after reviewing Pinchot's letter Gompers, in an interview given to a New York Times staff member, made a number of comments which easily could have been lifted from Pinchot's lengthy discourse on the drawbacks of the draft. Gompers reiterated his earlier determination to see that laboring men were paid "decent wages" and worked "reasonable" hours. He indicated, as had Pinchot, that "there must be no exploitation of labor under the cloak of false patriotism." The union chief maintained that the laborer in America would be sacrificing for the war effort just as the man in uniform. Although serving on the homefront he would be giving his skills to the war effort, paying for the higher cost of living, and still sending his sons and

65. NY Times, 13 May 1917
brothers to serve militarily.  

Gompers' position on defense mobilization seemed quite contradictory to some elements of labor. Was the Union chief really opposed to American involvement in the war, or was he, as some charged, actually a patriotic militarist at heart? His immediate acceptance of Selective Service, for instance, was seen as a quick sell-out of labor principles by some trade union groups.  

Gompers' reply to such charges always encompassed two ideas. He maintained that he had steadfastly fought for a trial of the volunteer method, citing his testimony before the Congressional investigating committees examining the draft measure, and he indicated that any affiliate of the AFL had the right or privilege to object to his policies. On one particular occasion Gompers wrote a letter to E.J. Ganel, Secretary of the Central Labor Union of Alexandria, Louisiana declaring that the local union's objections to his executive leadership were really unfounded since their comments were "in accord with the

66. Ibid.

67. AFL Papers, Office of the President, Box No. 25. See letters to Gompers from J.N. Krahl, Secretary, Dubuque Trades and Labor Congress, 24 April 1917; G. Schleimkofer, President Local 368 of the I.A.M. of Cleveland, Ohio, 19 March 1917; Ernest H. Zwally, Secretary Louisiana Federation of Labor, 26 April 1917; and James S. Meade, Secretary of Philadelphia Local 98 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, 5 June 1917.
repeated declarations of the American labor movement."68 Gompers also showed a great concern over his image as projected by the American press. After an unusually bitter exchange between Gompers and J.N. Krahl, Secretary of the Dubuque Trades and Labor Congress, the union head in quite moderate and conciliatory terms opined that many times the nation's newspapers "garbled my quotes," and particularly over the issue of compulsory military service.69 "You realize, of course," continued Gompers, "that the great metropolitan press of this country is not directed in support of the aims and purposes of the organized labor movement."70

In reality, opposition to American participation in World War I was not violently espoused by any of the AFL affiliates. Their attitude was moderate. A Kansas City union denounced the autocratic methods of compulsory service and voiced a fear of the growth of "Prussianism in America under the guise of democracy," 71 and a Cleveland local protested the "high-handed" action of the American Federation of Labor in pledging unlimited support in time

68. AFL Papers, Office of the President, Box No. 24. Letter of 24 April 1917.
69. Ibid., 10 May 1917.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid. Letter of 13 April 1917 from Local No. 14268. Stenographers, Typists and Bookkeepers Union.
of war, but these protests were exceptions to the general union attitude. Radical labor opposition to the war, and compulsory military service came from the Industrial Workers of the World, an organization alternately denounced and avoided by the AFL.

Early in 1917 the IWW held a gigantic New York rally to protest selective service. This meeting led by the noted anarchists Emma Goldman, and Alexander Berkman, recently freed from prison after serving a jail sentence for an attempt upon the life of steel magnate Henry C. Frick, caused the AFL a great deal of embarrassment, and gave labor a certain amount of bad publicity. "Thou shalt not Conscript," was the billed motto of the rally which eventually disintegrated into a diatribe against American capitalism, and the "ruling classes" who sought war for material gains. On this occasion executive leadership of the AFL decided to ignore the incident, but in other similar situations Gompers, usually backed by the executive council, vehemently asserted labor's patriotism and disclaimed labor peace groups.

One of Gompers most bitter battles involved the

72. Ibid. Letter of 19 March 1917.
73. NY Times, 19 May 1917.
74. Ibid.
People's Council, a New York left wing labor group headed by Jacob Panken. Gompers felt that Panken was "fomenting" trouble within labor, a situation which could weaken labor's bargaining position with the government and certainly would not help in the struggle to avoid industrial conscription. One advisor to Gompers stated that if groups like the People's Council, the National Labor Council for Peace, and the Workingmen's Council were not squashed by the AFL, industrial conscription would be invoked, a policy which would destroy labor's greatest weapon, the strike. By late spring of 1917 Gompers was convinced that any fissure in the labor movement could destroy industrial gains of the past decade, thus he had little sympathy for radical labor groups. In the case of the People's Council he went as far as to accuse its members of having German sympathies. After the war was over Gompers stated that he felt it was his duty to contribute his energies "toward the nullification of the pacifist and defeatist propaganda," being spread by left wing labor organizations. In retrospect he was convinced

75. Taft, pp. 358-360.
76. Ibid.
77. AFL Papers, Office of the President, Box No. 25, Resolution adopted by the Executive Council, 21 July 1917.
78. NY Times, 24 July 1917.
that these radical elements "sought to incite strikes in factories where munitions and supplies were produced and among the longshoremen and seamen." 80

Although this attitude at the executive level did not please all elements of the labor movement it certainly helped to give the AFL a favorable press. The New York Times editorially praised the organization for being patriotic, and stated that it was a "pleasure" to note that the labor unions were reacting to war better than the two major political parties. 81 Gompers received praise as a great labor leader who was sinking "class consciousness in social consciousness." However altruistic Gompers' activities might have seemed in these early stages of American participation in the war, one can be assured that his basic concern was the preservation of labor rights. This was certainly the reason that he, although having strong personal reservations, accepted the chairmanship of the committee on labor as established by the Council of National Defense, and worked so diligently with Felix Frankfurter during the early stages of the war to establish an effective War Labor Policies Board. 82

The union chief accepted the challenge of heading

80. Ibid.
81. NY Times, 18 June 1917.
82. Taft, pp. 343-344.
the defense council's labor committee although some observers felt the position was only symbolic. Gompers did not intend to be a figurehead in such a potentially significant position. Almost immediately after writing Newton D. Baker of his acceptance the AFL boss began contacting legislative, executive and labor leaders to describe some of the problems which would be created by America's entry into the war. Gompers never did feel that his efforts as labor committee chairman were too fruitful, although he directed his energies in a vain attempt to avoid the tremendous labor-business problems which emerged under the strain of a war economy. Even his most bitter critics commended his realistic appraisal of the difficulties which would confront a mobilized America. This is probably the reason Felix Frankfurter, then Dean of the Harvard Law School and serving in 1917 as a member of the Defense Advisory Board, contacted Gompers for advice and suggestions about the growing labor crisis.

Frankfurter urged the labor leader to support a board which would have as its primary duty the settling of industrial disputes which had already begun to plague the

83. Ibid., p.343.
84. Ibid.
85. AFL Papers, Office of the President, Box No. 24, Letter from Frankfurter dated 20 April 1917.
United States. The famous Carpenter's Union controversy is the best illustration of the pre-war labor-business difficulties. Frankfurter commented that it must not be forgotten that the major concern of the government was "maximum production" and the "rigorous" maintenance of labor rights. Realistically, the future Supreme Court Justice observed that "patriotic spirit will go far but of itself will not secure these ends." As the war progressed, commented Frankfurter, labor and management must anticipate "inevitable friction," which would increase as the cost of living increased. According to this member of the Advisory Board danger signals could be seen throughout the country. This was particularly true in the formulation of government contracts.

Gompers was evidently convinced of Frankfurter's sincerity because he quickly contacted a number of key labor leaders who worked to organize the War Labor Board which was generally approved by the AFL. The major complaint of the trade unions centered around the government's insistence upon establishing wage rates. On the other hand business leaders objected to the War Labor Board because they felt it favored employees and stimulated the growth of trade

86. Ibid.
87. Ibid.
88. Taft, pp. 357-358.
unionism. 89

After this brief interlude Gompers returned to his continuing struggle with Selective Service, the institution which he felt could be the greatest weapon wielded against unionism. This attitude and the actual maneuverings of the union chief can be traced quite readily in his correspondence during the late spring of 1917. President Wilson, Secretary of War, Newton Baker, military advisor on the National Defense Committee, Major Charles B. Warren, and Chairman of the Advisory Commission of the Council of National Defense, Louis B. Schram were all bombarded with requests by Gompers in a series of attempts to protect union organization. 90

Gompers firmly believed that labor could be destroyed through the improper administration of Selective Service. 91 He publicly demanded that labor be represented on the national, state, and local draft boards which, of course, was the position maintained by labor during World War II.

"The wage earners," stated Gompers "will be vitally affected by selective conscription, and they ought to have representatives in such strategic positions." 92 Soon after airing

89. Ibid.

90. AFL Papers, Office of the President, Box No. 25, Letter to Baker 11 May 1917; Warren 25 May 1917; and Wilson and Schram, 29 May 1917.

91. NY Times, 20 May 1917.

92. Ibid.
these concerns for public consumption, Gompers was contacted by Louis Schram.\textsuperscript{93} The advisory chairman acknowledged the special interest that labor had with regard to the draft boards and industrial conscription. Schram outlined the draft procedure, indicating that Gompers should note the fact that the local draft boards had original jurisdiction over all exemptions, except industrial, which were special powers delegated to the district boards. Even the local boards, said Schram, should have a "labor man."\textsuperscript{94} Most important to Gompers however was Schram's comment that the advisory commission felt the district board should consist of a lawyer, an engineer, a businessman, a farmer, and a labor man, "recommended by the Committee on Labor of the Advisory Commission."\textsuperscript{95}

The Commission Chairman also issued a number of "requests" which were finally accepted by Gompers as the best concessions labor could gain under the pressures of a war time economy. Schram stated that exemptions should be tentative, "not final," since there were so many changes which could effect personal or public conditions.\textsuperscript{96} Further-

\textsuperscript{93.} AFL Papers, Office of the President, Box No. 25, Letter from Schram dated 20 May 1917. 

\textsuperscript{94.} Ibid. 

\textsuperscript{95.} Ibid. 

\textsuperscript{96.} Ibid. 
more Schram objected to the issuance of exemptions for entire classes of workingmen, such as railroad engineers, shipbuilders, factory workers and so forth. Prior to this time the AFL had fought for this principle, but after this letter from Schram the labor organization seemed to have abandoned it for obvious practical considerations. On one vital issue, however, the union had won a hard-fought victory. Chairman Schram made it clear that the judgment of the employers would have a certain amount of weight, but he recognized the fact, as stressed by the AFL Executive Council, that there might be discrimination by employers against "uncongenial" employees. To give the worker in such a predicament some sort of protection it had been decided by the Advisory Commission that the newest employees would be called into military service first. 97

Gompers was equally as concerned about protecting executive leadership from the Selective Service system. When a number of key labor officials were ordered to report for induction into the armed services, Gompers wrote a sharp letter to Major Warren protesting this situation. 98 He indicated that these men would be more valuable within the labor movement. They were familiar with the problems of labor, and more importantly these labor leaders enjoyed the

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid., Letter to Warren dated 25 May 1917.
confidence of the union workers. Gompers felt they were "indispensable" for government-labor cooperation during the crisis of war. In an earlier letter to Newton Baker the union chief had labeled these considerations as of "extreme importance." 99

There can be little doubt that Gompers felt that Selective Service could be used to destroy trade unionism in America. Thus, his battles to place laboring men on the draft boards and to keep union leadership intact were motivated by the necessity of maintaining cohesion in the labor union movement. Executive leadership had accepted military conscription and would support it if industrial conscription were not pursued by the national government. If union gains and organization were not tampered with, stringent efforts would be made to prevent strikes which could cripple wartime production. In the final analysis Gompers' campaigns at the beginning of the war succeeded—the initial skirmish brought victory, and union leadership remained intact to direct the efforts of organized labor throughout the war.

During the spring and early summer of 1917 this marriage of convenience between labor and government was sorely tested, but each time fissures appeared they were quickly covered with glowing comments of patriotic rhetoric.

However, such surface efforts could not long prevent this situation from becoming public knowledge. The increasingly belligerent statements of Gompers and the growing complaints of laboring men throughout the nation warned of the tremendous problems surrounding industrial mobilization.

It is only fair to indicate that many, and perhaps most, of the issues between labor and government, and labor and business during the early phases of the war were due to inadequate mobilization planning. The burden of increased difficulties can be placed upon the failure to work out administrative duties and procedures for the various branches of the military. Both Congress and the military establishment share the brunt of this oversight. The initial difficulties were of such magnitude that they approach the unbelievable. Reserve supplies of military equipment were almost nonexistent when the war broke out. There were no general military plans available to indicate what size army was needed, how many men would or should be inducted under Selective Service, or just what equipment the armed forces would need immediately. Adding even more confusion was the fact that there was no standardization of equipment in any of the various branches of service. When production did get underway much overlapping in procurement policies

100. Smith (Army Mobilization), see Chapter II.
occurred and the estimates of necessary equipment was only vaguely perceived. Even more pathetic was the fact that the various branches of the armed services were in direct competition for military goods. This resulted in tremendously increased prices, sky-rocketing profits for manufacturers and growing discontentment among union men, both at the official and grass roots level. To the labor leadership this situation seemed unwarranted and unfair, particularly since labor was being singled out as contributing to wartime confusion by calling for increased wages.

Almost as bewildering as the military structure were governmental attempts at coordination. The President was not certain of the role he should play in the formulation of mobilization plans, and Congress was reluctant, at times almost frightened, to make innovations in defense preparations or delegate authority to other agencies to perform such tasks. This confusion is well illustrated by the difficulties encountered by such an important agency as the Council of


National Defense. The Council, created in August, 1916, proved to be inefficient, and the Executive Advisory Commission, although filled with men of great talent, did not hold its first meeting until six months after it was organized in 1916. Just one week before the declaration of war the Advisory Commission finally voted to create a purchasing board to coordinate procurement. This new agency, the General Munitions Board, possessed only vague powers which were obscured when the Advisory Commission formed a succession of new committees which began duplicating its work. Moreover, the board was handicapped by its great size. Twenty-two men were appointed to serve on the committee, a situation which could only insure a lack of accomplishment.

Because of the Inefficiencies of the Munitions Board, the Advisory Council soon voted to form a seven-man War Industries Board 8 July 1917. This Board, too, was limited in its authority, and a year and a half after its creation two talented executives had resigned as chairman of the Board. It was not until 4 March 1918 when Bernard M. Baruch assumed leadership of the War Industries Board that

103. Ibid.
this organization realized its potential. 106 At this time all war mobilization efforts, with the exception of price control, were directed by Baruch. Henceforth the Industries Board served as an effective instrument of national policy.

The piecemeal attempts to mold American business and labor into a cohesive unit were more apparent than real. Not only were the agencies themselves guilty of mismanagement, but co-ordination between the executive and legislative branches of government all too frequently broke down completely. For instance, the War Finance Corporation was specifically created by an act of Congress while this same branch of government ignored the obvious vital need to establish a Fuel Administration, although the Lever Food Control Act of 10 August 1917 authorized the President to fix the price of fuel. 107 In a few cases such as the establishment of the Food Administration and the War Industries Board, Congressional recognition of the existence of such agencies was given only after these organizations had been functioning for many months. 108 Congress did, however, provide additional powers for these wartime agencies.

Such breakdowns at the military and governmental levels undoubtedly caused confusion in the ranks of both

108. Ibid.
business and labor. Indeed, after the war America was commended for her vast military potential, but castigated for not achieving the industrial output of which she was capable. Two of America's most severe critics were the noted English Prime Minister, David Lloyd George and United States military hero, General John J. Pershing. Pershing lambasted industry for not providing quickly enough the weapons which were so desperately needed on the front lines, while George sarcastically commented "... the organization at home and behind the lines was not worthy of the reputation which American businessmen have deservedly worn for smartness, promptitude and efficiency." In the flush of victory many of these unsolved mobilization problems were overlooked, but World War II resurrected them again under the tremendous pressures of operating a two front war.

The administrative and military shortcomings of the World War I effort were largely overlooked during the actual period of American participation in the war. Instead mobilization inadequacies were blamed upon both labor and business. These natural and traditional antagonists engaged in a series of charges and countercharges aimed at placing


110. War Memoirs, p. 1831.
the blame for production failures on the inefficiency of their respective rivals. This attitude proved most unfortunate as both labor and business became belligerent, each asking the government to curb the powers of the other.

By late summer of 1917 the American Federationist began to mirror the concern of organized labor over the largely unjust charges being levied at unionism by business, government and the public. The patriotic gestures of April and May gave way to a realistic analysis of the vast production problems which had begun to enshroud mobilization efforts. These attacks upon trade unionism combined with an increasing fear of "the mobilization of workers," brought forth a declaration against "the worst kind of slavery -- industrial unfreedom." Particularly irritating to the Executive Council of the AFL were the government agencies which were allegedly discriminating against union workers in defense industries. Despite the efforts made by organized labor to improve its public image and place some of the industrial problems at the feet of the government, the prevailing public attitude seemed to condemn labor for the inability to fill armament orders, failure to equip properly American fighting men, and the


112. Ibid.; also see Taft, pp. 351-353.
increased delays in filling production orders.

For organized labor in 1917 the approaching holiday season did not bring visions of merriment and goodwill, but instead an increasing awareness that the coming year would provide a series of obstacles as difficult to overcome as those faced by Christian in Pilgrim's Progress. In a December editorial to the AFL, Samuel Gompers once again outlined the hypocrisy of the mobilization situation, dwelling upon unfair pressures being placed upon labor by the threat of industrial mobilization. To Gompers this situation had the earmarks of a giant conspiracy led by unscrupulous businessmen, supported by the large metropolitan newspapers which used "every possible opportunity for editorials upon the necessity for industrial conscription and for news articles furthering this general policy." This plan, as seen by the labor chief, was completely incompatible with the "spirit and purpose of the war." Working men were fighting the battles of democracy "not only in foreign countries but in our shops and mines and mills." A square deal, contended Gompers, was the only thing that American workers wanted in this war.


114. Ibid., p. 1096.

115. Ibid.
Then, for the first time, executive leadership of the AFL offered a positive program and a possible alternative to industrial conscription. The greatest weakness in the mobilization program, according to union officers, lay in the habit of regarding industrial problems as being regional or local questions.\textsuperscript{116} "Adjustment" agencies which were national in scope seemed the only logical answer for solving all major industrial difficulties, as well as eliminating the more specific demands of some groups for industrial conscription. These agencies would be composed of representatives from labor and business who would work in close conjunction with the Department of Labor. Such an approach seemed the most "intelligent way to settle these 'nation-wide' problems.\textsuperscript{117}

The gloomy forecast for the new year proved accurate. Little respite for the beleagured hierarchy of labor could be found on the horizon. Adding further to the misery of the labor organization were repeated charges that a growing labor shortage in America was hindering armaments production. Secretary of Labor, William B. Wilson, on 10 January 1918 attempted to alleviate these fears at a press conference in which he commented that there was "an ample supply of labor

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., p. 1097.
for the army and for industry."¹¹⁸ He supported the position taken by the AFL some months before by indicating that an improper analogy had been made by those who were comparing the United States to Great Britain and her wartime industrial problems. The 1,500,000 workers who would be inducted into military service could easily be replaced, stated Wilson, from the vast available labor market although this might "interfere with industry to some extent." Many persons were skeptical of this analysis. The day after Wilson's news conference the New York Times complained that the Labor Secretary was too optimistic, and even negligent in his comments.¹¹⁹ It was obvious, stated the Times editorially, that a labor shortage already existed in America "due to the number of men who have volunteered or been drafted for military service."¹²⁰

Organized labor was no longer commended for its patriotic positions and endeavors. Indeed, increased union belligerancy against the possibility of industrial conscription brought accelerated criticism. Many felt that both William B. Wilson and the Department of Labor were too closely tied to organized labor.¹²¹ To many observers

¹¹⁸. NY Times, 10 January 1918.
¹¹⁹. Ibid., 11 January 1918.
¹²⁰. Ibid.
¹²¹. Ibid., 4, 17 February 1918.
labor problems were rapidly becoming the most serious of the war. The feeling that labor was moving further left is well illustrated by an anonymous newspaper article which stated that the labor unions and the Bolsheviks were quite similar, the difference being "only in degree of radicalism." 122

The winter months were increasingly difficult for the AFL. Disillusionment with most facets of defense mobilization had brought about an increasingly critical public attitude which was reflected in the increased demands for an efficient production system. This situation tended to crush even further labor confidence and initiative. None was more aware of the perils of this situation than the director of Selective Service during World War I, Enoch Crowder. Eventually the Provost General took charge of the chaotic labor situation and did eliminate many mobilization problems, although his methods and goals were not always approved by organized labor. 123

Earlier in the war Crowder had worked with labor over the question of labor deferments for skilled workers, but after that time, until the spring of 1918, he had few dealings with the trade unionists. The deterioration of

122. Ibid., 17 February 1918.

efforts for unity at the executive and Congressional levels had influenced Crowder to intervene in the situation. This pathetic state of affairs is well illustrated by a letter received by the Provost Marshall General dated 30 March 1918 from the Assistant Secretary of Labor, Louis T. Post. The Assistant Secretary requested that Selective Service and the Department of Labor begin working together in classifying men and analyzing production data so that the Employment Service could "render these classified men more readily available to the needs of the war industries." That such an attempt to bring some cohesion into the war effort was made one year after America had entered the war readily attests to the rampant confusion in mobilization efforts. This incongruity in cooperative efforts between Selective Service and the Department of Labor was eliminated in World War II largely due to the activities of Selective Service head, General Lewis B. Hershey.

Crowder, too, believed that the adjustment of industrial manpower was the key problem to be faced during the war. However, he felt that the "adjustment agencies" desired by labor, or the plan outlined by Post were too complex for the immediacy of the war situation. The problem

124. SS Library, Provost Marshal General, 1917-1918 File, Correspondence of Enoch Crowder.

125. Ibid.
must be handled directly and with firmness. In other words one must view the situation as a tactical one to be met and dealt with as a military question. In March the Selective Service director had considered the possibilities of conscripting labor but decided that "popular approval" for such a venture would not be forthcoming, and any hasty "advance in the direction of conscription would be doomed to failure." Although Crowder approved of such a plan and felt that at some later date such a procedure could be used, organized labor in 1917 could distort the whole question with cries of "industrial slavery." Hence, the goal was to avoid "violent departures from traditional principles." "Manpower," said Crowder, "must be influenced by more insidious and more general principles than any yet advanced." Cleverly and perceptively Crowder, showing a great deal more insight than the majority of his military colleagues, observed "the rules that are to control it must be more readily compared to leaven in a lump than to the whip of a driver." Certainly "ingrained popular traditions and political inhibitions are not lightly to be disregarded.


127. Ibid., p. 7.

128. Ibid.
The calculating General then outlined a plan which was little short of pure genius. This was the famous and brilliantly effective "work or fight" order which dominated labor and mobilization considerations from the spring of 1918 until the end of the war. The "work or fight" order was a many faceted tool, which in actual operation, was as effective as industrial conscription. Even today a cloud of uncertainty surrounds the operation of the plan because its outline was so nebulous that ultimate discretion whether a man would work or fight was left to the various district draft boards. Thus even though the theory of how the Work or Fight Order should function could be worked out at the national level, its actual practice was determined locally.

The original version of the "work or fight" order was written by Hugh Johnson and entitled "Labor in the Draft." According to Johnson he first tried to gain the support of


130. Ibid.

131. SS Library, F-54; This story is related in two sources originated by H.C. Kramer. The first is a lecture entitled "Selective Service," delivered at the Army War College, Washington, D.C. 11 October 1934. The second in a "Confidential Memorandum in reference to the Senate Munitions Committee," c. 1938.
organized labor for this idea before taking the matter to President Wilson. In a conference with Samuel Gompers the future General became convinced that the trade unionists would not support such a provision. The union chief insisted that this plan was an insult to labor since there was no shortage of manpower in America. President Wilson was not impressed by the idea, possibly because of political pressure from the AFL, and returned Johnson's memorandum marked "disapproved." "But I had a very astute assistant who had methods for doing things," commented Johnson, "and he inadvertently left this thing where a newspaper man could see it." This resulted in a storm of editorial approval for the measure. The political implications were obvious. "I do not suppose a more popular move was taken during the war," stated Johnson. "Within twenty-four hours the President sent for the memorandum, approved it, and it became a part of the Draft system." Johnson's good friend and ardent foe of labor, Colonel H.C. Kramer, stated that President Wilson commissioned the secret service

133. Kramer, "Confidential Memorandum."
134. Ibid.
135. Kramer, "Confidential Memorandum." Johnson quotation taken from a War College Lecture that is presently closed. Probably delivered in the mid-1920's.
to find out how the newspapers got a copy of the "work or fight" memorandum; "they never did find out." Much to the dismay of organized labor, the "work or fight" order did, as indicated by Johnson, become an intricate part of the selective service system.

There were three general roles that the work or fight order played as it was put into operation, although the results were not necessarily anticipated or desired by its proponents. In retrospect, however, Crowder did, to use his expression, find a plan "insidious" enough to solve the labor problem. The principal task of the work or fight order was to redefine the productive and nonproductive industries. Men working in nonproductive industries would immediately lose their deferments to be inducted into military service or, at the discretion of Selective Service, these men could be assigned to productive war industries. A second use of the order involved the skilled laborer already inducted into, or who had volunteered for, military service. A man with a particular skill which was needed in a specific war production plant would be offered a choice between continued military service or a "furlough" to work in the designated defense plant. The last, and most objectionable, part of the work or fight


137. American Selective Service, p. 16.
scheme concerned production efficiency. Workers who did not maintain a high level of efficiency would be inducted into the armed forces. Fortunately this was the one section which did not go into effect. This was only because the procedure for evaluation of workers had not been completed at the time of the early and unexpected German capitulation.

Crowder was certain this plan would find immediate acceptance since it could be put into operation by the Selective Service system without going to Congress for the passage of more legislation. He believed that the Selective Service Bill of 1917 was flexible enough to encompass such a procedure as the work or fight order. Nevertheless in a memorandum to War Department executive, Major H.C. Kramer, Crowder stated that it was possible Congress might "attempt to legislate in the field of the work or fight order." This would be unnecessary, according to Crowder, since the order was self executing. He cited newspaper articles in the Pittsburgh Post Gazette and Press which indicated that the effect of the work or fight order was "to fill the steel mills with labor."

For the general public the most significant thing

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140. Ibid.
about the work or fight order was its attack upon idlers. Numerous magazine and newspaper articles discussed the revision to the Selective Service Bill known as Section 121 which placed an obligation upon all administrators of Selective Service and "all citizens" to report to local draft boards information about registrants who were idlers or persons engaged in nonproductive work.\(^\text{141}\) This idea proved to be extremely popular, resulting in much speculation about such idlers, "parasites, animals, and gamblers" who would be inducted into military service because of this new regulation.\(^\text{142}\)

Union leadership realized the importance of Crowder's order and although it caused a great deal of anguish the work or fight plan seemed more acceptable than actual conscription legislation. Of greater concern to union officials in 1918 was Crowder's request that Congress increase the draft age from 18 to 45 and eliminate the old standards of 21 to 31 inclusive. The Selective Service Director complained that nearly two-thirds of the labor supply could be found outside the draft age limit and in order for Selective Service to be successful in adjusting the labor supply it would be necessary to be able to

\(^\text{141.} \) Industrial Deferment, pp. 14-15.

\(^\text{142.} \) NY Times, 1 July 1918.
"reach the whole field."\textsuperscript{143}

William L. Hutcheson and Frank Duffy of the Carpenter's Union wrote a letter to Samuel Gompers 6 August 1918 complaining about Crowder's activities in the area of labor and mobilization. They indicated that the General's comment that if the age limit of Selective Service was fixed between 18 and 45 "he would guarantee no labor shortage" was an obvious threat to the whole labor movement.\textsuperscript{144} Crowder's statement could only be interpreted to mean that men being drafted into the armed services would be used in other than military capacities. "Our organization," stated Duffy, "has no fear of being drafted but we most strenuously object to being drafted for anything but active military or naval services."\textsuperscript{145} Duffy and Hutcheson then implored Gompers to use his influence to combat this injustice to American workingmen. The union chief quickly complied with the request. The result was a terse and somewhat uncharacteristic letter to the Selective Service Director protesting the intimations that he intended "to draft men for compulsory industrial service" by extending the registration age for selective

\textsuperscript{143} Crowder (Selective Draft and Manpower), p. 10.

\textsuperscript{144} SS Library, PMG File, 1917-1918, Reproduction of a letter from Hutcheson and Duffy to Gompers dated 6 August 1918. A letter dated 10 August 1918 from Gompers to Crowder accompanied this correspondence.

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 6 August 1918.
Crowder turned Gompers' letter over to Colonel James S. Easby-Smith, the Judge Advocate and Chief of the Law Division of the War Department, to draft a suitable reply to the irate union leader. In an informal letter to Crowder, which accompanied the reply drafted for Gompers, Easby-Smith voiced his disapproval of the furlough practices being used by some military men. 147 This practice, according to the Judge Advocate, "will not have to go much further before it reaches the stage of being in effect an industrial draft." The Colonel called the "option" to remain in the army or be furloughed to some other industry after being inducted into the military "fallacious reasoning." This, indicated Easby-Smith, was not a true option but a coercive policy. "Labor leaders," warned the Colonel, "will not be slow to appreciate the real significance and effect of such a course if it proceeds much further." 148 Easby-Smith's fears were certainly not those of the head of Selective Service. Both during and after the war Crowder maintained that "armies could not fight effectively if industry did not function efficiently." 149 Efficiency could only be

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146. Ibid., 10 August 1918.
147. Ibid., 16 August 1918.
148. Ibid.
accomplished by redistributing the nation's industrial manpower without regard to the legal and moral implications of such actions. The great irony of this situation was that many members of the War Department were influenced by the "potential" of the work or fight plan which was nurtured from 1918 until World War II when it was once again implemented. The results of the second venture, as in World War I, were negligible.\(^{150}\) Many of the weaknesses of the work or fight order were not really exposed during World War I because of the brief time the order was in effect. World War II proved that this panacea was only a mirage.

Growder's reply to Gompers was a perfect example of Machiavellian politics. The General denied that he had ever contrived to use Selective Service as a weapon to control industrial mobilization or direct America's workingmen.\(^{151}\) This, of course, is an outright lie -- to say that it is just a "distortion of the truth" would be to deny the shrewdness and total commitment of Crowder in his desires to win the war. In his communications with the War Department the Selective Service Director stated that with the induction of men from ages 18 through 45 the


\(^{151}\) *SS Library*, PMG File, 1917-1918, Letter of 17 August 1918.
additional skills which would be added for the mobilization effort could change the entire complexion of the war program. "The whole field of labor would be mapped before us with such infinite ramification of detail, with such scientific and supple exactitude," stated Crowder, "that we might liken the instrument placed at our hand to the keyboard of a piano and our finger tips ready for us to produce almost any desired harmonization of effect." 152 He likened his potential powers to that of a general who could marshall his regiments. Labor, too, under the work or fight plan, could be handled with "confidence and precision." This would place the United States in a "position more advantageous for the adjustment and mobilization of labor than any nation has been since the beginning of warfare." 153

This attitude, of course, was ignored in the correspondence to the labor head. Crowder reiterated an earlier public statement in which he commented that the purpose of the work or fight order was to put men in non-productive jobs into productive employment. 154 He concluded his letter by indicating he was following the Secretary of War's dictate, which had been sent to Gompers, not to

152. Crowder (Selective Draft and Manpower), p. 11.

153. Ibid.

regulate labor in the United States through the Selective Service system. Immediately upon learning of any attempt to coerce labor because of controversy arising out of strikes, lock-outs or other similar labor questions, stated Crowder, "I have, conformably with the Secretary's view, taken instant action to prevent such misuse and have promptly used the necessary corrective measures." 155

Missing from this letter was a reference to the extension of the age of the inductees, the original question posed by Duffy and Hutcheson. Crowder was reasonably assured of the outcome of his request and he could see no logical reason to debate with the AFL about it. Exactly two weeks after writing this letter to Gompers the Selective Service Bill was amended for the third time, increasing the draft age from 18 through 45. 156 "A measure," intoned Crowder, which had become essential to "accurate and orderly control of the poll of manpower." 157

Industrial conscription, if Crowder had been given a free hand by the President, would have been accomplished by the work or fight order. The reaction of organized labor and the objections of the Department of Labor combined to

155. Ibid.
thwart some of the designs of Selective Service. The Wilson administration decided that the Department of Labor, working through the Employment Service should handle war labor problems, moving workers from nonproductive to productive jobs and supervising skilled laborers in the armed forces.\textsuperscript{158} Certain other safeguards were awarded to organized labor. Employees could not be taken from one locality to another without the consent of the state director of the Employment Service, and not outside the state without the approval of Washington.\textsuperscript{159} The Employment Service was determined to avoid coercion in this program. Labor cannot be forced to comply, stated the Employment Service, "only an appeal made to patriotism and desire to serve" could accomplish the industrial goals sought by the United States government.\textsuperscript{160}

Selective Service certainly had overstepped its authority in the attempt to develop a more efficient use of manpower. The result was this gentle, but firm rebuke by the Wilson administration. A speech by Assistant Secretary of Labor, Louis T. Post, to the American Association of Commerce reflected the administration's position. "This democracy," according to Post, "will not stand for the

\textsuperscript{158} See Samuel Gompers, "U.S. Employment Service,"\textit{American Federationist}, Vol. 25, September, 1918, for labor's attitude toward the government's attitude.

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., p. 813.

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., p. 814.
conscription of men to work for the profit of other men.\footnote{161} Union men could then assume that they would be protected from the work or fight scheme outlined by Crowder, and the enactment of an industrial conscription law. However, there is a difference here between the theory and practice. Even in the fall of 1918 some draft boards were still using the work or fight measure as a means to conscript labor.

The sudden German surrender to the allied forces November 1918 brought a temporary conclusion to the fears of organized labor. Their concerns, however, would once again be aroused in the decade of the Twenties as the American military establishment attempted to work out plans for efficient mobilization procedures. Industrial conscription was envisioned as one of the prime goals to assure an adequate military effort. The experiences of World War I indicated that much improvement was needed in American mobilization endeavors. The industrial inefficiency which limited war production and created an industrial lag was obvious to both labor and military leaders. They both agreed that there was a need for elaborate planning and coordination during wartime, something which was lacking in the Great War. But these antagonists disagreed over the role which labor should play. Organized labor's reaction during the two decades between the wars was largely negative.

\footnote{161. \textit{NY Times}, 27 August 1918.}
It objected to, and fought against the demands for military and industrial conscription in a manner very similar to its position prior to World War I. With the death of Samuel Gompers, however, a new type of leadership emerged in the American Federation of Labor which significantly altered labor's approach to total mobilization. This situation was further complicated by the newly founded Congress of Industrial Organizations. Nevertheless the original question -- what is the major job of the skilled worker in time of war? Soldier or industrial producer -- remained unanswered.
CHAPTER II

ON THE PERIPHERY: ORGANIZED LABOR AND
DEFENSE STRATEGY BETWEEN THE WARS

In the two decades between the wars organized labor maintained its basic opposition to military and industrial conscription. This policy was constant and supported at the executive level by Samuel Gompers and his successor William Green of the American Federation of Labor, and by John L. Lewis and the newly formed Congress of Industrial Organizations. There was a unity in the fight against this form of "militarism" which escaped most other phases of labor endeavor. Organized labor in the post World War I period has been criticized because of its ineffectiveness in dealing with the political, economic, and social problems which confronted America during these difficult years. Probably the best illustration of this interpretation came from the pen of John Dewey. The noted scholar characterized organized labor in the post war period as a pressure group that was striving to be "blessed as a constructive, safe and patriotic organization." 1 This description certainly

does not illustrate the trade union movement and its attitude toward industrial mobilization. To be sure the bargaining position of organized labor had changed drastically in the post war era. Most of the nation wanted to forget the war and America's crusade to preserve democracy. Labor executives realized that if the trade union movement emphasized their mobilization fears a large portion of the American public would react negatively. Labor's relationship to the United States government had also changed drastically. The pressures of a war economy and mobilization needs could not be used as a lever by organized labor to gain political or economic concessions as had been the case in 1917-1918. Thus, even though labor's opposition to conscription remained constant, its tone of dissent was much less belligerent.

During the 1920's and 1930's, too, labor energies were directed toward domestic considerations, not the nebulous possibilities of some future wartime crisis. Organized labor had to concentrate on trying to maintain previously gained concessions, making progress in management-labor conferences, and "selling" trade unionism to a skeptical public, already influenced by the political and economic stagnancy of President Warren G. Harding's normalcy. Lastly, and possibly most significant, is the fact that the Department of War took the initiative in
formulating plans to provide for mobilization during war. Even if leaders of organized labor had wanted to provide leadership in the field of industrial mobilization planning they would have found their efforts thwarted by American military leaders. Mobilization plans were conceived and outlined by military personnel without the advice or consent of organized labor. Labor executives could only react to public statements made by defense leaders, or speculate upon ideas and plans which they assumed were under discussion. They were, of course, primarily concerned with those facets of mobilization planning which directly affected organized labor. It is within this framework that one must examine the role of labor in those confusing years between the wars. Trade union uncertainty is reflected in the inability of labor leaders to formulate a cohesive policy with regard to the growing European and Far Eastern crisis in the latter part of the 1930's.

At the conclusion of the Great War there seemed to be two major and quite divergent views about the position of organized labor in the postwar years. The two logical extremes on this topic were expressed by Enoch Crowder, Selective Service Director during World War I, and the newly elected Republican chief executive, Warren G. Harding. Although labor leaders were well aware of the views of these two men, they avoided any public discussion of the
matter. The trade unionists believed that neither of these positions would gain wide acceptance. Thus organized labor specifically sought a middle, or compromise position.

Enoch Crowder had developed a healthy respect for the labor movement as the result of his experiences during World War I. Labor's struggle against industrial conscription and its fight for representation on local and district draft boards indicated to the General that the organized labor movement was a force to be considered in the postwar era. His eloquent, but surprising evaluation of organized labor is well illustrated in the following passage.

The man with the hoe has broken the silence of the centuries. It is becoming more and more apparent every day that the most potent voice in the reconstruction of the world is the voice of labor . . . the man who works with his hands has begun to assert his strength in no uncertain way.

The glimpses that the Provost Marshal had of labor's potential in the Great War indicated to him that unionism must be considered in shaping a healthy postwar world. That Crowder should take such a stand is rather remarkable considering the fact that just two years prior to this he had shown his disdain for labor by demanding the "manipulation" of workers in order to secure necessary production in wartime. Nevertheless the General was so impressed by

the potent voice of the man with the hoe that he formulated a simple, but remarkable plan which would have greatly increased the political and economic position of organized labor in America. Crowder's plan would have provided for a national industrial parliament composed of representatives of business and labor who would work "side by side with and in aid of the political parliament, Congress," with a voice so "potent that its recommendations and requests could not be lightly treated." 4

Crowder was primarily concerned with bringing about a "franker relation between capital and labor." 5 American military potential could only be maintained intact if labor and business continued to coordinate their activities, and developed a high degree of cooperation. The General, as well as other key military leaders, was not impressed by the mobilization efforts of business and labor during the World War. He incorrectly assumed that the major difficulty was created by the basic antagonism between labor and business. 6 Crowder failed to perceive the tremendous problems created by the failure of the government or the military to develop realistic mobilization plans before America became involved


5. Ibid., p. 331.

in the war. At any rate, after the war he voiced the opinion that labor's cause was "righteous," but warned that organized labor should make only moderate demands of business so that "industrial stagnation" would not make America impotent. "If labor will crash the social structure down about its ears," prophesied the General, "it must, like Samson, find a common burial with those it would destroy." Crowder expressed his conviction that a dynamic and active labor movement would build a stronger America if it were allowed to work hand-in-hand, and on an equal basis with industry, the military, and most importantly the government. The man who works with his hands' must, according to Crowder, be given his proper position in America. Second-rate status would not do.

Warren G. Harding, as opposed to the Provost General, was not impressed by organized labor and its role in World War I. He felt that the trade unionists had taken advantage of the wartime situation to gain wage increases and strengthen unionism. Moreover, he was convinced that industrial conscription laws should have been enacted during the war so that every segment of society would have contributed its "fair share" to the war effort. During his three years in the White House Harding was the leading proponent of universal conscription. The President believed

this system would eliminate the special privileges of such important groups as skilled defense workers. Organized labor, of course, greatly feared this concept, which obviously was aimed at the conscription of labor.

In Harding's inaugural delivered 4 March 1921 he discussed the various means which could be used in time of crisis to consecrate "all Americans . . . body and soul, to national defense." In Harding's inaugural delivered 4 March 1921 he discussed the various means which could be used in time of crisis to consecrate "all Americans . . . body and soul, to national defense." "I can vision the ideal republic," intoned the President, "where every man and woman is called under the flag for assignment to duty for whatever service, military or civic, the individual is best fitted." Out of such "sublime sacrifice for country" would come a new sense of unity and spirit, "a new confidence and consecration, which would make our defense impregnable, our triumph assured." Harding emphasized, as did most proponents of industrial conscription, that such a procedure would insure economic efficiency. The newly elected President was disturbed by the freedom trade unionists enjoyed in World War I. He likewise hoped that in any future crisis defense mobilization would be handled by the government through total conscription.


9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.
The President's dedication to universal conscription was sincere. He did not want the United States to forget the mobilization chaos of World War I. Speaking in Helena, Montana, in 1923 Harding commented, "I have said before, and I choose to repeat it very deliberately now, that if war must come again ... we must draft all the nation." 11 The President declared that every phase of life should be mobilized. This would make America "slower to make war and more swift in bringing it to a triumphant close." 12 Harding was convinced that universal conscription would have avoided many of the tragedies committed in the First World War. Organized labor, however, still envisioned this as a means to crush trade unionism in the United States.

By avoiding the extremes of either the Harding or Crowder position, organized labor was able to maintain a respectable moderate position with regard to military and industrial conscription and the role trade unionism would play in the post war era. Moreover, Samuel Gompers realized that the AFL would, out of necessity, have to work privately and informally to win the support of key military and political leaders in the delicate bid for recognition of organized labor as a key participant in mobilization planning. This was a long range program. Gompers did not

11. NY Times, 30 June 1923.
12. Ibid.
envision immediate acceptance of organized labor as an integral part of the defense oligarchy whose burdensome task was to create a realistic defense strategy. Labor's negative attitude toward military and industrial conscription, moreover, had already alienated many military leaders. There were few successes in the 1920's or 1930's, but during World War II Gompers' technique reached fruition. Many military and political stalwarts were impressed enough by labor's activities during World War I and between the wars that they joined with the trade unionists in opposing a demand for labor conscription, and the reviving of the old 'work or fight' policy of Enoch Crowder. Furthermore, during the Second World War labor advice on matters of mobilization planning and organization were sought in a manner never dreamed about in 1917.

Colonel Edward A. Fitzpatrick, a Selective Service official and key advisor to General Lewis B. Hershey during the Second World War, provides an excellent illustration of how organized labor was able to convince some military men of the logic of labor's position. Colonel Fitzpatrick, a strong exponent of industrial conscription in 1917, had completely reversed his position by 1940 when he moved back into the Selective Service hierarchy. After examining the possibilities of universal conscription during wartime,

the Colonel asserted that "the most critical part of the whole program to conscript everything is the proposed conscription of labor." 14 Fitzpatrick, examining the role of labor in World War I from the vantage point of two decades of analysis, commented that conscription could only be viewed in light of the "inspired leadership of Samuel Gompers." The AFL chief had established a record in World War I, stated the Colonel, "which may be recalled with pride and satisfaction." 15 "The scourge of war," continued Fitzpatrick, will have more effect upon "labor and its leadership than on the other elements of the American people." 16 The Colonel concluded that as a consequence of labor's sincere and patriotic leadership there was no "need for such a proposal as conscription of labor." 17

It was no accident that many people were impressed by labor's role during World War I. Samuel Gompers from 1919 until his death in 1924 lectured annually at the Army War College in Washington, D.C. and at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, describing vividly the yeoman tasks performed by America's workingmen. 18

15. Ibid., p. 137.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
Green continued this tradition, and a number of other key union leaders, including John Frey and John B. Colpoys, also lectured before various military groups. 19

The message labor wished to convey to military and political leaders was brilliantly presented by Samuel Gompers in a speech to the Army War College 7 March 1922. 20 His lecture topic was "Organized labor and the War of 1917," but the speech actually centered around labor's primary concerns in the postwar period. These included the essential questions of conscription, and the equally important problem of allowing the trade unionists to be an integral part of mobilization planning. Gompers envisioned the trade unions as an intermediary between the "forces of democracy and special privilege." It was for this reason that labor should be intimately involved in mobilization strategy. Wartime conditions, warned Gompers, would once again arouse tensions between these forces. "In such a struggle," said the AFL head, "the masses of the people necessarily represent the ideals of democracy." But more importantly organized labor represents the "vanguard" of the people, "the one organization whose sole purpose is to further and make permanent the underlying spirit of repub-


lican institutions." It is for this reason that the government and military "must recognize the organized labor movement as the agency through which it must cooperate with wage earners." This would not be accomplished arbitrarily by government control of industry and labor, but "in accord with plans agreed upon by representatives of the government and those engaged and employed in the industry." Writing in the American Federationist two years later, and just shortly before his death, Gompers once again articulated his ever increasing concern about conscription.

The long time AFL patriarch mused that "in theory universal conscription in time of war is correct," but what would happen if it were ever actually put into practice? Would it be used to just curb unnatural "profiteering in the next war," pondered Gompers, or would it be "a means of destroying our economic life and ruining our standards of life and work after war?" For Gompers at the end of his life, just as during the Great Conflict, labor gains could not be sacrificed to the false gods of conscription. Labor must maintain a rigid opposition to those devices which could

21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
24. Ibid., p. 462.
destroy trade unionism in America.

Gompers' successor, William Green, was quick to indicate his acceptance of AFL policies regarding industrial and military conscription as formulated by the union's founder. Green, whose "ineffective leadership" in the years between the wars has been deplored, certainly did not drastically alter his predecessor's approach to defense problems. On some occasions he was even more belligerent than Gompers in his attacks upon mobilization strategy, and what he referred to as the growth of American militarism. Green's personality and pressure tactics were not as dramatic as those of Gompers', but in the field of military strategy and conscription they were just as effective. In an American Federationist editorial published in 1925, Green attacked the efforts of the War Department to establish a National Defense Day. He condemned this as a blatant attempt to build "militaristic practices." "There is no need," warned the new AFL head, "to attempt to mobilize the nation as a war machine." He, like Gompers, emphasized the fact that organized labor had performed admirably in World War I, but noted that even then trade unionists

25. Cited in Morris, p. 84.
27. Ibid., p. 633.
opposed militarism. It was true that America needed adequate defenses, but the AFL opposed "building up huge war machines which in themselves are a menace to peace."\(^{28}\) Green also renewed labor opposition to military conscription in peacetime. When several conscription bills were introduced into Congress the AFL head, backed by union resolutions, quickly condemned them as being incompatible with the designs of a democratic society.\(^{29}\)

The AFL was particularly concerned about numerous Congressional plans which would have given the President power to conscript workers during a national emergency. At the 1924 annual convention union leaders vigorously attacked such a proposal.\(^{30}\) "It is difficult to conceive," declared a union resolution, "of a more subtle and vicious proposal to subordinate life and liberty to the exaltation of property and material wealth."\(^{31}\) Trade unionists were convinced that conscription would have placed an inordinate amount of pressure upon the worker while the "captains of industry" would be free to secure the monetary rewards of a capitalistic society. Carrying the argument one step

\(^{28}\) Ibid.


\(^{30}\) Proceedings 1924, p. 69.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., p. 260.
further the AFL declared that "labor shall not be conscripted unless all classes of citizens are conscripted and then only for the purposes of repelling an invasion of our land or in defending the institutions of our country when challenged by force of arms."  

At the next four annual conventions the AFL issued general statements regarding military and industrial conscription. There seemed to be a general belief that conscription, at least for the moment, had become a dead issue. In fact at the 1928 meeting conscription was decried as an impractical measure which Congress could not possibly put into law because of adverse public reaction. The following year, however, brought a dramatic reversal of attitude. The reason is apparent. In 1929 the War Department began introducing to the public its mobilization plans. The 1929 plan and those which followed had provisions for some manner of conscription or labor control, the precise situation that organized labor wanted to avoid at any cost. It was generally believed by labor leaders that the War Department's mobilization plans, although geared for a wartime situation, would create a favorable attitude in Congress for the passage of some form of peacetime conscription. Thus, labor's reaction

32. Ibid.
33. Proceedings 1928, p. 82.
34. Proceedings 1929, pp. 82-83.
to the proposed conscription laws at the end of the decade were much more belligerent than at any other time during the 1920's.

Labor leaders were quick to point out that the United States had just signed the Kellogg-Briand Pact which attempted to outlaw war. "If the nations that sign the Kellogg Pact are sincere and will respect its declarations," argued labor, "what is the need of a conscription law that will create an enormous fighting force?" The AFL maintained that the Civilian Military Training Camps were quite capable of handling the training of military personnel. This position itself is remarkable considering the attitude of organized labor toward the 'Plattsburg Idea' prior to World War I. Just three years earlier tempers had flared abruptly when William Green had successfully led a fight to have the AFL convention accept an Executive Council Report endorsing the CMTC. At that time Green told his opponents that the "training, purposes and objectives of the military training camps," were misunderstood. Green and a number of other union officials who had visited the camp

35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Proceedings 1924, pp. 295-296; also see Morris, pp. 76-79.
38. Letter of Green to Ross, 21 July 1926 as cited in Morris, p. 76.
at Plattsburg, New York, were quite impressed with the "patriotic endeavors" they saw there. At any rate the wounds created in the AFL over this issue healed quite rapidly in 1929 with the disclosure of the army mobilization plans. Who could possibly argue that military or industrial conscription was preferable to the CMTC?

In the decade after the Great War the fears of labor did not change significantly. "It is practically certain," stated a 1929 convention resolution, "that under industrial conscription the trade unions would be either dissolved or prevented from functioning in any effective manner." Military planning was still regarded as a means to destroy organized labor in America. The union leaders could only conclude that no matter what the relationship between the government and labor during the war, when peace was signed "the workers would be placed at the mercy of the employers." Thus, industrial conscription would benefit "reactionary employers," and not the basic interests of the nation.

Although organized labor continued to stress the belief that industrial conscription would benefit the business leaders in America and give them a preponderant amount of economic strength, there was an ever increasing

40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
militant minority that charged that in reality it was organized labor which benefited in time of war. The emotions and the complexities of this particular controversy are enormous, but some definite threads of cohesion are detectable in the accusations directed against American workers. The basic charge was that the soldier who had served on the front lines in World War I sacrificed more for the war effort than did the American laborer. Moreover, the soldier received little compensation for his efforts while the skilled worker reaped great financial gains. "While avoiding the personal dangers of battle," commented one army officer, the skilled worker was able to "profit" from the war by bettering his "financial condition." There was a growing conviction by many persons that the American laborer had made personal economic advances while the soldier on the battlefield really paid the price. When the soldier returned from serving his country he found that the good jobs were taken. This was indication enough for many advocates of conscription that the worker had actually betrayed America's fighting men. Consequently, "many have been led to advocate the conscription of labor during war as a means of equally distributing the burdens" of war.

42. SS Library, F-59, Major James Cox, "Labor in War," Research for the War Department, submitted 28 October 1930, Section G-1.

43. Ibid.
Eventually the principal support for this position came from the American Legion. As early as 1929 the Legion vehemently pushed a Universal Draft bill which specifically demanded the drafting of men in industrial occupations. The AFL, of course, denied the validity of the Legion's position, but this did not alleviate the difficulty of facing the War Department's mobilization plans and trying to avoid a public battle with the popular American Legion. From 1929 until the mid-1940's these two organizations were at loggerheads over this issue. The conflict never was resolved. This situation alone tends to cast doubt upon the assertion of a noted labor historian that the American Legion and the AFL formed an "alliance" in the 1920's which has "proved to be a lasting one, and it is carried on today by the AFL-CIO." It is true that Samuel Gompers had spoken of the "absolute cordial relations" existing between the AFL and the American Legion at the 1922 AFL Convention, and had himself addressed the Legion Conventions in 1922 and 1923 while William Green performed the same duties at the Legion meetings in 1928 and 1930. However, the fact remains that the Legionnaires constantly backed the demands for

44. Proceedings 1929, p. 82.

45. Morris, p. 74.

industrial conscription in time of war, a position irrevocably opposed by organized labor. In this instance what was said for public consumption and what was happening behind the scenes were completely different. Neither organized labor nor the American Legion was willing to compromise on the conscription issue.

Organized labor was definitely concerned about the public's image of the role played by the American worker during wartime. Its sensitivity to this issue is well illustrated by an address to the Army War College in 1931 by AFL legislative representative, John B. Colpoys. "These stories as to the profiteering of labor accomplished the purpose of their inventors," argued Colpoys, "in that they made the boys who came back from overseas very dissatisfied with the indifference and the shabby treatment accorded them." He also indicated that although soldiers had been led to believe that while they "were fighting in the trenches" union workers were living a life of luxury, actually the "opposite was true." "It was not labor that profiteered," contended the labor spokesman, "but the so-called captains of industry who exacted a profit that was unreasonable and unconscionable." These fabrications of

47. SS Library, F-59, Army War College Lectures, 1922-1934. Lecture by John B. Colpoys delivered 13 October 1931.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.
the truth had led many to desire the conscription of labor. "I want to say, in no uncertain language," continued Colpoys, "that we are unalterably opposed to the conscription of our civilian population in time of war or time of peace."\(^{50}\)  
Colpoys did, however, present one quite dramatic innovation with regard to the AFL and conscription. He indicated that organized labor would support a military conscription bill "provided it would be carried out justly and equitably."\(^{51}\)  
Thus, labor in 1931, as in 1917, was willing to accept selective service if absolutely necessary. Industrial conscription, however, was to be avoided at any cost. Organized labor, including the newly founded Congress of Industrial Organizations, maintained this basic position throughout the 1930's. It was not until 1939 that the trade unionists again publicly discussed the issue of industrial or military conscription.\(^{52}\) The furor at that time was occasioned by the announcement of the now infamous "M Day Plan" developed so brilliantly by the War Department.\(^{53}\)

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50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.


It is to be remembered, of course, that the whole series of questions which arose in the two decades between the wars concerning defense preparations and mobilization schemes were of secondary importance to organized labor. The problems arising from the depression, and the many difficulties created by the fissure in the trade union movement were enough to keep most union leaders occupied with domestic concerns. It is true, also, that the myriad defense plans under discussion by top government and military officials greatly interested, but at the same time frustrated organized labor since it was unable to participate in the formulation of those mobilization concepts. It is in these years between the wars that the most brilliant and controversial outlines for military and industrial conscription were conceived by key defense personnel. The various military plans, which incorporated in some manner the idea of conscription, provide the background for the brilliantly "fought" political and intellectual battle between military leaders, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and organized labor over the question of defense preparation prior to America's entrance into World War II. Labor's ability to influence the outcome was quite negligible -- truly American trade unionists were on the periphery of the titanic struggle to formulate defense strategy.

At this point it is necessary to shift the focus of
attention to the War Department and its role in those frustrating years between the wars. One can easily sympathize with the complicated situation faced by American military leaders after World War I. Most military men wanted to retain some vestiges of American military strength but could not because of the tremendous public pressure to demobilize American troops as rapidly as possible. Probably Harry S. Truman was correct in his assertion that "no people in history have been known to disengage themselves so quickly from the ways of war" as have Americans. 

Both Truman and English author D.W. Brogan contend that this necessity to demobilize is an intricate part of the 'American character.' Since Americans hate war, it is quite natural that they should be antagonistic toward the idea of "maintaining a large standing army" after hostilities have ceased. "But the tragic experience following World War I," theorized Truman, "taught us that this admirable trait could lead to catastrophe."

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56. Truman, p. 510.

unpreparedness prior to World War II. American military leaders in the post World War II period wanted to avoid the demobilization fiasco which occurred after the Great War, but could not convince the public that "we needed to temper and adjust the rate of demobilization of our forces so we would be able to meet our new obligations in the world." 58

This difficult situation was further complicated by what Harold W. Thatcher, noted military expert, described as

The frank cynicism of the younger generation, the spirit of disillusionment which pervaded the older as well as the younger generation, and the preoccupation of Congress with methods of avoiding future wars. (This) . . . constituted a milieu unfavorable to successful planning for industrial mobilization in a future war. 59

The task which American military men hoped to perform was conceived and organized in an atmosphere overwhelmingly opposed to preparation for future wars. The negative reaction of such literary figures as John Dos Passos, Ernest Hemingway and John Steinbeck, coupled with executive and Congressional inertia could only mean the destruction of any real attempt to formulate effective mobilization policies. 60

58. Ibid.


This feeling was fostered and supported by organized labor which always envisioned mobilization planning as a threat to unionism in the United States. 61

Military experts during this period claimed that regardless whether one interpreted American industrial performance in World War I as a tremendous success or a failure, one basic assumption had to be made. This was, as these defense strategists conceived it, that any "sudden large-scale economic mobilization" would 'inherently' cause organizational difficulties in a complex industrial society. 62

Indeed, the primary lesson to be gleaned from the Great War was the "importance of the materiel side of modern war." Mobilization planners must seek to avoid the "inevitable time lag between the mobilization of troops and the mobilization of their all important supporting equipment and supplies." 63 To these hardbitten military realists it was obvious that the fighting of a modern war required elaborate planning. The major problem facing military men centered about the question of how to gain public acceptance for defense planning.

Congress had provided necessary machinery to strengthen American defense preparations when it passed the

63. Ibid.
National Defense Act of 1920. In a momentous decision Congress had placed the entire responsibility for industrial preparation in the hands of the Assistant Secretary of War.\textsuperscript{64} In the now famous Section 5a of that act the Assistant Secretary was charged with the responsibility of performing two major duties. "The first is to arrange in detail for the production of Army munitions in war . . . the second task . . . is to develop broad plans for the mobilization of national industry to meet the country's complete industrial needs in war."\textsuperscript{65} For the next twenty years these two responsibilities became the primary concern of the Assistant Secretary of War.\textsuperscript{66} In the autumn of 1921 an extensive reorganization of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of War (OASW) was undertaken with the aid, and in close conjunction with the War Department General Staff. Almost immediately a minor crisis developed when certain General Staff members began objecting to what appeared to be the almost unlimited prerogatives of the Assistant Secretary of War. This problem was quickly resolved by a special investigating board headed by the very respected General James G. Harboard.\textsuperscript{67} The General Staff's strategic power

\textsuperscript{64} Thatcher, p. 5; Blum (M Day Plan), p. 2.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{66} Smith (Army Mobilization), p. 40.

\textsuperscript{67} Thatcher, pp. 6-8; Blum (M Day Plan), pp. 2-3.
position would not be jeopardized. It was specifically designated as the agency to develop America's war plans while the Assistant Secretary of War was to handle the more complex and nebulous duties of outlining plans for the mobilization of industry. Of course, both offices were to work in close conjunction with each other, and pertinent data was to be exchanged without delay.

The next step in organizing mobilization procedures was the establishment of the Procurement Division OASW which consisted of two sections -- a Current Procurement Branch, responsible for peacetime logistics, and the more significant Planning Branch. The latter section became the nucleus for the most important industrial mobilization plans from its inception in 1921 until it was formally disbanded 14 February 1942 and replaced by the Resources Branch, Office of the Under Secretary of War. From the Planning Branch emerged a number of key agencies which also helped the Assistant Secretary in the development of procurement planning. These include the Army-Navy Munitions Board (ANMB) created in 1922, the Army Industrial College (AIC) organized in 1924, the various planning sections for the supply of arms and provisions, and the most important agency as far as organized labor was concerned, the very

68. Thatcher, p. 9; Blum (M Day Plan), p. 3.

69. Smith (Army Mobilization), p. 40; Thatcher, Chapter Two.
controversial planning division for the implementation of an Industrial Mobilization Plan (IMP) which would function in the event of a war emergency.  

Organized labor had little contact with the ANMB although its duties included the coordinating of the acquisition of supplies and munitions for war purposes. This Board became quite active in the 1930's as world tensions increased. The major burden of the ANMB fell upon the Army since Naval experts did not anticipate any significant need for expansion if war should come. The World War I experience indicated that naval supply shortages were much less severe than those of the army. It should also be noted that the Army Branch of the ANMB did most of the work on the various Industrial Mobilization Plans between the wars.

The Army Industrial College was a rather unique experience in the history of the Planning Branch of the OASW. The AIC was the first school of its kind for the extensive study of all aspects of the economic life of a nation which might be thrust into "total war."  

70. Thatcher, pp. 60-62.
73. Smith (Army Mobilization), p. 43.
controlled by the Planning Branch, the AIC grew rapidly during the 1930's until it shed its Army shroud and became a truly interservice organization. Selected officers who were to be trained at the college were intensively schooled in a curriculum of lectures, seminars, and extensive problem assignments. The topics under consideration ran from the principles of industrial mobilization to a minute study of the major industries of the United States.74 The AIC worked in close accord with the ANME, and the Planning Branch (OASW) in the development of the various Industrial Mobilization Plans. Many ideas incorporated in the M Day Plan (IMP) were directly attributed to the faculty and students of the AIC.75

During the two decades between the wars organized labor developed an intense dislike for the AIC. The major concern centered about the refusal of the industrial college to establish any type of working relationship with trade unionists. For instance, during the 1930's only two labor leaders, John Frey and William M. Leiserson, spoke at the college. The largest single group of lecturers came from America's major corporations.76 To American labor leaders this meant that the AIC was sympathetic to large

74. Thatcher, pp. 23-42.
75. Smith (Army Mobilization), p. 44.
business, and they assumed that any contributions the college made to mobilization planning would prove to be detrimental to organized labor. Thus, one of labor's most violent, but yet realistic charges levelled at the IMP's was that in formulating mobilization planning most of the data used was supplied by the AIC. This material was quite probably biased, and most certainly not beneficial to the labor movement.

The last of these topics to be considered, the planning division which had the tremendous task of formulating an acceptable Industrial Mobilization Plan, is the most significant single military and political development which affected labor until just prior to America's entrance into World War II. Once again labor, although vitally concerned, was on the periphery of this important political struggle which involved President Roosevelt, Planning Branch (OASW), and the War Department. The chronology, intricacies, and problems of what actually happened in this curious episode are amazingly complex. Three eminent historians have written literally hundreds of pages trying to unravel the complete story, yet controversy and confusion still surround these events. 77 For the purposes of this

77. The basic problems are traced by Blum, Smith and Thatcher. Thatcher's work is the primary source -- both Blum and Smith follow the general outline, and reach the basic conclusions that Thatcher presented in his 1945 publication.
paper only a limited survey of these myriad developments
will be presented, indicating where organized labor became
involved, the basic outlines of the various mobilization
plans, and the factors which led the President to make his
decision not to implement this carefully detailed expression
of American military ingenuity.

In reality public interest in mobilization planning
was very slight until 1930 when Congress established a War
Policies Commission which was charged with a series of
duties, including the exploration of "policies to be
pursued in the event of war." This gave the Army, and
particularly the Planning Branch (OASW), an opportunity to
display publicly the mobilization plans they had been
developing so diligently for the past decade. Just one
year after the creation of the War Policies Commission
Army Chief of Staff, Douglas MacArthur, was able to present
to the American people their first view of Industrial
Mobilization Planning as conceived by the OASW. Three
other mobilization plans, those of 1933, 1936 and the most
controversial in 1939, were announced in the decade of the
1930's. Each of these IMP's dealt with the specific
problems of material procurement, but of considerably more

78. SS Library, F-54, Special Memorandum on the
War Policies Commission and comments by MacArthur.

79. Ibid. ; also see Thatcher, Chapter Five.
interest to organized labor and the general public were the sections dealing with the questions of over-all planning for industrial mobilization. These latter problems were categorized under various proposals indicating such things as which governmental agencies already in existence could be expanded to aid in wartime mobilization, where there was a need to create new 'super agencies' to handle specific mobilization questions, and the enumeration of the necessary steps the nation would have to take in the transition from peace to war. The most controversial feature of the IMP's were the super agencies. The agencies were grouped under such headings as War Trade, War Finance, War Labor and Selective Service. The leaders of organized labor greatly feared these agencies because they believed that in wartime such an agency as Selective Service could gain almost unlimited powers. Ultimately the super agency was the feature which President Roosevelt could not accept in 1939 when the IMP was backed by such notable personalities as Bernard Baruch and Assistant Secretary of War, Louis Johnson.

The IMP super agencies were pliable concepts which could be altered and remolded from time to time. Their numbers fluctuated from four to eight during the 1930's, and all had equal authority until 1939 when the War Resources

80. Thatcher, pp. 187-294; Blum (M Day Plan), pp. 3-5.
Administration was designated as the 'supreme' super agency which had direct control over price control, finance, trade, and labor. The WRA had almost complete control over the American economy during war, a situation which would have resulted in a drastic curtailment of presidential powers if it had been instituted. Of course, a perceptive chief executive like President Franklin D. Roosevelt could not, and would not, accept such a potential power rival.

Labor's fears with regard to the super agencies were well founded. Major Dwight D. Eisenhower delivered an address to the Army Industrial College on the subject, "Changing Conceptions Regarding the Creation of Super-Agencies," which realistically shows the completely powerless position given to labor by the creators of the IMP's. After tracing the changing attitudes toward mobilization planning from 1921 through 1930, the Major observed that "It is, of course, axiomatic that any plan developed for the control of industry in war, and which will have a direct bearing on the activities of the Army and Navy in war," must reflect

82. Blum (M Day Plan), p. 18.
the views of a "joint Army-Navy-Business Man's plan." Noticeable in this analysis is, of course, the complete disregard of labor participation in such mobilization planning. Eisenhower, quite in contrast to some of his colleagues, also stressed the fact that these emergency organizations would always be subordinate to the President, and could function only with his approval.

It was the ill fortune of the army to have the various mobilization plans presented to the American public at a time when anti-war feeling was at a peak. The Nye Committee Reports, serious demands for a war referendum, and a growing concern that President Roosevelt was attempting to involve the United States in the deteriorating world situation had already steeled the American public in its conviction to avoid any set of circumstances which might lead to a wartime situation. Thus, it should not be surprising that the mobilization plans were immediately characterized as a "blueprint for fascism" by its opponents. H. E. Fey, one of the IMP's most violent detractors, stated that such planning would allow "industrialists to adjust strikes," and fix wages. But more importantly Fey believed

84. Ibid.
85. Ibid.
86. Thatcher, pp. 256-260; also see Smith (Army Mobilization), p. 83.
"social legislation which is in the least obstructive will be scrapped, and everything necessary to winning the war will be sacrificed — except property rights." Although organized labor never voiced such radical opposition to mobilization planning, the trade unionists were aware, as Gompers had been in World War I, that union gains could quickly be eliminated by stringent wartime regulation. For most segments of American society the fear of involvement in another great war in the twentieth century was very real. However the equally apparent need to prepare the nation for the possibility of war became dramatically clear as Adolph Hitler began to realize the ghastly horrors of Mein Kampf. The growing crisis in the Far East, although not as apparent to the general American public, also convinced the army of both the necessity and wisdom of its mobilization efforts.

In the last analysis the burden of the failure to attract public support for the M Day Plan must fall upon the shoulders of the army. This is doubly significant since President Roosevelt, a political realist, would certainly have been more amiable to such a plan if the public had been convinced of the righteousness of its designs. As one historian has indicated, the army blundered when it did not attempt to educate the people to the significance of

the M Day plans. Of paramount importance in this regard was the "loss of contact with one increasingly important segment of American society -- organized labor." 88

There is considerable validity in the assertion that by alienating organized labor, the War Department seriously jeopardized its mobilization plans. The failure to include trade union leaders in the discussions dealing with wartime production created an attitude of suspicion with regard to the "real designs" of defense planning. Yet the War Department seems to have followed a deliberate course to antagonize trade union leaders. In the 1920's only William Green and John Frey of the AFL had been consulted about mobilization plans, and this seems due to the fact that Frey was a Lieutenant Colonel in the army reserves. But what is even more amazing is the fact that John L. Lewis and the newly created CIO were never contacted at all, a truly remarkable development considering the dominant role labor would necessarily play in any of the M Day plans. 89

In this connection the War Department also seriously injured its cause by failing to involve the Department of Labor in war production discussions. Secretary of Labor, Frances Perkins, bitterly denounced this unfortunate


89. Thatcher, pp. 201-203; Blum (M Day Plan), p. 7.
development and asked President Roosevelt to rectify the situation. The President declined to intervene at this time, but later indicated that he was sympathetic to the situation faced by his labor secretary. "This reluctance to consult with organized labor and the Department of Labor," commented labor historian Albert Blum, "was in sharp contrast to the willingness, even eagerness, to consult with business." This discrepancy is hard to understand on a pragmatic basis. Trade union strength was increasing quite rapidly during the 1930's, and organized labor could count upon the support of the President and various other high government officials in legislation affecting unionism in America. Also by consulting exclusively with businessmen, the War Department ran the risk of offending not only the leadership of the AFL and CIO, but such key men in the Roosevelt administration as Harold Ickes, Henry Wallace, and Henry Jackson.  

The most pertinent episode in the rise and decline of the M Day Plan can readily be traced from June 1937 when Louis Johnson was appointed Assistant Secretary of War until President Roosevelt's rejection of the plan in

90. Thatcher, pp. 245-246; Blum (M Day Plan), p. 7.  
92. Ibid., p. 8.
September 1939. Johnson, supported by the army and numerous respected statesmen, attempted to mobilize Congressional support for the M Day Plan. The Assistant Secretary believed a favorable reaction from Congress would convince the President of the necessity for supporting such defense planning.

The newly appointed Assistant Secretary of War quickly indicated his interest in industrial mobilization planning when he met with World War I mobilization expert Bernard Baruch in an attempt to gain Baruch's support for the establishment of an advisory board to examine the IMP's. Evidently Baruch was impressed with Johnson's idea because in the summer of 1938 he discussed the matter with the President, although no practical results were forthcoming. In the meantime the Assistant Secretary urged the army to once again revise the mobilization plans with the hope that the new effort would eliminate some of the basic objections directed at the earlier plans. Johnson quite correctly believed that the world situation was so volatile that the United States might become involved at any time. Thus, the Secretary was confident that his request of 8 August 1939 to the President to establish a War Resources Board, which would evaluate the army industrial mobilization

93. Ibid., pp. 8-26.
efforts, would ultimately result in the successful adoption of the 1939 IMP. The President, keenly aware of the impending crisis, agreed to the establishment of such an agency. However, it is clear that both Assistant Secretary Johnson and the President had dramatically different concepts of the role that such a Board would assume. Johnson envisioned the War Resources Board as the eventual coordinating agency, the War Resources Administration, which had been so carefully outlined in the 1939 IMP, while President Roosevelt interpreted it as a review board. He most certainly did not believe that it would be an executive agency with broad powers as anticipated by the IMP.94

Almost immediately the War Resources Board was organized with Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., Chairman of the Board of U.S. Steel, appointed chairman. Stettinius, an executive acceptable to both business and the Roosevelt administration, had worked with government officials during the establishment of the National Recovery Administration, and performed yeoman tasks in ending the open shop in big steel.95 Although some critics, Assistant Secretary Johnson being the most notable, felt that the more prestigious Bernard Baruch should have been given the chairman-

94. Ibid., p. 11.
ship, the President specifically ruled against this
appointment, although the reasons for his position on this
matter have never been clarified. 96 Five other prominent
men were chosen to serve as members of the WRB and none of
them were in any way affiliated with organized labor, giving
further illustration of the relatively powerless position
that the trade unionists found themselves assuming in this
whole question of industrial mobilization planning. 97

Shortly after the creation of the WRB Frances Perkins
sent a memorandum to the President suggesting that a trade
union representative be appointed to the Board. She
indicated that organized labor would quite justifiably protest
this omission. 98 As the Secretary of Labor predicted the
American Federationist, and a number of AFL and CIO officials
soon condemned the Board. The trade unionists predicted
that such an agency would work against the basic interests
of the people since it did not contain representatives of
organized labor. 99

96. Ibid.

97. War Department-Navy Department Joint Release,
9 August 1939 on the formation of War Resources Board,
SS Library, F-52; also see NY Times, 9, 10 August 1939.

98. Hyde Park Library, President's Official Files,
Perkins memo to the President 11 August 1939, verification
of citation in Blum (M Day Plan), p. 13.

99. American Federationist, Vol. 46, September,
1939, No. 9, p. 418; also see Tobin and Bidwell, p. 51,
and Janeway, pp. 60-61.
It seems apparent now that as early as mid-August 1939 the President had decided against implementing the 1939 mobilization plan, although the reports of the War Resources Board to the chief executive were very favorable to its adoption. The Board was quite impressed with the pyramidal organization established by the IMP to direct the nation's economic mobilization. The most questionable feature of the plan was the establishment of a War Resources Administration whose director, responsible only to the President, would "have the final word to say on all matters pertaining to economic mobilization." This was more power than the President would allow any government agency to have, even if it meant more efficiency in production. Roosevelt felt that the executive office demanded that he, not some super agency, should control the complexities of mobilization production. Do you, asked the President, want me to "abdicate" my constitutional responsibilities? The WRB quickly took the President's hint and in a revised evaluation indicated that this super agency should be deleted. On 12 October 1939 it presented to Roosevelt a plan much more in line with the chief executive's desires. The

100. Blum (M Day Plan), p. 16.

President decided to 'pocket-veto' the report, refusing to take any action on it or present it to the nation because of his belief that public reaction would be largely negative.\(^{102}\) He wanted to avoid any speculation that he was preparing the nation for war. After the fall of Poland and the developments leading to the period of the "phony war" Americans were even more adamant in their desires to avoid entanglement with European difficulties.

The President, of course, was still interested in preparing the nation for war, and eventually he instituted his own version of economic mobilization which contrasted significantly with the desires of Bernard Baruch, Louis Johnson, the WRB, and the military men who formulated the IMP.\(^{103}\) "What Roosevelt wanted . . . was to be Boss," he did not want a newly created agency to have tremendous powers, "all roads led to the White House, not to a War Resources Administrator."\(^{104}\) In this incident the President illustrated the same characteristics which motivated his handling of Congress, the Supreme Court, and the war effort in the 1940's. The aristocrat in the White House used his executive powers to strengthen his presidential position and eliminate power blocs which might compete with him.

\(^{102}\) Thatcher, p. 299.

\(^{103}\) Smith (Army Mobilization), pp. 104-107.

With the failure of this curious episode in the history of economic mobilization organized labor breathed a sigh of relief. The outcome was beneficial to organized labor, yet its role was an incidental one which influenced the President's decision only in a very peripheral manner. It is true, of course, that the War Department could have strengthened its argument by gaining the support of labor but deigned not to do so because of its apparent conviction that organized labor would never support industrial mobilization in any form. This assumption by the military may have been incorrect. Trade unionists realized that the growing international crisis necessitated mobilization planning; however, they viewed the War Department's IMP as a means to destroy organized labor through the very powerful super agencies. Dread of these agencies, coupled with the increased fear of industrial conscription and the general belief in the expanding power and eminence of big business, resulted in the largely negative reaction of American trade unionists. It cannot be denied, however, that labor's attitude would have been quite different if trade union representatives had been actually involved in mobilization planning.

The great tragedy of the situation can be seen in the increased antagonism between America's labor and military leaders. This caused considerable difficulties in the early
stages of American participation in World War II. From 1939 until mid-way in the war effort there persisted, among military men, a general belief that labor had influenced President Roosevelt in his decision not to implement the M Day Plan. This, as has already been indicated, was not true. The President's stand was based solely upon his own desires, not those of organized labor. Roosevelt was certainly not sensitive to labor demands or fears when he pressed Congress for a national service bill in 1944 which would have resulted in the conscription of American union men. On this occasion, as in the discussion over mobilization planning, military and labor leaders levelled recriminating charges at one another. This type of atmosphere was not conducive to the establishment of a healthy relationship needed by a nation struggling under the burdens of a two-front war.

This development brings the story of labor between the two wars to a significant watershed. Certainly the key episode during these years revolved around the Planning Branch of the OASW. Although the events surrounding the Planning Branch are complex and the fitting together of the basic historical data sometimes resembles an attempt to complete a difficult puzzle, it is apparent that the fundamental outlines of the story have been revealed by modern historians. The historical development of the various
branches of the OASW, the general reaction of organized labor to such planning, and the events leading to the defeat of the M Day Plan can be discussed with some certainty. Much more difficult to ascertain, but of significantly more value to this study are the implications of the markedly increased antagonism between American labor and the military during these decades. The key concern, then, is to determine why the War Department did not work with labor when it would have benefited by doing so, and why some conciliatory force, either from the government or one of the opposing factions, did not emerge as the situation became increasingly acute. These questions are of extreme importance because of the events which took place during World War II. Certainly the antagonism had not abated by that time, and upon occasion intensified under the rigors of a wartime situation. If there would have been more communication between organized labor and American military leaders many mobilization problems would have been eliminated during the Second World War. The seeds of discontent had been sown in the decades between the wars, and to understand the complexities of the problems facing mobilization planning in the 1940's it is necessary to turn back to a series of events which had taken place some years earlier.

The most obvious reason for antagonism between labor and the military hierarchy was simply a lack of contact.
With the exceptions of a few formal talks before the Army War College and the Army Industrial College there were few discussions between labor leaders and military men which could have created an atmosphere more congenial for establishing an informal working partnership. In the early years of mobilization planning trade unionists were quite willing to work with the Planning Branch in an attempt to develop an acceptable IMP. This was particularly true of the AFL under William Green's leadership. In 1930 a key figure in mobilization planning could state quite truthfully that

The American Federation of Labor has cooperated in the preparation of our plans for the best utilization of labor in war. A high official of the Federation (John Frey) has participated as a reserve officer in the course of instruction given in this office during the year. The assistance of this organization is greatly appreciated.

The Army Chief of Staff, General Charles P. Summerall, expressed hope for continued cooperation, and a "former union man" Lieutenant Colonel C. B. Ross attempted to bring the AFL directly into the IMP, only to be severely rebuffed by his colleagues in the Planning Branch. William Green and the AFL Executive Committee were gratified at Ross' interest, and seemed quite willing to work with the OASW in developing mobilization plans. The AFL chief went as far

105. Thatcher, p. 192.
106. Ibid., p. 203.
as to comment to Ross that the Executive Council "after an examination of your plan and after full and free discussion which took place expressed themselves as finding nothing objectionable in the plan as submitted." 107 Of course, the Executive Council was impressed by the fact that Ross wanted labor representatives on the advisory council to the labor super agency. These examples are exceptions to the rule, and the situation worsened throughout the 1930's as the Planning Branch began evolving more elaborate mobilization schemes which did not provide for labor participation.

From the point of view of organized labor this already rather dubious scheme caused further complications because the trade unionists equated mobilization planning with industrial conscription. Labor's fears were not unfounded, although American military leaders continually emphasized the fact that the IMP's would not lead to the drafting of industrial workers. For instance in 1925 Brigadier General Cambell King, Assistant Chief of Staff, commented that the drafting of labor "although ideal from a military standpoint, is opposed to the basis of all our law, and when examined closely, presents insurmountable obstacles." 108 His conclusion was that any proposed selective service law "should

107. Ibid.

108. SS Library, F-54, Correspondence 1923-1926, Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, 30 October 1925.
contemplate only the drafting of manpower for our public armed forces." 109 This was the same position held by most segments of organized labor. Colonel James Cox observed in his scholarly treatise, "Labor in War," that "conscription of labor . . . is constitutionally and politically impossible; and by lowering the national morale would adversely affect essential production." 110 This liberal approach to the handling of labor in time of crisis gradually changed throughout the Thirties as world difficulties seemed to multiply.

Although the M Day plans never specifically mentioned an industrial draft, it is quite apparent that variations of the 'work or fight' principle were being considered. Military men objected to the charges that they were contemplating such plans. General Douglas MacArthur, speaking before the War Policies Commission, indicated that some questionable activities had taken place in World War I and that although some difficulties were arising with regard to labor and mobilization planning Americans could be assured that "with the passage of time and longer study of the relations between industry and selective service the proposed system will be improved and refined." 111 Much to the consternation of

109. Ibid.


111. Ibid., F-54, Special MacArthur File, Statements of MacArthur to WPC, 13 May 1931.
trade unionists, the General did not indicate how selective service would "refine" the treatment of labor problems during time of war. In the 1933 Industrial Mobilization Plan specific reference was made to the problem when the Planning Branch inserted the statement that "this plan for the organization of a War Labor Administration has been developed ... to provide machinery for the equitable, voluntary distribution of labor." 112 This same theme was evident in a 1934 army training manual which commented "the participation of labor in a national emergency program must be founded upon the tenet of voluntary action." 113 This was the theory, not the actual practice. Even during the early part of the 1930's when military strategists were more receptive to the desires of labor there was a deep concern that labor would, if given the opportunity, unduly influence local draft boards. Thus, there was a general fear that the Selective Service System could be used by labor to thwart "scientific" military and mobilization planning. This was the primary reason most military leaders did not want the trade unionists to become too intricately involved in the industrial mobilization plans. 114

112. Ibid., F-59, Industrial Mobilization Plans, p. 51. Also see Thatcher, p. 207.

113. Ibid.

114. Ibid., see attached memo of 17 August 1936 from Colonel H.C. Kramer to General Knight.
The best illustration of this point was the vigorous objection to Colonel Ross' suggestion that the AFL be allowed to work with the Planning Branch OASW in the establishment of labor safeguards for union workers. "My apprehension," commented Brigadier General Andrew Moses, "is based on the possibility that industrial deferments may be unduly influenced, generally by labor, specifically by organized labor, and specifically by the American Federation of Labor." The 1936 IMP aroused even more concern among labor leaders. By this time organized labor had absolutely no contact with mobilization planning and greatly feared that the Planning Branch was going to destroy union gains as well as move toward the direction of industrial regulation. A military spokesman chided labor by stating that opposition to the IMP "as usual . . . came from the left wing of public opinion," most important in this respect being labor groups which hold "tenaciously to the view that the plan envisioned the conscription of labor." When Assistant Secretary of War Woodring was questioned about labor's fears on this particular point he replied, "I didn't say there would be a draft of labor." The Secretary's comment was anything but reassuring to the trade unionists.

115. Thatcher, p. 203.
116. Ibid.
117. Ibid.
Of course he did not say that there would not be a draft of labor either. Another high ranking official dismissed trade union concerns with the statement that conscription of labor was never favored, or seriously considered by the formulatons of the mobilization plans. This was definitely not true. The proof of this assertion can readily be found in the records of the Joint Army and Navy Selective Service Committee.

This committee, organized in 1926 by the joint action of the Secretary of War and the Secretary of Navy, attempted to develop a plan for the reorganization of the Selective Service system which had operated during World War I. It wrote proposed legislation which could put a new selective service plan into effect, and contacted individuals who could be trained to operate the National Headquarters of Selective Service. It is important to remember when discussing this committee that "every attempt was made to prevent publicity concerning the early Selective Service Conferences," because of the general feeling that the public would react negatively to such war plans in time of peace. Thus, it is difficult to trace the activities of the

118. Ibid.

119. SS Library, F-54, memorandum of 20 November 1939 from Secretary of the Joint Army and Navy Selective Service Committee to the Secretary of War. Also see Backgrounds of Selective Service, pp. 75-78.

120. Ibid.
committee throughout the decades between the wars. However the committee did submit reports to the Planning Branch of the OASW, and from this one can assert that the Selective Service Committee worked closely with the formulators of the IMP. Often in these reports one can find open discussions of both the necessity and desirability of the conscription of labor, either through the 'work or fight' principle or specific legislation. For instance in the 1933 Selective Service Committee report there is a section devoted solely to this topic. The Committee was considering the vast equipment supply problems created by war, and the equally important problem of maintaining an adequate work force to insure the flow of materials. It warned that the military must always keep "in mind the necessity to avoid competition for men which resulted in fantastic wages during the World War . . ." The Joint Committee asserted that this undesirable situation could be avoided, the primary question being "how and when should Selective Service begin the forcing system to supply necessary manpower and avoid ruthless wage demands?" Labor had a right to believe that American military men were considering industrial conscription despite their protestations to the contrary. Many of the ideas developed in this connection can directly be attributed to the activities of the Joint Army and Navy

Selective Service Committee.

A number of the members of the Selective Service Committee had objected to the fact that their Committee had become too involved with the IMP. The result being that Selective Service was often subordinated to the Planning Branch. In 1939 after the M Day Plan had been vetoed by the President these committeemen sent a special memorandum to then Secretary of War Woodring objecting to the way the War Department had dealt with Selective Service. By being involved with IMP serious damage and much "misunderstanding on the part of many concerning the relationship between Selective Service and industrial mobilization" had been perpetrated. The committee members charged that the basic error was one of timing, resulting in serious "misconceptions" on the part of the general public. "Our public accepts the necessity of a draft in war," stated the memorandum, however it has not accepted the "regimentation of industry, and other controls of the lives of individual citizens." This was the position assumed by organized labor throughout the latter part of the 1930's.

At the 1939 AFL Convention union members showed their concern about mobilization planning by recommending

122. Ibid., Memorandum of 20 November 1939.
123. Ibid.
to the Executive Council that it "inaugurate a movement that will protect organized labor from the menace of such war dictatorship as is contained in the Industrial Mobilization Plan."\textsuperscript{124} The major brunt of the labor attack was directed toward the potentially powerful War Resources Board. The Board was characterized as an agency which could destroy laws which had protected women and children, and could "bring back the intolerable exploitation which labor has combatted and ameliorated in fifty years of struggle."\textsuperscript{125} Some representatives of labor labeled the M Day Plan as being "Hitler-like," and an agency which would completely "control wages, hours of labor and working conditions," although most of the diatribes directed against the IMP were not this violent.\textsuperscript{126} If industrial mobilization planning had been accepted by the President in the form it had originally been submitted by the War Department the likelihood of industrial dictatorship would have been a real possibility. The lesson was a valuable one for organized labor. Trade unionists in the 1930's had come to the realization that they must remain as guarded and skeptical of the American military establishment as Gompers had been during the Great War. This attitude was unfortunate since

\textsuperscript{124} Proceedings 1939, p. 497.

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{126} Thatcher, p. 255.
it complicated mobilization efforts in the early stages of World War II.

The most difficult to evaluate, but possibly the most important factor in the lack of cohesion between labor and the military between the wars was the almost violent dislike a number of key military men felt toward trade unionism. The most prominent in this category being General Hugh Johnson and Colonel Harry C. Kramer. Both of these men believed that labor had used World War I as a way to gain economic and political strength and would do so again if the opportunity presented itself. The position of Kramer was particularly noteworthy since he was one of the key figures in Selective Service just prior to, and during the Second World War.

Colonel Kramer had never forgiven Samuel Gompers for his opposition to Selective Service in World War I. Moreover he was convinced that organized labor still harbored resentment because American military men had conceived the 'work or fight' concept. "Labor," commented the Colonel, "has never forgotten that defeat."127 He warned that military men should always be wary of labor activities. Labor is looking to the next war, contended Kramer, "so that it can

127. SS Library, F-59, under Nye Committee Report, Confidential Memorandum of H.C. Kramer in reference to the Senate Munitions Committee, p. 4.
use its influence to vastly increase its strength.¹²⁸ This would have been accomplished by the trade unions in the First World War, stated the Colonel, if General Johnson had not intervened and restricted labor with his brilliant work or fight idea.¹²⁹ Kramer pointed out that he disliked coddling labor, or attempting to work amiably with the trade unionists because "the irony of it all is that you obtain the friendship of labor only by meeting its demands, and these are insatiable."¹³⁰ Among other things Colonel Kramer charged that organized labor had supported the Nye Committee so that the effectiveness of the military would be ended, labor tried to become an intricate part of industrial mobilization planning so that it could ruin the plan's potential, and that it was attempting to gain a foothold in the War Department so that it could destroy any effort to "resurrect" the work or fight plan.¹³¹ In his concluding paragraph Kramer argued that one had to always remember that labor was opposed to Selective Service, and that it would do everything possible to "utilize its power

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 3.
¹²⁹ Ibid., also see F-54, Special Johnson File, Lecture of Johnson to Army War College, 20 October 1939, and an article written by Johnson and submitted to the War Department, 29 November 1922 entitled, "Notes on Draft of Industry and Labor."
¹³⁰ Ibid., Kramer Memorandum, p. 4.
¹³¹ Ibid., pp. 4-6.
to further unionize the country." "It is time," advised Kramer, "for the War Department to take stock."\textsuperscript{132}

The importance of Kramer's statements cannot be overemphasized. He was an important figure in military circles for two decades as well as being a staunch supporter of Selective Service. Mr. Kenneth McGill, the number two man in the Selective Service system who came to that organization in 1942 at the behest of General Hershey and presently is serving as research director, described Kramer as a "dedicated, sincere man," who commanded "tremendous respect from military men."\textsuperscript{133}

Kramer's attitude toward organized labor undoubtedly affected numerous other military men. In a lecture he delivered to the Army War College in the mid-1930's the Colonel displayed his considerable disdain for labor. The speech, which was published in limited quantities and labeled 'Confidential' by the War Department, is full of exaggerated statements, and at points appears to be almost irrational.\textsuperscript{134} Colonel Kramer lambasted labor for its inadequacies during the war, and its selfish attitude toward industrial mobilization. In the question and answer period following the

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., p. 7.

\textsuperscript{133} Interview with the author 11 June 1966.

\textsuperscript{134} SS Library, F-54, Kramer lecture to the Army War College, 11 October 1934.
formal speech, one of the students asked Kramer if any efforts were being made to bring about better communications between the military and labor. "No," answered the Colonel, "because the American Federation of Labor has never stuck its head up where we could identify them in any movement." Continuing he stated that organized labor had "never openly appeared in anything that has been done. We have no one to go to and discuss the problems that are facing the industrial situation." Some of Kramer's extreme statements were later tempered when the Chief of Staff reprimanded him for endangering industrial mobilization planning, but the Colonel continued to provide opposition to organized labor throughout the early years of the Second World War.  

Labor's role between the wars was a frustrating experience to the trade union leaders. The rather simplified vision of labor in the post World War I era as interpreted by Enoch Crowder and President Harding in 1920 never achieved fruition. Organized labor did not assume the power position envisioned by Crowder, but the fear of conscription did not destroy labor's confidence either. Domestic considerations were of primary concern. However organized labor was well aware of the significance of mobilization.

135. Ibid.

136. Ibid., F-59, memorandum of 20 April 1936 to the Joint Army and Navy Selective Service Committee which singled out, and condemned the activities of Kramer.
planning, although attempts to aid in such strategy were thwarted by the War Department. The encounter with the military over industrial mobilization planning was a bitter one, and something which labor would not forget in the next decade. It would have been even more irritating for organized labor if it had known that the President's decision to abandon the IMP was due solely to the chief executive's desires, and had nothing to do with labor apprehensions. In 1940 labor and the military would once again be opponents --- this time over the question of peacetime conscription, but on this occasion the President would stand with the military. Indeed, both the AFL and CIO had difficulties formulating a sensible and realistic defense policy which would still insure the rights of the American worker.
CHAPTER III

THE 'SOWING OF DRAGON'S TEETH': AMERICA EMBARKS UPON PEACETIME CONSCRIPTION

I am not assuming the role of a prophet, but mark me, when we shall have left these seats forever, and when the record of our times is gathered into history's golden urn... this is the day when by draft in time of peace we sowed dragon's teeth, from which we will reap a terrible harvest through all days that are to come.

Henry F. Ashurst

These eloquent words of the 'golden tongued' orator from Arizona, Senator Henry Fountain Ashurst, certainly expressed the feelings of most segments of organized labor. Hardly recuperating from the anxieties of the M Day Plan, American trade unionists were suddenly confronted with the ominous threat of peacetime conscription. Both the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations fought against the demand for a military draft in peacetime, although the degree and reasons for opposition often differed sharply. Organized labor opposed the general concept of selective service in time of peace, but more importantly objected to the possibilities of a demand for


123
industrial conscription if a draft measure were passed. Labor did not want to become involved in a struggle over national service legislation, or be faced with the implications of a 'work or fight' demand from the military as it had been in 1917. Many Americans, including the great majority of military leaders, believed that the Nazi war machine and the rapidly disintegrating American-Japanese relations constituted a threat which could not be ignored. George C. Marshall, United States Chief of Staff in 1940, remarked that "the experience of the past has been that there is a very definite limit to how far you can go by way of voluntary enlistments in time of peace... I personally am strongly of the opinion that we must bring our units... to full strength as quickly as we possibly can." Thus once again key American labor and military leaders became embattled in a cause which each considered to be essential for the preservation of the United States. The military believed that peacetime conscription would insure America's safety, while labor looked upon it as an attempt to destroy


3. Hearings, Committee on Military Affairs, United States Senate, 76th Congress, Third Session, on S. 4164, Compulsory Military Training and Service Bill, 12 July 1940, p. 327.
democratic ideals.

Just as in the M Day struggle the chief figure in this episode was President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The President was quite aware of the intense emotions which were developing over the question of peacetime conscription. Supreme Court Justice Frank Murphy's admonition about selective service to Roosevelt that "History brings you another crisis. But when things go wrong men of high purpose do not wring their hands and sob. They act," did not fall upon deaf ears. The President realized something had to be done, but what? 1940 was an election year, and conscription was a potentially dangerous issue. This was particularly true since the Republicans had nominated Wendell Willkie, a worthy challenger for the nation's most important political post. The President readily admitted that he was reluctant to commit himself on an issue which might prove unpopular. New York Times columnist, Arthur Krock, was probably right in believing it very unfortunate that a measure as significant as conscription should be "embroiled in the politics of the presidential year." Trade unionists tended to think that politics would dissuade the President from taking a firm stand on conscription, permitting them to

4. Hyde Park Library, President's Personal File, 1662, Letter from Murphy dated 10 June 1940.

5. NY Times, 5 June 1940; 2 August 1940.
concentrate on placing pressure upon Congress in an attempt to defeat selective service legislation. On the other hand proponents of conscription were even more determined to enlist the support of Roosevelt for legislation which they deemed necessary for the preservation of the union. The situation was finally resolved when President Roosevelt, after considerable deliberation, called for the passage of the first peacetime conscription bill in American history at a special press conference in early August 1940. His political apprehensions were soon allayed when Willkie, in a brilliant and forceful speech, gave his endorsement to peacetime selective service. These developments convinced leaders in both the AFL and CIO that they must unite their efforts in order to forestall a future Saguntum -- industrial conscription. Indeed labor cooperation in this endeavor resulted in a unity which escaped most other facets of the AFL--CIO rivalry.

Throughout the 1930's the American trade union movement had demanded that the United States refrain from any steps which would involve America in European affairs. At the same time it denounced Adolph Hitler for his suppression of the German trade union movement, and his persecution of the Jews. Although the American Federation of Labor went

6. AFL Papers, Office of the President, File E, Address by Green 25 May 1940 before the Hartford Central Labor Union.
as far as to call for a boycott of German goods because of Nazi "atrocities," and castigated Japan for her brutal invasion of China, this organization reiterated vociferously that it desired a strict neutrality which would avoid military hostilities with either country. In 1939, shortly after the German invasion of Poland, William Green restated the AFL position, placing new emphasis on the inherent differences between America and Europe. The AFL chieftain stated that "we in America want no part of this war," since America's involvement in World War I to "make a world safe for democracy" had proven to be such a fiasco. "The working men and women of this country," warned Green, "were inoculated against war by the last war." The labor leader insisted that "no matter what happens in Europe" American labor would oppose any involvement in consequence of the fear that democratic institutions "may be sacrificed to the

7. Ibid. Address by Green 18 November 1938 before National and International Unions, State Federations of Labor, Central Labor unions, and directly affiliated unions; also cited in Taft, p. 206.

8. Ibid. Address by Green before the Hartford Central Union; also see Taft, p. 207, who cites a letter cablegram from Green to Walter M. Citrine, Secretary of the British Trade Union Congress, 25 January 1938, from the Minutes of the Executive Council, 25 January 1939.

9. Ibid. Address by Green 2 October 1939 at the 59th Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor meeting at Cincinnati, Ohio.

10. Ibid.
war machine." Green was obviously reiterating Gompers' convictions of 1917 that wartime legislation could curb the growth of American unionism, and even destroy organized labor if enough restrictions were imposed. Paramount among these considerations was the ever present danger of industrial conscription.

This fear was well expressed by the AFL Executive Council in a series of recommendations made at the 1939 convention. The Council initiated a seven-point program which it felt was designed to safeguard the neutrality of the United States. Included in the recommendations were demands that the United States continue its neutrality and embargo legislation, prevent any situations which would lead to war profiteering and military preparedness, and that "labor be fully represented on any and all government boards engaged in preparing plans for industrial mobilization or other emergency programs affecting the nation's workers." There could be little doubt that the recent struggle over industrial mobilization planning was still in the forefront of labor's thoughts. The fear of industrial conscription remained the number one catalyst for labor's isolationist policy.

11. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
The Congress of Industrial Organizations in general, and John L. Lewis in particular, were much more belligerent in their opposition to a possible involvement in the European conflict than was the American Federation of Labor. The CIO was also more demanding in its desires to have organized labor participate in mobilization planning. Speaking before the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America Lewis commented, "if the country and the government want cooperation from labor in protecting the flag and the country and its institutions, let that modicum of cooperation be extended to labor so that labor may have a voice in determining conditions of protection." The CIO chieftain, however, was solely interested in military preparedness, not in involvement in European wars. In an address to the American Youth Congress in February 1940 Lewis adamantly stated, "I am against war." He insisted that the rights of organized labor and American youth must be preserved, indicating that each was bound by a common heritage. Lewis, taking a position similar to the one assumed by William J. Bryan in 1915, posed the rhetorical question "Who has a greater right to protest against war or any part of war . . . than the young men who in the event of war will become cannon

fodder? Lewis' message was clear. Wars are fought by young men, the major portion of whom come from the working class.

Lewis expressed labor's agreement with the necessity for national defense, but, like his counterpart in the AFL, greatly feared the results of mobilization planning. This explains his ardent demands for labor representation on any agencies devoted to military preparation. In the spring of 1940 Lewis posed a series of questions in behalf of the CIO about America's national defense program and its effects upon society. He demanded assurances that social legislation, collective bargaining, competitive wages, and civil liberties would be preserved in the event that defense programs were put into operation. Key among CIO concerns was the essential question, "Will labor be given a voice in the determination of national defense policies in the discussion of national defense production? Lewis was quite willing to commit the CIO to the United States defense program if labor organizations were given certain safeguards. However, he remained anchored to his conviction that America should not become involved in European misfortunes, no

17. CIO News, 19 February 1940.
18. Ibid., 27 May 1940. See editorial entitled, "National Defense."
19. Ibid.
matter how dastardly the activities of the world's dictators. Lewis stated his position again in strong words in an address before the 31st Annual Convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. "Involvement or intervention in the European war," stated the CIO chief, "is repugnant to every healthy-minded American." Any major political party that allowed militarism to "write its platform will find itself hopelessly beaten by the votes of an outraged electorate in November," warned Lewis. Lewis was particularly convinced that organized labor would recoil from any interventionist policy initiated at the executive levels of the American parties.

Two other key CIO executives, Sidney Hillman and Philip Murray, emphasized a different aspect of the difficulties which mobilization efforts could create. Murray frequently argued that trade unionists should not be "engulfed" by war hysteria, which he felt was being encouraged by certain military and government leaders. He warned that if labor should succumb to this type of emotional pressure labor gains made in the past half century would be lost. Sidney Hillman, CIO Vice President in 1940, was more specific.

20. CIO News, 24 June 1940.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., 10 June 1940.
The Wagner Act, the Walsh Healey Act, and the Wage Hour Bill, warned Hillman, were under attack from "certain" elements who, "under the mask of national defense, will try to emasculate and destroy progressive legislation." Labor did not consider war, or the threat of war a golden opportunity for advancement in the field of wages and labor legislation as was so firmly believed by key War Department figures, Colonel Harry C. Kramer and General Hugh Johnson.

Thus by 1940 organized labor was well aware of the problems which a preparedness program would create for trade unionism. Both the AFL and CIO were also convinced that America should strengthen her defenses, but each sought safeguards for union workers and demanded administrative cooperation with labor leaders in the establishment of a national defense program. One might assume that the trade unionists were well organized and keenly aware of all the ramifications of mobilization planning. Yet when the Burke-Wadsworth Selective Service Bill was introduced into Congress in June 1940 neither the CIO nor AFL was prepared to offer an intelligent or satisfactory alternative to this demand for peacetime conscription.

Both major labor organizations had been aware of

23. NY Times, 18 May 1940. From a speech to the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America.

the activities of the Joint Army-Navy Selective Service Committee which had been functioning since 1926, and union leaders had been advised of the role this Committee had played in the development of the M Day Plan. Thus it is rather surprising that organized labor was caught in such apparent disarray when the movement to have a selective service measure gained momentum in the summer of 1940. It is possible, of course, that union leaders did not anticipate a demand for selective service in peacetime, particularly since the general public seemed to be so isolationist. Whatever the reason, it is obvious that labor did fail to develop a coherent policy with regard to the draft.

Labor's failure to defeat peacetime conscription can be attributed to a number of factors. The most apparent was the inability of the two major labor organizations to work together to develop a frontal attack upon a well organized drive for selective service. The AFL and CIO, although working together for some common labor objectives, could not unite in an effort to combat demands for selective conscription. Secondly organized labor was unable to convince the general public and Congress that such a measure was unnecessary at the time. And last, but most significant, was the failure of the trade union leaders to persuade the President not to support peacetime conscription for either moral or practical political considerations. Quite in contrast to organized
labor's ineffectiveness were the activities of the advocates of selective service. The proponents of peacetime conscription were very well organized and dedicated to the passage of the measure at any cost. The story of this struggle over the passage of the Burke-Wadsworth Bill is intricate, but it provides fascinating reading for the student of American politics. 25

New York lawyer, Grenville Clark, and the well known Republican political figure, Henry L. Stimson, were the key men in the fight for the passage of conscription in 1940. 26 Clark, one of the prime movers in the establishment of the Plattsburg training camps prior to World War I, decided in late spring 1940 to organize a movement dedicated to the passage of a selective service bill. On 8 May 1940 Clark and several associates met in New York ostensibly to organize the twenty-fifth anniversary reunion of the Military Training Camps Association. It was at this time that Clark in a skilled and carefully worded speech proposed military


26. Ibid.
conscription. The executive committee of the association decided to support Clark's proposal and advocated that the MTCA endorse conscription. At the association's dinner held 22 May this group of prominent citizens, including Henry Stimson, General John McAuley Palmer, and quite significant for later developments, the New York Times' general manager Julius Ochs Adler, unanimously passed resolutions in favor of aid to the allies and support for compulsory military service.

Prior to the dinner Clark had written to President Roosevelt advising him of the MTCA executive committee's decision to promote peacetime conscription. Clark asked the President if he thought the subject of military service could be debated at this time. Roosevelt replied two days later with a letter marked 'private' and confidential to "Dear Grennie." "I see no reason," commented the chief executive, "why the group you mention should not advocate military training." However the President's interests were different from Clark's for he continued his correspondence

27. Langer and Gleason, p. 507.
28. Ibid.
30. Ibid., Roosevelt to Clark, 18 May 1940.
with the comment "if it is to be called 'compulsory' I am inclined to think there is a very strong public opinion for universal service of some kind so that every able bodied man and woman would fit into his or her place." President Roosevelt was probably interested in the type of universal training advocated by Warren Harding in 1921 and 1923, and which had been resurrected in a new form in the spring of 1940. The President, of course, refused to give his support to either form of selective training at this time, but his attitude is certainly noteworthy. This helps to explain why Roosevelt was such a staunch supporter of National Service in 1944 and 1945 after Grenville Clark again initiated a new form of conscription which more closely followed the plan envisioned by the President in 1940. In 1940, however, Clark was dismayed that his proposal for military conscription was being confused with an attempt to initiate universal conscription. Clark emphasized that his plan had "nothing whatsoever to do with industrial conscription," and had absolutely no "connection with

31. Ibid.

32. Hearings, Committee on Military Affairs, United States Senate, 76th Congress, Third Session on S. 4164, Compulsory Military Training and Service, p. 10. Note Clark's discussion of industrial conscription and his reference to the proposal by Sidney Hillman dealing with industrial vocational training. Also see NY Times, 18 May 1940.

33. See Chapter V.
training for industry."34 "This is an exclusively military bill," stated Clark. He then went on to indicate that it would not "give the President far-reaching powers to mobilize the manpower of the nation for military or vocational training or service."35 Grenville Clark was apparently convinced that a strictly military conscription bill was the most that could be hoped for in 1940.

President Roosevelt's own inclinations were evidently stimulated by his correspondence with Clark because soon after writing to "Grennie" the chief executive sent up two trial balloons in an attempt to see if the American public would be receptive to some form of universal conscription. There is some confusion as to what the President really had in mind, and he never did clarify his position after the initial negative reaction to his rather vague proposals. At any rate in early June the First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, held a press conference in which she advocated a "compulsory training service" program to prepare young people for national emergencies.36 Mrs. Roosevelt specifically stated that this plan was not to be confused with compulsory military training which she opposed. "National defense means more than military training," commented the First Lady, "it means

34. Hearings, Clark on S. 4164, p. 10.
35. Ibid.
36. NY Times, 4 June 1940.
the building up of physique, of character and of a people conscious of what they owe to their country and what it means to them." The President's wife did not spell out how this 'compulsory training service' could be put into operation. However, later in this same month at a Presidential press conference the chief executive discussed the possibility of a plan for compulsory government service, but not necessarily military, for all Americans when they reached a certain age. Roosevelt indicated that such a plan was under study, and would be submitted to Congress in the near future. Whatever the President had in mind never materialized. This was probably due to Congressional embroilment over Clark's military selective service bill and the negative reaction to the President's comments on the quite nebulous subject of 'government service.'

Alf Landon, unsuccessful Republican candidate for the Presidency in 1936, was attending the 1940 Republican convention in Philadelphia when Roosevelt discussed compulsory government service. Roosevelt, quipped the Governor, "is using weasel words; I want to see exactly what he means before I make another comment." New York Times writer, Felix Belair, Jr., commented that the

37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., 19 June 1940.
39. Ibid.
President was unusually "vague" in his presentation,\(^{40}\) while CIO president, John L. Lewis, made the most scathing statement of all when he castigated Roosevelt's idea as "a fantastic suggestion from a mind in full intellectual retreat."\(^{41}\) Longtime labor stalwart, John P. Frey, president of the AFL Metal's Union, stated that such a proposal was not necessary since existing agencies could handle any such program on a voluntary basis.\(^{42}\) After this initial negative reaction the President refused to discuss his compulsory training plan again. This situation brings to mind the President's reaction to the furor created by his famous Quarantine Speech made in 1937.

The results of this episode probably caused the President to refrain from giving his immediate support to the military conscription bill proposed by Grenville Clark. The President's apparent decision to withdraw from any further discussion of conscription in any form resulted in some strong criticism from proponents of selective service. Arthur Krock condemned "the total silence of the White House on this essential section of a defense program."\(^{43}\) The columnist, adopting an argument originally presented by

\(\)\(^{40}\) Ibid.

\(\)\(^{41}\) Ibid.

\(\)\(^{42}\) Ibid., 23 June 1940.

\(\)\(^{43}\) Ibid., 5 June 1940.
Chief of Staff Marshall, insisted that by 1941 the United States would have more military equipment than there would be men to use it. Krock believed that the emotionalism of the term "'conscription of individuals' is the phrase which is still sending politicians to cover," even though the righteousness of selective service seemed obvious to those who wanted to establish a strong defense program.\(^{44}\) A New York Times editorial emphasized a similar interpretation when it indicated that although the newspaper had never before advocated peacetime conscription it had to now "because the logic of events drives us remorselessly to this conclusion."\(^{45}\) Moreover, if politicians refused to touch such an explosive issue in an election year the proponents of selective service would carry the struggle to the American people.\(^{46}\) The Times' support of selective service was most certainly aided by the work of owner and general manager of the paper, Julius Ochs Adler, with Grenville Clark in developing the conscription plan. Some interested observers bitterly criticized the Times for this type of personal connection with selective service. Although there is considerable truth in the assertion that the Times' observations on the struggle for peacetime conscription were

\(^{44}\) Ibid.

\(^{45}\) Ibid., 7 June 1940.

\(^{46}\) Ibid.
biased, one nonetheless finds the most comprehensive coverage of the subject in this paper. \(^{47}\)

Grenville Clark and his colleagues, working outside the elective political arena, were not hampered by the political problems of an election year in their quest for a national draft. A National Emergency Committee, directed by Clark, was established in late May 1940. The Committee's primary function was to formulate a workable selective service plan which would be acceptable to the American military, and key Congressional officials. \(^{48}\) Almost immediately the Committee contacted the Joint Army-Navy Selective Service Committee which provided essential information and data about the functioning of Selective Service in World War I. The Joint Committee also offered some suggestions for improving the draft procedure. Actually the War Department was quite reluctant at this time to become too involved with Clark, apparently fearing that the publicity being directed toward the National Emergency Committee would cause a negative public reaction to the whole matter of conscrip-

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48. *SS Library, F-59.* This relationship is discussed in a letter from the Chief of Staff to General Edwin M. Watson, 27 May 1940; also see Langer and Gleason, pp. 507-508.
tion. Probably the only reason the War Department worked with Clark at all was because of the involvement of retired Brigadier General John McAuley Palmer, a man greatly respected in military circles. 49

Chief of Staff, George C. Marshall, was particularly adamant in his desires not to commit the War Department's prestige to a plan calling for the immediate passage of a compulsory military training measure. 50 Marshall was convinced that such a bill was doomed to fail in face of the general isolationist attitude of the American people. However, Marshall also believed that the War Department would eventually seek selective service legislation, "perhaps in the near future," but "in my opinion we should avoid any risk of impeding the equipment program and other measures now before Congress." 51 He felt that a strong endorsement of conscription at that time by the War Department "might easily have that effect." 52 The General's position was probably realistic and practical. Certainly the army had been hampered by the lack of Congressional support in its demands

49. Ibid., Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, 27 May 1940.

50. Ibid., See attached note to this memorandum from G.C. Marshall indicating his position that the War Department should not commit itself "in any way" to the proposed selective service bill.

51. Ibid., Marshall to Watson, 27 May 1940.

52. Ibid.
for a bolstered defense system. Now, in early 1940, the military was receiving larger appropriations, and Marshall did not want to become involved in any program which would jeopardize American defense strategy.

Undaunted by his failure to gain the public support of President Roosevelt or the War Department for his selective service scheme, Grenville Clark proceeded to draw up a conscription bill which he hoped would be sponsored by Congress. A less dedicated man would probably have given up at this point but Clark continued to proselytize with even more vigor. Clark's proposal was rejected by numerous Congressmen before he was able to gain the support of Nebraska's anti-New Deal Democratic Senator, Edward R. Burke, and New York Republican Congressman, James W. Wadsworth. These two men agreed to introduce Clark's conscription bill into Congress in late June. It was actually a stroke of luck for Clark and the proponents of selective service that these particular Congressmen agreed to introduce peacetime conscription. Neither, of course, was associated with the administration, a condition which gave the President more

53. Langer and Gleason, p. 508; also see Stimson and Bundy, pp. 345-346.

political maneuverability than he would ordinarily have in dealing with such a volatile subject.

Grenville Clark continued to press the War Department, and particularly Secretary of War, Harry Woodring, for an endorsement of his selective service plan. The Secretary, who was becoming increasingly isolationist, refused to do so, indicating that he did not approve of such war preparations at that time. In the meantime President Roosevelt had become quite disgruntled at Woodring's attitude toward aiding the Allies and had decided to ask for the Secretary's resignation.55 Once Clark realized the situation he met with his good friend Supreme Court Associate Justice Felix Frankfurter and prevailed upon him to suggest the name of Henry Stimson, a staunch supporter of conscription, to the President as a possible successor to Woodring's post as Secretary of War.56 Once again Clark was amazingly lucky. The President had already decided to bring at least one Republican into the cabinet as a sign of national unity during this period of world crisis. He had recently written to former Republican nominee for the vice-presidency, Colonel Frank Knox, and offered him the position of Secretary of the Navy, and at that time was toying with the idea of offering the War Department position to Knox's good friend, William

55. Langer and Gleason, pp. 509-510.

56. Ibid.
J. Donovan. The President was impressed by Frankfurter's suggestion of 3 June 1940 that he consider Stimson for the important war post, and soon after this Roosevelt discussed the matter with the former Republican statesman. Stimson indicated his willingness to serve, and two weeks later the President simultaneously appointed Republicans Frank Knox and Henry L. Stimson to two of America's most important cabinet posts.

Stimson's views on selective service were well known. Before his appointment as Secretary of War he had emphasized his determination to make certain that a peacetime conscription bill was enacted by Congress. Throughout the remainder of the summer of 1940 the new Secretary of War devoted his energies to seeing that such a measure was passed. Stimson never did believe that those opponents of selective service, such as organized labor, were really strong enough to prevent the passage of the bill. He viewed the difficulties being encountered by peacetime conscription as the result of political problems caused by an election year, not the pressures of particular interest.

57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.; also see Harold L. Ickes, "My Twelve Years with FDR," Saturday Evening Post, 5 June 1948.
59. Stimson and Bundy, p. 345.
60. Ibid.
groups. Stimson emphasized the "widespread feeling . . . that no act so controversial could be passed in an election year." The Secretary believed that this was a misrepresentation of the opposition's strength. He was correct.

Years later when Stimson evaluated this struggle over selective service, he stated that his accomplishments and role in this episode could be narrowed down to two things. The first was his work with General Marshall in determining a judicious position for the War Department with regard to the promotion of selective service. In a very realistic analysis the two men decided that "essentially . . . any workable bill would be satisfactory to the army." His second, and much more difficult task, was to gain President Roosevelt's active support of selective service. This proved to be a frustrating experience for Stimson because the President refused to give immediate public sanction to the bill, even though he had privately told Stimson that a selective conscription measure was necessary. When the President finally did commit his name to the conscription cause, the passage of the Burke-Wadsworth Bill was assured. The result of this experience was that the new Secretary "learned a lesson about the power of Mr. Roosevelt's leader-

61. Ibid.
62. Ibid., p. 346.
63. Langer and Gleason, p. 510.
ship which he did not forget."  

Roosevelt's delaying tactics on the issue of peacetime conscription were certainly not unique. Indeed, Stimson as so many others involved with the Roosevelt administration "found himself engaged in a form of sport which had become familiar in the seven years of the New Deal." As has already been indicated, on this occasion the President's attitude was dictated primarily by political considerations. Roosevelt felt that too many people were already antagonized over the furor of the third term issue, and he did not want to add another potential millstone to his candidacy. The President also wanted to avoid any speculation that he was preparing the nation for war. To make matters worse Roosevelt feared that isolationists in the Democratic Party might insert a plank in the party platform opposing peacetime conscription. The President felt conscription was a just cause but did not feel he could champion it at that time.

The Republican Party and its vibrant presidential nominee, Wendell Willkie, gave little consolation to President

64. Stimson and Bundy, p. 346.
65. Ibid.
66. NY Times, see analysis of Arthur Krock, 2 August 1940.
67. Langer and Gleason, p. 680.
Roosevelt. Willkie had skillfully skirted the question of peacetime conscription, refusing to be placed in the position of either accepting or rejecting it. Before he was nominated Willkie stated in a speech delivered in Providence, Rhode Island that compulsory military training and other such important defense considerations should be delayed until a "comprehensive" plan could be worked out.\(^{68}\) The defense program Willkie envisioned would be drafted by the various branches of the armed services, leaders of industry and labor, and those "people who know about these things."\(^{69}\) "Conscription may be necessary," stated the potential Republican nominee, but he indicated that there was some doubt in his own mind whether there was enough equipment and officers to handle all the men who would be brought into the armed forces if a conscription bill were enacted in 1940.\(^{70}\)

President Roosevelt continued to hedge on the conscription issue until early August 1940 even though various public opinion polls indicated that the majority of Americans believed that selective service was necessary.\(^{71}\)

\(^{68}\) NY Times, 16 June 1940.

\(^{69}\) Ibid.

\(^{70}\) Ibid.

The President still was not sure what his Republican opponent would do, and he was equally mystified about the attitude of Congress. This is understandable when one considers the tremendous Congressional support given to such a bizarre isolationist scheme as the war referendum which the President had narrowly defeated just two years earlier.72 Finally, under growing pressures from Secretary of War Stimson and the General Staff, Roosevelt reluctantly stated, "I am in favor of a selective training bill and I consider it essential to adequate defense."73 When a Washington news correspondent commented to the President that it was generally assumed in the nation's capital that he was not "very hot" about the pending selective service bill, the President pointed out that this measure was one of those "propositions" where he would be damned if he did support it, and equally damned if he did not.74 Although Willkie still remained equivocal on the issue he had told news reporters that he would be glad to give his opinion on the advisability of peacetime conscription if the President desired.75 Roosevelt was convinced that the Republican nominee was playing politics with the draft issue, and now

72. Sperry, "War Referendum," Chapter IV.
73. NY Times, 3 August 1940.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
that he had openly supported selective service he thought Willkie would use this as a political club in the forthcoming election.\textsuperscript{76} Roosevelt was soon to be proven wrong. Willkie, in a major policy speech, endorsed selective service as the only democratic method of building up the country's armed forces.\textsuperscript{77} The President undoubtedly breathed a sigh of relief at the position adopted by his worthy challenger.

The support of peacetime conscription by President Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie in 1940 virtually assured the passage of the Burke-Wadsworth Bill. It also unleashed a torrent of opposition from isolationist groups and those opponents of conscription, including organized labor, which believed that the enactment of a draft bill in time of peace was premature. There was a general consensus of opinion amongst these groups that peacetime conscription was motivated by a Machiavellian desire by the government to acquire even more power, not, as the proponents of selective service claimed, to bolster national defenses. Senator Gerald P. Nye described conscription as a "subterfuge, a complete subterfuge, a political subterfuge, and the Congress knows it."\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{76} Langer and Gleason, p. 682. Quoting a letter of Representative Edward Taylor to the President, 5 August 1940 and the President's reply, 12 August 1940.

\textsuperscript{77} \textit{NY Times}, 18 August 1940.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 28 August 1940, Letter of Nye written to refute the editorial attack upon his stand against the Burke-Wadsworth Bill.
If it were anything but a subterfuge, commented the isolationist Senator, "the issue would have been disposed of in a week." The CIO, too, tended to believe Roosevelt had been playing politics with the draft, although the AFL was much more charitable in its appraisal of the President's role.

An interesting footnote to the struggle over peacetime conscription is the position in which many politicians suddenly found themselves as the result of this emotion charged issue. In some states, such as Arizona, the constituents became significantly involved in the complexities of the pro and con arguments as a consequence of the positions taken by their respective representatives. In the case of Arizona, its highly respected Democratic Senator, Henry Fountain Ashurst, violently opposed peacetime selective service although the idea of conscription was quite popular amongst the state's voters.

Most of the individuals who participated in the fight against the Burke-Wadsworth Bill did so out of strong personal conviction, realizing that by opposing such a popular measure their political careers could be ended. Ashurst, for instance, had been warned that he would lose the Democratic primary to Ernest McFarland, who supported the draft bill,

79. Ibid.
if he continued to oppose peacetime conscription. Actually the only support Ashurst had on this issue, other than his own convictions, came from the rather insignificant organized labor movement in Arizona. "We the workers of the State of Arizona, again call on you to do your duty as far as lies in your power to do so for your fellow man," pleaded Guillermo Rodriguez, representative of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers, "by helping to defeat the notorious Burk Wadsworth Bill (sic.)." After his untimely defeat, J. H. Short, Local Chairman of the Telegraphers Union commented that Ashurst's "vigorous attack on the conscription bill" contributed more to his defeat "than probably any one thing." Even after his loss Ashurst maintained that his greatest contribution to the United States and the one "on which I may rest my fame . . . will be the circumstance that I warned my countrymen not to allow themselves to be gagged, bound and shackled by a system which will last forever." Obviously Ashurst's

80. Henry Fountain Ashurst Papers, University of Arizona, Box 1, Correspondence, 1913-1940, see comments in April-September File, 1940.

81. Ibid., Letter dated 13 September 1940 from Cottonwood, Arizona.

82. Ibid., Letter of 12 September 1940 from Gila Bend, Arizona.

83. Cong. Rec., 76th Congress, Third Session, from speech given 22 August 1940, p. 16431.
prophecy has been an accurate one — it is almost three decades since the Senator made his famous comments, and it seems quite likely that conscription 'will last forever.'

In some states Congressmen enjoyed considerable more freedom in their anti-conscription declarations. This was particularly true in isolationist states or districts. Thus, Senator Ernest Lundeen of Minnesota was able to direct vindictive gibes at conscription and the administration which was impossible for Ashurst. Lundeen, for instance, believed that America had arrived at the "cross-roads" between war and peace with the push for peacetime conscription. The Senator, reasoning as did former Secretary of War Woodring, argued that it was "conscription slavery" to take men earning good wages and put them in the army to take home $21 a month. To him the argument over peacetime selective service was irrational, lacking any "semblance of reason and sanity in our national defense policy." Lundeen charged that President Roosevelt had not solved the nation's unemployment problem, and now a solution had been found in the form of


85. Quoted in the Minority Report of the House of Representatives, Committee on Military Affairs, Hearings on Selective Conscription, Submitted 29 August 1940, pp. 11-12; also printed in the NY Times, 3 August 1940.

86. American Forum, 28 July 1940.
peacetime conscription. 87 "This," stated the irate Senator, "is the new Youth Bill, which the administration has given to its young people." They are to sacrifice their lives in foreign wars, "'theirs not to reason why -- theirs but to do or die.'" 88

Actually the struggle over conscription was remarkably moderate considering the intense emotions involved. There were violent attacks, as illustrated by the remarks of New York Congressman, Vito Marcantonio, and the Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union, but these were the exception. Those who adopted a "leftist" position usually asserted that conscription was an attack upon the "common people" for imperialist reasons. Marcantonio believed that the movement for selective service was an attempt by the administration to create the same type of war hysteria which was prevalent in 1917. 89 The motivation for American war preparedness, according to the New York representative, was "to protect the stake of the American dollar in the British pound, and for a possible extension of our imperialism in south and central America." 90 He charged that the leaders

87. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
89. Speech by Marcantonio over NBC 13 August 1940 before the American Youth Congress. It was placed in the Appendix to the Cong. Rec., 29 August 1940, p. 17119.
90. Ibid.
of the United States were leading the country into dictatorship through armaments, conscription, and the next and final step, war. "Armaments and conscription are not being undertaken for defensive purposes," warned Marcantonio, "but constitute preparedness for active participation in an imperialist war from which the American people have nothing to gain and all to lose." 91

Robert Handschin, secretary of the Farmers' Union, also objected to selective service on similar grounds. He indicated his organization feared a "vast imperialistic campaign" which would eventually "result in disaster for our country and our people." 92 Handschin added one additional thought. He warned that the United States should not "repeat the disastrous experience of the World War, in which the profits and privileges of the wealthy led us into a needless slaughter of the common people." 93 For the Farmers' Union, as for most elements of organized labor, it was an unquestioned truism that the burdens of war fall upon the working man. He would be the one to shed his blood, and make the great personal sacrifices which war entailed. This was not an unique thought which had suddenly originated in the late 1930's -- Americans had

91. Ibid.
93. Ibid., p. 296.
expressed these views during the Civil War and World War I. 94

Thus it is not too surprising that many persons who opposed military conscription did so out of a genuine conviction that the draft would weigh most heavily upon the working classes. 95 Even in those areas where demands for conscription were quite strong a sympathetic understanding of the opposition of organized labor and the working man was not uncommon. "After all," stated one editorial writer, "it is the kind of men who belong to labor unions who must make the major sacrifices involved in the operation of the draft." 96 Selective service, coupled with the growing "god-complex" invoked by the "trend of New Dealism" was enough to convince even the most rock ribbed conservative that there really was a "threat to organized labor" in 1940. 97 Even though conscription was viewed as a necessity, many segments of society which were traditionally unsympathetic to labor could understand the fears expressed by trade unionists.


95. CIO News, 12 August 1940.


It is probably safe to assume that the opposition of organized labor to peacetime selective service would have been sufficient to prevent the passage of such a bill in an election year if President Roosevelt had not decided to intervene directly in the dispute. The greatly increased political strength of organized labor prevented many persons from jumping immediately on the selective service bandwagon. One editorial pointed out that the 1940 draft bill faced "a complication that had affected no other draft bill in this country" -- the tremendous growth of labor since World War I. There is little doubt that organized labor was solidly aligned against conscription. James A. Wechsler, analyzing the trade union fight against the Burke-Wadsworth Bill, stated that labor was significantly more opposed to conscription "than against - or - for anything else." He indicated that it was quite unusual that not one prominent labor leader had endorsed conscription or joined any of the numerous pro-conscription committees. It would certainly seem that in the vast trade union movement some leader would espouse selective service, but this was not the case.

Wechsler felt labor's fears were more than "casual anxiety."  

98. Ibid., editorial of 23 August 1940.  
99. NY Times, 21 August 1940.  
100. Ibid.
Moreover, he maintained there were two primary concerns which labor leaders had to keep in mind. The first was the possibility that "large-scale military psychology will evoke anti-union vigilantism," and the second concerned the very practical consideration that once conscription was underway American workers would be "at the mercy of military agencies shifting them from place to place and burdening them with 'no strike edicts.'" This was one of the very few comments prior to the adoption of selective service that even hinted at the possibility of industrial conscription. Such an expansion of military conscription had been feared by trade union leaders for some time, but had been generally ignored by most segments of American society until 1943 when Congress pushed for a national service bill.

The proponents of selective service were well aware of labor's attitude toward the draft, and the potential political strength wielded by the trade union movement. Thus, it is not surprising that the supporters of the Burke-Wadsworth Bill tried to eliminate labor opposition to selective service when the measure was first introduced into Congress. A.G. Thatcher, a friend and associate of Grenville Clark, interviewed David Dubinsky, head of the powerful International Ladies Garment Workers Union, 14 June 1940 in an attempt to allay labor fears and gain trade union

101. Ibid.
support if at all possible. The MTCA did not want to appear to be the enemy of the working man, and thereby renew the antagonism between the trade unions and the proponents of military training which had existed prior to World War I. Thatcher told Dubinsky that the Burke-Wadsworth Bill was a sincere effort to bolster American defenses, a concern just as vital to organized labor as any other group in America. He indicated that the Bill was in no way a strike breaking measure or means to destroy previous labor gains.

Dubinsky realistically commented that he could understand Clark's position, but warned that the backers of the Burke-Wadsworth plan should not expect the support of organized labor. "You and your organization," stated the CIO leader, "should be satisfied if labor doesn't come out actively against your bill; that's the most you can hope for." Dubinsky's analysis was quite accurate. As has already been indicated no major labor union, or prominent trade union leader supported conscription. However a number of unions, the most notable being Sidney Hillman's Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers' Union, did refuse to participate in the condemnation of selective service.

102. Interview cited in Chapter VII of the Spencer manuscript on the history of selective service, p. 278.

103. Ibid.

104. Ibid.

105. NY Times, 27 August 1940.
The Congress of Industrial Organizations, led by John L. Lewis, spearheaded organized labor's attack upon the Burke-Wadsworth Bill. The most scathing remarks were made by the CIO chieftain himself. Yet stripping away the emotional tirades and extremist comments one can easily conclude that Lewis presented some of the most logical and telling arguments against selective service. Lewis argued quite effectively that the "very genesis of the measure for peacetime conscription is open to serious question." He explained this assertion by outlining the following points. First, the President had not requested a conscription bill. This was, of course, true. Logically either the White House or the War Department should have formally demanded such a measure if it were needed for national defense. Secondly, in the Republican and Democratic conventions held in the summer of 1940 both major parties had refused to endorse conscription although the matter was debated at each of the conventions. And lastly, stated Lewis, the bill was launched by a group of wealthy citizens, mostly corporation lawyers, who were never noted for "their support of legislation for the welfare of the common people of this country." This


107. Ibid.; also see CIO News, 19 August 1940.
was the attitude that A.G. Thatcher had tried to dispel.

The official position of the CIO with regard to selective service was somewhat different than the pronouncements of Lewis. This organization maintained that it could not support military conscription because it believed that voluntary enlistments were still adequate, there was already more manpower in the armed forces than military equipment, and most basically "forced military service in peacetime would be an alarming departure from the basic principles of our democracy."108 "I wonder if in our zeal to protect our country from the shadow of Hitler," said the CIO chief, "we are not foolishly taking on some of Hitler's own methods."109 CIO vice president Philip Murray declared that "peacetime conscription has become one of the major planks in the platform of reaction," which will ultimately result in the destruction of civil liberties.110 Editorially the CIO News supported Lewis and Murray, indicating that the CIO would not succumb to the militarism being fashioned to crush the laboring man by the devious means of peacetime conscription.111 The working men of America should be

108. Ibid.
109. Lewis' speech before the Automobile Workers Convention 30 July 1940, as cited in the CIO News, 5 August 1940.
110. CIO News, 9 September 1940.
111. Ibid., editorial of 5 August 1940.
commended, stated the News, "for their refusal to be swept by war hysteria into sacrificing the liberties and democratic institutions" so precious to the American heritage. William Green was even praised for his opposition to the Burke-Wadsworth Bill, although it was somewhat sarcastically noted that the AFL president had worded his opposition so "there would be room for retreat if the going got tough."

After the Burke-Wadsworth Bill was reported out of Committee, and the vote upon the measure seemed imminent, the CIO became increasingly violent in its attacks upon selective service. Big business became the focus for these renewed charges. Lewis evidently believed that by shifting the attack from the idea of conscription itself to the role of the captains of industry he could generate more public support for the assault upon the draft. The CIO chief charged that conscription "would establish the principle in this nation that the lives of our young men are less privileged than the profit rights of dollars." He pointed out that at the moment many large corporations were setting as preconditions for the manufacture of arms "imperious demands" for vast tax concessions and enormous governmental

112. Ibid.
113. Ibid., 12 August 1940, article by C.W. Fowler.
114. Lewis memo to Congress, 14 August 1940.
And although this charge was dismissed as untrue in 1940, the post-war evaluation of economic mobilization by the War Department criticized industry for making just such demands. Lewis emphasized time and again that "wealth retains its privileges" while the common man was being offered as cannon fodder for imperialist designs. Philip Murray went as far as to declare that manufacturers "should not be allowed to stick a knife in America's back." For Murray, as for Lewis, there was something "sinister about the attempt to force conscription upon the nation." That something sinister was, of course, the destruction of the labor movement and the further entrenchment of the "wealthy" in America.

Comments of this kind by the CIO leaders tended to alienate support, or at least the sympathies of those persons and organizations which had accepted the trade union

115. Ibid.

116. NY Times, 29 August 1940.


119. Murray Labor Day Speech, Ibid.

120. Ibid.
arguments. It also launched a prolonged and severe attack upon the CIO by the biased editorial staff of the New York Times. The Times contended that the "imputation that conscription is in anyway a 'class' measure cannot be rebuked too strongly." The fact that the class issue was raised, commented the Times, is unwarranted "and a poor service to the country." Following very closely the arguments of Wendell Willkie, the New York newspaper argued that by engaging in such attacks upon industry, and demanding that wealth as well as men should be conscripted organized labor would push business into a position where it would fear "to undertake normal industrial expansion, endangering employment and weakening" the American defense system. Willkie had for some time maintained that if industry were conscripted then labor's worst fear, industrial conscription, would be realized. Thus it would not only be bad for the American defense effort if labor continued to attack business, but it would ultimately result in the enactment of some form of national service. Willkie eventually gained the public support of Republican William L. Hutcheson, vice president of the Republicana Party.

121. NY Times, 29 August 1940.
122. Ibid.
123. Statement of Willkie issued 30 August 1940, see NY Times, 1 September 1940.
124. Ibid., 31 August 1940.
president of the AFL and president of the Carpenter's Union, who backed the Republican nominee's contention that conscription of industry would result in the drafting of labor. 125

Thus, industrial conscription still remained the great fear of the AFL. The AFL fought against the enactment of the Burke-Wadsworth Bill, but did not go as far as the CIO in denouncing this apparent departure from American traditions. When it became apparent that the selective service bill would pass, the AFL quietly acquiesced and prepared for the more important struggle against national service; a battle it was certain would take place in the near future.

Throughout the three-month debate over the Burke-Wadsworth Bill the AFL maintained its basic position that such a measure as peacetime conscription should not be undertaken "blindly or lightly." 126 William Green stated that the AFL "will not oppose conscription if it can be proved that the traditional method of voluntary enlistment has failed." 127 In a series of speeches delivered in August and September 1940 Green insisted time and again

125. Ibid., 1 September 1940.

126. AFL Papers, Office of the President, File E, William Green Papers, 1925-1952, Labor Speeches, 1937-1942, Box No. 3, speech delivered in Denver, Colorado 2 September 1940.

127. Ibid.
that organized labor did not have confidence in the Burke-Wadsworth Bill or its sponsors, and furthermore labor "did not consider it well drawn or well planned." "On a matter as vital as this to the nation's welfare," stated the AFL president, "we feel it is the duty of the President of the United States to send a message to Congress stating the manpower needs of the nation's military forces and recommending a definite program to fulfill these needs." If and when such legislation became necessary the AFL wanted to go on record as demanding safeguards "which would adequately protect the economic and industrial status of working men and women." This included such things as passing a bill which would prohibit American soldiers from fighting in foreign wars, the maintenance of "decent" wages, and the protection of the rights of American workers. However, even though this labor organization would support compulsory military training if such legislation was necessary in order "to defend, protect and preserve America," it would still seem advisable to follow the "American way" of voluntary enlistments.

128. Ibid.

129. Ibid., see addresses 20 August 1940 to the New York State Federation of Labor, Niagara Falls, New York, and speech to the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Washington, D.C., 9 September 1940; also note Labor Day address 2 September 1940 as previously cited.

130. Ibid., Teamsters' speech 9 September 1940.
Green and the voice of the AFL, the American Federationist, were quick to indicate that the positions of the AFL and CIO were dramatically different. Green stated that the American working man would support the war, although the "dictatorial and autocratic" head of the CIO denied this. The Federationist pointed out that most American newspapers had assumed that the AFL had joined with the CIO in opposition to any selective service measure. "The CIO, right in line with the Communist Party opposes any conscription law at any time," a position which the AFL had not, or would not assume. "Arguments that conscription is a totalitarian product are vicious attempts to confuse the real issues," warned the voice of the AFL. If necessary the AFL would support military conscription, although it did not believe 1940 was the year, or the Burke-Wadsworth Bill was the proper measure for the enactment of selective service. The continual bickering of the AFL and CIO over the stand to be taken with regard to the peacetime draft undoubtedly undermined the effectiveness of organized labor and its fight against military conscription. The only

131. Ibid., 20 August 1940 speech to New York Federation of Labor; also see NY Times, 21 August 1940.


133. Ibid., p. 25.
benefit derived from this experience was the knowledge that such disunity would nullify the efforts of trade unionism against the proponents of national conscription.

Although the AFL and CIO dominated organized labor's opposition to the Burke-Wadsworth Bill a number of other interested observers of trade unionism in America made some rather interesting observations about America's first peacetime conscription bill. Most notable in this respect were the comments, made before both the House and Senate Military Committees examining the selective service proposal, by leaders of the American Socialist Party and the Socialist Labor Party.

Norman Thomas, head of the Socialist Party, predicted that conscription would jeopardize the rights of labor because "It gives reaction an instrument of repression." Thomas felt that the United States "under the Old Deal and the New," was unable to solve the problems of unemployment and economic security. This predicament, he said, has led "large sections of the ruling classes to seek the escape which they think military conscription will afford." The end product of all this, warned the socialist leader, would be the destruction of civil liberties and the foundations

134. Hearings, Thomas on S. 4164, p. 256.
of democratic society. Thomas' argument was later carried one step further by Joseph Curran, president of the International Maritime Union, and one of the chief organizers of Emergency Peace Mobilization. According to Curran, "Great industrialists and bankers" were back of conscription, distributing war propaganda which created fear and hysteria so that they could gain "government contracts, destroy democracy and the labor movement, and build a colonial empire . . ."  

Many labor spokesmen were as critical of conscription as Curran. However, of all the men who spoke on behalf of labor, Norman Thomas was the only one to offer an alternative to European involvement and conscription. "We should make our democracy work," challenged Thomas, "by destroying poverty." "By concentrating on the conquest of poverty" America would "achieve a national unity at home, and a reputation abroad which would serve us better than armaments, economies and conscription."  

It was the Socialist Labor Party, however, which drew public attention to the basic fear of organized labor. This was the concern over industrial conscription, a subject which had been avoided in public statements by both major

136. *NY Times*, 1 September 1940.
137. Ibid.
labor organizations. Their strategy was to circumvent any discussions on this issue because of the possibilities of arousing Congressional and public interest. The Socialist Labor Party had no such inhibitions. In a statement presented before the House Military Affairs Committee the labor party warned that conscription would open "a veritable Pandora's box from which even hope will have fled." The Socialist Labor Party built its case around the activities of the "notorious New York Times" which had been urging the speedy adoption of the Burke-Wadsworth Bill while avoiding "any discussion of the fatal consequences to such democratic liberties as we enjoy." According to the labor party the Times had made one tremendous mistake. In an editorial 27 May 1940 a writer discussing Britain and the war effort commented, "But once the principle of conscription for the army is admitted -- as it must be in a life or death struggle with another nation of equal power -- then there is no logical stopping point."

The editorial continued to explain that if men could be taken from civilian life and ordered to be slain in battle "there is no reason why other men should not be ordered into coal mines, or to work 12 hours a day ..." The Times had not pointed out that


140. NY Times, 27 May 1940.

141. Ibid.
something similar to this could happen in the United States with the enactment of peacetime conscription. However the Socialist Labor Party indicated there was a 'logical stopping point.' This was "industrial feudalism," a term which is synonymous with industrial conscription. The logic of this argument was apparent to most labor leaders, the question was how to make the public aware of the situation.

Senator Edwin C. Johnson of Colorado presented this same argument in Congressional debate. "Labor knows," said the Senator, "that peacetime conscription of men is a wicked precedent that must naturally lead in time to conscription of labor and industry." Although no group has "a monopoly on patriotism," stated Johnson, no one has a better understanding of the principles of democracy than organized workers. The Senator then theorized that "it must be apparent to everyone that there is something wrong with a measure which is so bitterly fought by every group of organized labor."  

Most politicians declined to become involved in the discussion of this logical extension of military conscription. As has been indicated previously, Wendell Willkie had touched upon the subject when he had voiced his


143. Ibid.
opposition to the controversial conscription of industry amendment tacked on the Burke-Wadsworth Bill.\textsuperscript{144} Willkie maintained that one could not conscript industry without conscripting labor, a situation which could destroy trade unionism in America.\textsuperscript{145} Although the idea of conscripting industry was labeled as "unjust" there was no mention of the possible arbitrary conscription of the laboring forces.\textsuperscript{146} Eventually the Russell-Overton Amendment, which stated that the President could take over industrial plants for national defense production of essential war materials if satisfactory agreements were not reached with the owners, was passed. This concession, although vague and not really adding to the powers of the President in time of crisis, did make military conscription more palatable to the general public.\textsuperscript{147} Most executives in the trade union movement realized that the amendment meant nothing. It did not allay labor concerns over the growing fear that industrial conscription might soon be proposed by the President. If the amendment had given the government control of profits during wartime,

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., pp. 16883-16905.

\textsuperscript{145} \textit{NY Times}, 30 August 1940.

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 31 August 1940.

\textsuperscript{147} See "Industrial Mobilization for War," Chapter I which analyzes Presidential powers during time of war; also note discussion in \textit{NY Times} editorial, 31 August 1940.
organized labor would not have been so uneasy. The question uppermost in the minds of the leaders of labor and business was what did the President really feel about this whole problem of conscription.

During this particular episode Roosevelt refused to discuss the conscription of industry or labor, declining on the basis that "now as in 1933," he could not discuss legislation pending in Congress. However, the President did assail Willkie for "putting the draft in politics." He objected to the Republican presidential nominee's contention that restrictions on industry would result in the weakening of America's defenses. The President probably objected to the innocuous Russell-Overton amendment, and would have had it deleted if the political scene were different. But, as Arthur Krock had so astutely remarked, "the inexorable rules of the political game make it certain" that some form of conscription of business would have to be included in the Burke-Wadsworth Bill since so many people were inquiring "how can men be conscripted and not America's wealth?" Any politician who voted for one and not the other "would consider he had invited his own defeat at the polls."

148. NY Times, 31 August 1940.
149. Ibid.
150. Ibid., 21 August 1940.
151. Ibid.
Roosevelt had no intention of becoming embroiled over the larger issue of national service at that time. The support of the military draft had been risk enough for one election year.

Even without the added inducement of the conscription of industry in time of emergency the proponents of selective service had the votes to pass the first peacetime selective conscription bill in American history. America prepared for the draft with little fanfare. One of the few expressions of emotionalism was the march on the White House by the Congress of American Mothers who quite unexpectedly, and somewhat out of character, began burning in effigy a number of the proponents of selective service. 152  But the undeniable evidence that the passage of the Burke-Wadsworth Bill was imminent can be seen in the public report of W.W. Schwap, president of the J. R. Wood Company, America's largest manufacturer of rings. Schwap stated that the sale of wedding rings was up 250%, and even though the company was working overtime it could not meet the great demand. 153  The military draft has from time to time provided a stimulus for romance.

The Burke-Wadsworth Bill was passed in Congress

152. Ibid., 22 August 1940.
153. Ibid., 27 August 1940.
14 September 1940 and signed by the President two days later. On October 16 all men between the ages of twenty one and thirty five registered for the draft. This, coupled with the recent authorization of Congress giving the President power to call the National Guard to active duty for twelve months, provided the manpower needed for completing American defense needs. 154

After the enactment of selective service organized labor concentrated its efforts on trying to prevent the draft from being used as a means to destroy trade union gains or informally instituting industrial conscription through such devices as the 'work or fight' plan. The major trade union goal was to insure proper labor representation on the draft boards. 155 Once the Burke-Wadsworth Bill was law labor opposition was rather mild. The CIO condemned Congress for failing to provide for conscription of wealth after conscripting men. "Plain John Smith can be pushed around a bit," commented the CIO, but the powerful corporations were not called upon to make "sacrifices" for the defense effort. 156 However this statement was quite moderate


156. CIO News, October 1940. Editorial entitled, "War Profits."
considering the intensity of the opposition before the passage of the military draft.

Even in the summer of 1941 when Congress was debating the question of whether or not the Burke-Wadsworth Bill would be extended, labor refused to become embroiled in the controversy. In mid-August military service was extended for an additional 18 months, but in the House of Representatives the measure squeaked by 203-202. David Lawrence attributed the close vote to political considerations, rather than organized labor or any isolationist opposition. The vote was along party lines. Democrats supported it 182 to 65, while the Republican Party voted 133 to 21 against the extension. Lawrence called this the "biggest political gamble of a decade." The Republicans were hoping to capitalize on the anti-war feeling in the United States. Most observers were appalled at the narrow victory ecked out by the extension advocates. The consensus was that the


160. Ibid.

161. See 13 August 1941 editorials in the NY Times, Baltimore Sun, and the Philadelphia Enquirer.
"margin of wisdom" in America was dangerously thin.162

The trade unionists were quite realistic in their desire to avoid championing another losing cause. National defense preparations in 1941 had already brought to the surface many problems such as the question of the strike, and the relocation of workers. Solutions had to be found for these complex problems, but both major labor organizations also realized that organized labor would soon have to face its greatest threat -- industrial conscription. The union record against military conscription was disappointing, but the efforts to thwart national service were greater, and dramatically more successful.

162. Washington Post, 14 August 1941.
CHAPTER IV
THE CRUCIAL YEARS: AMERICA WEIGHS NATIONAL SERVICE, 1941-1943

The two years following the extension of the Burke-Wadsworth Selective Service Act in 1941 were exceedingly trying and difficult for the executive leadership of organized labor. Early in 1941, before the United States had entered into World War II, the seemingly desperate situation faced by Great Britain, and the apparently insoluble Far Eastern question had convinced many military and government officials that it was only a matter of time before the United States became involved in the war. There was an obvious necessity, then, to prepare the nation for this possible crisis, or, at least, make America's defenses so strong that no nation dare challenge her might. To achieve either of these goals it was necessary for the United States to maintain maximum production in defense plants. Tremendous pressure was placed upon American workers to maintain full defense production, and to mediate any labor-management difficulties without resorting to the strike. Strikes would inevitably result in costly delays in the defense effort. On the other hand the American laboring man was being pressured to work long hours,
reacting to a rising cost in living, and generally becoming incensed that the brunt of criticism in any production failure was directed at him. It seemed apparent to both the leaders of American labor, and the workers themselves, that a large portion of the difficulties in defense mobilization could be attributed to employer inefficiency and the poor procurement policies of the various branches of the armed services. It was obvious also that the burden of protecting the American worker, and minimizing the conflict between the laborer and his detractors fell upon the shoulders of Philip Murray and William Green, the respected heads of America's two leading labor organizations, the Congress of Industrial Organizations and the American Federation of Labor. Their task was an unenviable one. They had to protect the rights of America's workers, but at the same time these labor chieftains realized that they had to be cautious because of the growing demands for some form of labor conscription. Neither Murray nor Green wanted to alienate the support of President Roosevelt or the United States Congress. Both the President and Congress seemed content to follow a policy of voluntary manpower recruitment for defense industries, at least in the early years of the 1940's. Yet with the adoption of price controls, wage freezing and no-strike guarantees, the American worker began to clamor for redress of his grievances. The dilemma of the labor leader was
obvious. Equally apparent was the fact that there was no clearcut solution to the predicament, a truism illustrated by the vacillating course followed by the two major labor organizations during the crucial years from 1941-1943.

Once again the key figure during these difficult years was the hard pressed resident of the White House, Franklin D. Roosevelt. During the 1930's when the War Department was formulating the various Industrial Mobilization Plans, the proponents of these plans had indicated that the regulation of civilian workers would eliminate basic problems of production inefficiency, strikes, and the lack of skilled workers in essential defense plants. In the early 1940's this same theme was revived, this time by the proponents of national service. President Roosevelt's good friend and architect of the 1940 Selective Service Bill, Grenville Clark, saw a definite connection between his earlier activities on behalf of the Burke-Wadsworth Act and the growing demand for labor conscription. Civilian war work was "a logical and necessary supplement to Selective Service for military duty," confided Clark. The New York lawyer also insisted that a national service bill must be thought of as "companion legislation" to the 1940 Selective Service Act. 1 This was precisely the extension

of selective service that organized labor had feared most. Since World War I American labor executives had fought against this logical extension of selective service. One of the primary reasons labor had opposed the Burke-Wadsworth Act was the belief that in time of crisis civilian conscription might seem as logical as military conscription. In 1940 the War Department, the President and the formulators of the military draft bill had vehemently denied that the Burke-Wadsworth Act would result in the enactment of any subsequent conscription legislation, but the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the seemingly endless mobilization difficulties convinced many of the nation's leaders that a national service bill was needed.2

President Roosevelt, although aware of the growing demands for labor conscription within the War Department and the attitude of his good friend Grenville Clark, refused to support national service during the first two years of the Second World War. By 1944, however, the chief executive was convinced of the necessity of such a proposal and worked diligently, if belatedly, to have national service enacted. Much confusion has surrounded the attempt to enact labor conscription during the war. Particularly


2. Ibid., p. 2.
controversial is the question of how organized labor contributed to the ultimate defeat of such legislation, and whether or not labor's attitude during the initial stages of the war prevented President Roosevelt from endorsing the idea of national service.

Although organized labor played an important role in the defeat of national service it should be remembered that there were many reasons for its demise. Some of these reasons include the opposition of the business community, the attitude of such key government officials as Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor, Paul McNutt, Chairman of the War Manpower Commission, and Harvey Smith, the director of the Bureau of the Budget, the effective political machinations of the anti-conscription oriented Senate Military Affairs Committee, and the vacillating attitude of the American public. In the last analysis, however, one must accept Grenville Clark's conclusion that the "President's protracted delay in giving" national service public and "unequivocal support was the most important single factor in the failure to obtain enactment of the law."3 One might also conclude that the reason President Roosevelt delayed supporting national service was the result of labor's intense struggle against the whole concept of labor conscription. By the time the President had become convinced

3. Ibid., p. 16.
of the virtues of conscripting labor, the great wartime manpower crisis had passed. Roosevelt's decision, then, not to demand labor conscription during the early stages of the war probably defeated the national service scheme.

President Roosevelt actually received the burdensome task of handling the national service question because of Congressional unwillingness to tackle the problem. The American Congress, which had shown great reluctance to lead in any conscription controversy, whether military or civilian, continually lagged behind the chief executive in even examining the possibilities of a national service plan. Labor conscription was obviously a political liability. When President Roosevelt finally decided to back national service Congress refused to react to his urgings to enact such legislation. Roosevelt's political gamemanship which had relied consistently upon delaying tactics, as in the case of the Burke-Wadsworth Bill, proved ineffective in the fight over national service. The President's timing was certainly the key factor in this particular story.

There is a certain timeliness in the study of national service that transcends World War II. Indeed, the struggle over labor conscription aroused great interest in the whole subject of efficiency in wartime mobilization. Even in 1945 when the leaders of organized labor realized that American workers had escaped the threat of immediate
labor conscription there was also a realization that when and if mobilization efforts ever reached the same proportions as those of World War II they could safely assume that national service would be resurrected with renewed vigor. Grenville Clark expressed this idea soon after the conclusion of the war. He pointed out that the next time America faced a similar military crisis the leaders of the nation would have a guideline for the establishing of a national service act. Although Clark and most of the proponents of labor conscription thought national service would solve the basic mobilization ills of the United States, it was never proven that such a measure would produce the desired results. In the postwar period some military men have gone as far as to say that national service would cause more problems than it would solve because of the tremendous antagonism it would generate among America's workers. Nonetheless it is still amazing that the United States was the only major belligerent in World War II which did not resort to labor conscription. There can be

4. Ibid., p. VIII.


6. Ibid., p. 197.
no doubt that national service provoked strong emotion, and certainly no group was more aware of the intensity of the situation than organized labor.

As has already been noted there had been some discussion of national service from World War I to the culmination of the idea in the 1940's. During the fight over the Burke-Wadsworth Bill in 1940, however, labor conscription was rarely mentioned. The struggle to adopt military conscription was difficult enough without injecting the additional complications that national service would have invoked. During 1941, however, there were a number of references to labor conscription which aroused the interest of organized labor. Although there was no organized drive for civilian conscription, it was apparent that many segments of society were interested in this vital topic.

One type of interest was shown by some American businessmen. Glenn L. Martin, the Baltimore airplane manufacturer, provides an excellent example. In early January 1941 Martin publicly commented that the government should have the power to draft labor and industry.\(^7\) He warned that the crucial problems of defense mobilization would provide an opportunity for labor organizers to threaten industry with strikes. Conscription, warned Martin, was the only way to prevent labor from "taking a bite into

\(^7\) NY Times, 15 January 1941.
a bigger and bigger melon." This kind of appeal aroused much sympathy for labor conscription because most Americans felt that any strikes carried out in key mobilization industries would be both immoral and unpatriotic. Congressmen were well aware of the emotions involved in the strike issue. Representative Samuel Hobbs of Alabama, a man not sympathetic to national service, commented that Congress was being bombarded with letters from fathers, mothers, wives and sweethearts, inquiring why their loved ones were being forced to serve in the armed services for $30 a month while labor was allowed to strike against the projects designed to put necessary equipment in their hands. Hobbs stated that although he felt that labor conscription was a "radical" idea, it would not be long before public pressures would give new validity to such a proposal. There can be little doubt of the general abhorrence with which the public held industrial strikes when the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee could publicly state that he would not "hesitate one split second" to recommend the electric chair for all enemies of the defense program. Most of the Congressional plans for drafting workers in 1941 were

8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., 11 March 1941.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., 28 March 1941.
in someway concerned with amending the Burke-Wadsworth Selective Service Bill to allow the President to enforce the drafting of manpower for defense purposes as well as military service. Grenville Clark and his associates later branded this as a perversion of the intentions of the authors of the Burke-Wadsworth Bill. Clark always insisted that a completely new bill should be written to implement national service.  

Many key government officials, including Selective Service Director, Lewis B. Hershey, believed that the Burke-Wadsworth Selective Service Bill was flexible enough so that it could be used to coerce workers to refrain from striking. If this technique had succeeded it is probable that demands for national service would have abated. One of the best illustrations of how Selective Service could be expanded to deal with strikes can be seen in the Ryan Aeronautical Company strike in San Diego, California, during January 1941. The CIO organized United Automobile Workers struck the Ryan factory over a serious wage dispute. Attempts to mediate the difficulty seemed to have failed.

12. Ibid.


during the early weeks of the strike, and emotions on both sides were high. The workers in particular felt that the Ryan company was taking advantage of the critical defense situation. CIO spokesman, Richard Frankensteen, expressed labor's attitude in a telegram sent to President Roosevelt 17 January 1941. Frankensteen told the President that the CIO was quite willing and ready to sacrifice for the United States. "We are not willing, however," stated the labor representative, "... to permit exploiting manufacturers to get-rich-quick while depressing the living standards of the workers and then publicly hiding behind the slogan of 'national defense' as Ryan is doing." Frankensteen commented that the situation had worsened considerably because of the attitude of the chairman of the San Diego Draft Board. The chairman had stated that he "had no sympathy for defense workers who struck" against national interests. He warned that any workers who struck against defense production would be reclassified and immediately inducted into the army. "We will not tolerate any such course of action," stated Frankensteen, who then proceeded to ask the President to support the CIO position. When

15. Ibid., 18 January 1941.
16. Ibid., 17 January 1941.
17. Ibid., 18 January 1941.
General Hershey was questioned about this volatile situation he declined to comment. He stated that he was not aware of all of the factors in the Ryan strike, but he did admit that the Selective Service law was not a club which could be used to intimidate workers. Fortunately the Ryan strike soon ended, but the crucial question of the role of the draft board during such crises was not resolved. During the next few months the West Coast suffered a series of strikes affecting defense production. One of these, the North American Aviation Company strike, is particularly notable because of the effect it had upon the proponents of national service and organized labor.

The North American strike, which seemed unusually violent and chaotic, caused a great deal of concern throughout the country. Especially frightening was the inability of CIO representative Richard Frankensteen to deal with the striking workers. Frankensteen admitted difficulties in trying to persuade the UAW to accept what he considered a realistic settlement. Finally in exasperation he charged that "vicious underhanded maneuverings of the Communist Party" were prohibiting a negotiated and just settlement.

18. Ibid.

of the strike. 20 The strike also caused considerable concern among key government officials. Henry Stimson and Lewis Hershey were adamant in their demands that the government take over the plant and restore order. 21 President Roosevelt complied, and the strike was soon ended. On this occasion, however, the Selective Service Director was quite willing to use the Burke-Wadsworth Bill as a club to coerce strikers. At a special press conference held by Secretary of War Stimson, Hershey read a telegram sent to the Inglewood, California District Draft Board. The telegram authorized all draft boards to reclassify striking defense workers who had ceased to perform their jobs. 22 "I might say that this statement," commented Secretary Stimson, "was issued with the expressed approval of the President." 23

One of the results of this whole unfortunate episode was the hardening of Lewis B. Hershey's attitude toward organized labor. Shortly after the North American strike, General Hershey, in a speech before the United States Junior


Chamber of Commerce, warned that 1941 was not the time for "chaos" in labor. The American people, confided the Selective Service head, had the right to demand that management and labor work out their differences through peaceful negotiations. Hershey prophesied that costly delays in production "may be measured in blood; blood of your sons and mine." General Hershey later recalled that the summer of 1941 proved a turning point in his attitude toward the question of defense mobilization. He emphasized the fact that he did not become "anti-labor," but rather became determined to do everything in his power to make sure production continued, even if this meant expanding the powers of the Selective Service System.

The reaction of Philip Murray, worthy successor to John L. Lewis as President of the CIO, toward this new and belligerent attitude displayed by Selective Service was immediate and emotional. "The perversion of the conscription law to the establishment of enforced labor in the United States," warned Murray, "is deeply repugnant to the American


25. Ibid.

26. Interview with the author 14 July 1966. General Hershey also stated that he felt his job was complicated by the definite pro-labor attitude of the Labor Department.
way of doing things."

The CIO chief expressed both surprise and alarm that the government would use army troops in suppressing the North American aviation strike. He contended that the basic right of labor to strike was being abused, and warned that any further hardening of the government's attitude could bring about the destruction of organized labor. Murray castigated the use of troops and Hershey's order to reclassify striking workers as "an open breach of faith with labor." In particular the CIO demanded that General Hershey rescind his infamous reclassification order. This the General refused to do even though the labor difficulties on the West Coast seemed to have been settled.

Two months after the conclusion of the North American incident the CIO was still attempting to persuade the Selective Service head to withdraw his controversial order of 9 June 1941. "The conscription act," stated the CIO News "was not intended to be a club over the heads of American workers to coerce them into working against their will and

27. NY Times, 13 June 1941.

28. Ibid.

29. CIO News, 16 June 1941.

30. Ibid. Also see Blum, "Use of the Draft as a Manpower Sanction," p. 376.
to destroy their right to strike." 31 The CIO complained that in the sixty days after the issuance of the Hershey dictum many local draft boards had begun to reject official recommendations for worker deferments, and in some cases had unjustly reclassified essential laborers. 32 This was a direct violation of labor rights. Allan Haywood, CIO director of organization, wrote General Hershey to advise him that many employers now believed that they did not have to bargain with union representatives in order to settle production disputes because they were convinced that Selective Service would destroy any strike in defense industries by reclassifying workers. "Every patriotic American," commented Haywood, "will resent conscription as a perversion into a form of punishment and a club to beat down . . . liberties." 33

The AFL was noticeably silent during the entire CIO—Selective Service hassle in 1941. It seems probable that William Green, as Samuel Gompers before him, preferred the broadening of the powers of Selective Service to the enactment of a national service bill. This was certainly the lesser of the two evils. Green gave no indication, at

31. CIO News, 18 August 1941.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
least publicly, that he had any intention of haggling with the Selective Service System over draft procedures. However, the AFL chieftain continued his vigilance in the area of labor conscription. Green's attitude on this subject had not changed since the mid-1920's when he took over the leadership of the AFL. The validity of this assertion can be illustrated by Green's reaction to a British news release in January 1941. The English government announced that British manpower, directed by Labor Minister Ernest Bevin, would be completely controlled by the drafting of all workers. Green immediately issued a statement declaring that organized American labor opposed the drafting of workingmen. The AFL head commented that the situation in America was drastically different from the one in England. "There is plenty of manpower available here," stated Green, "and we have not reached the desperate state of Great Britain." Green's pronouncement was given added validity when almost simultaneously the newspapers carried a similar interpretation of the manpower situation in America as voiced by Bernard Baruch, successful chairman of the War Industries Board in World War I. Baruch, addressing the National Industrial Conference Board, warned that

34. *NY Times*, 21 January 1941.

labor's right to strike should not be hindered by the draft, or be subject to conscription laws which might impair the freedom of labor organizations. The elder statesman then presented an argument which would be used by organized labor throughout the remainder of the debate over national service. Enforced and involuntary service for a private master, warned Baruch, "is and has been clearly and repeatedly defined by our Supreme Court as slavery prohibited by the Thirteenth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States." Baruch believed that if such governmental interference "were made it might be used to break a perfectly justifiable strike and so at one sweep destroy all the social advance of our labor system in the last century."

Green tried to take a positive stand on the whole issue of defense mobilization by stressing that organized labor, despite the negative comments of some labor critics, was meeting its defense obligations. In his 1941 Labor Day Speech Green warned the American public that they should "not for one moment believe those who say that the defense program is lagging and that labor has failed."
The AFL head stated on this occasion a thought which he would repeat many times in the next four years. He asserted that all those who criticized labor production efforts should examine actual production records. Green was convinced that the impressive mobilization statistics would vindicate labor. 40

Green was also vitally aware of the necessity for maintaining President Roosevelt's support for voluntarism in defense mobilization. Moreover he, much more than Philip Murray, was sympathetic to the many political pressures placed upon the President to maintain uninterrupted defense production. Green, too, realized that Franklin Roosevelt was primarily a political being and that widespread sympathy for national service would dictate the President's conversion to labor conscription just as it had in 1940 to military conscription. This is why the AFL head was so upset and disappointed in the efforts of the National Mediation Board established by the President 19 March 1941. 41 Two labor representatives had been selected from both the AFL and CIO in an attempt to settle labor disputes which threatened

Box No. 3, Speech of 1 September 1941 delivered at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

40. Ibid.

41. Executive Order 1747, Establishment of the National Defense Mediation Board, 19 March 1941; also see Taft, p. 212.
to harm American defense efforts. The Board had not produced the desired results, and in the West Coast difficulties in the airplane and mining industries the Board seemed to have obstructed settlement. 42

President Roosevelt became increasingly convinced that the major labor difficulties in defense mobilization was due to the unfortunate fissure within organized labor. In a letter to Green the President stated that "in this hour when civilization itself is in the balance, organizational rivalries and jurisdictional conflicts should be discarded." 43 President Roosevelt stated that in his opinion "the establishment of peace between labor organizations would be a patriotic step forward of incalculable value in the creation of true national unity." 44 Although Green did not make any new overtures toward the rival CIO after receiving Roosevelt's letter, there was a noticeable change in his public support for the President's mobilization program. The AFL head became increasingly insistent that labor desired strong military defenses so that no

42. See Blum, "Use of the Draft as a Manpower Sanction," pp. 376-377; also note articles in the NY Times, 1 and 10 June 1941.

43. AFL Papers, File B, Office of the President, William Green Papers, 1915-1945, Box No. 9, Letter of Roosevelt to Green dated 2 October 1941.

44. Ibid.
foreign power would dare attack America. Green coupled this approach with a renewed denunciation of John L. Lewis, and those of his opinion who believed that war preparations would involve the United States in the European conflict. There could be little doubt of Green's faith in the President. "I believe him, I trust him, I have always found President Roosevelt to be a man of his word," stated the AFL chief as he expressed his approval of the President's defense plans at an important labor rally in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Green's policy proved to be wise and correct. During the following year, particularly after the infamous bombing of Pearl Harbor 7 December 1941, the President refused to heed the council of those who demanded labor conscription. The Chief Executive's decision may have been influenced by Green's public and enthusiastic support of the nation's mobilization program.

After the initial shock of the Japanese attack upon the United States even those elements of organized labor which were skeptical of Roosevelt's defense policies throughout 1941 pledged support for the war program and

45. Ibid., File E, Labor Speeches, 1937-1942, Box No. 3. See Green's addresses of 8 February 1941 before the American Federation of Trades, 5 May 1941 talk before the Pennsylvania State Federation of Labor, and Labor Day Speech, 1 September 1941.

46. Ibid., 5 May 1941.
praised the President for his foresight. Once again William Green took the lead in trying to rally labor support for the war effort. The AFL head called an emergency meeting of the Executive Committee of the AFL 16 December 1941 in an attempt to formulate a satisfactory program for organized labor during the war crisis. The result was the famous five-point program which was eventually adopted by a conference of national and international unions. The most important provisions stated that workers in war industries would relinquish the right to strike for the duration of the conflict, and that the major problems between employees and employers would be solved by a National War Labor Board similar to the one created in World War I.

Almost immediately President Roosevelt called a meeting of the representatives of both major labor organizations in an attempt to establish some concrete means to prevent interruptions of defense production. Eventually


48. Taft, pp. 219-220. Author quotes from the Executive Council Minutes, 16 December 1941.

49. Ibid., also see Byron Fairchild and Jonathan Grossman, The Army and Industrial Manpower, United States Army in World War II, Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C., 1959, Chapter IV, "Labor Disputes and the War Department."
the President called upon the AFL and CIO to organize the
Combined Labor War Board whose only major duty was to
discuss "all matters concerning labor's participation in the
war." 50 Prior to this the President, following the guide­
lines of the AFL five point program, had created a National
War Labor Board with his famous Executive Order of 12
January 1942. 51 The primary task of the National War Labor
Board was, of course, to settle labor-management disputes
in defense industries, while the President envisioned the
Combined Labor War Board as a means to bridge the gap
between the two major labor organizations. In theory these
two agencies would be able to resolve any difficulties which
might arise in defense production. In actual practice,
however, the intense emotions invoked over the policies of
price stabilization, wage control, and the implementation
of no-strike agreements caused severe breakdowns in this
rather simple machinery. For the President the biggest
disappointment of all was the failure of the Combined War
Labor Board to initiate any positive defense programs. 52
Later in the war a key labor official attributed this
failure to a general mistrust between the AFL and CIO, and

50. Quoted in Taft, p. 221.
51. Ibid., p. 220; also see Fairchild and Grossman, p. 217.
52. Ibid., pp. 220-221.
the maverick role assumed by John L. Lewis and his United Mine Workers. 53

It was in this confused atmosphere that the proponents of national service found new impetus for espousing their design for greater efficiency in mobilization production. Certainly, they believed, it was both appropriate and realistic to ask the government how could organized labor perform its defense obligations during stress of war when the breakdowns in 1941 had caused such tremendous problems. Furthermore, if the labor organizations themselves were not sure that they could insure unity within the labor movement how could the government possibly expect the various labor agencies to prove effective? 54 Could President Roosevelt continue to remain optimistic about AFL and CIO cooperation after the failure of the Combined Labor War Board? Did the President really believe that dissensions which racked labor in peacetime would suddenly disappear in the wartime crisis? The advocates of labor conscription thought not. In the next three years they would strive to gain Congressional approval for the first national service bill in American

53. See the analysis of the labor split contained in a letter of James B. Carey to Philip Murray, 27 December 1943. Found in the Brophy Letters, a collection held at Catholic University, Box No. 3, 1943-1944.

54. Ibid.
history. Victory escaped them by the most narrow of margins; yet the legacy they left is a strong one which could confront organized labor at any time the nation is involved in total war.

The bombing of Pearl Harbor inspired Grenville Clark to begin his quest for a national service bill. Clark and many of his associates who had worked so diligently for the enactment of the Burke-Wadsworth Bill were convinced that the production needs projected by President Roosevelt in January 1922 "could not be fulfilled with promptness and assurance of success without National Service." It was evident that Clark did not expect the same type of struggle over the enactment of a labor conscription bill as was the case in 1940 over the passage of selective service. In his testimony before the Senate Committee on Military Affairs Clark confided that the passage of a national service bill was as certain as the likelihood "that the sun will rise tomorrow." The various opinion polls indicated that the American people overwhelmingly supported some form of national service. One commentator indicated that this

56. Ibid.
57. Hearings, Clark on S. 666, 4 March 1943, p. 49.
support was motivated by both a fear of labor strikes, and a general belief that labor conscription would ensure efficient defense mobilization.\(^{59}\)

In February 1942 Grenville Clark organized the Citizen's Committee for a National Service Act.\(^{60}\) The primary duty of this Committee was to formulate a labor conscription bill which would be acceptable to both Congress and President Roosevelt. Numerous bills were written before the Committee finally decided upon one version. Somewhat immodestly Clark later commented, "I made all those drafts on my own hook, beginning in February 1942, down to November 1942, with a draft submitted to every member of Congress."\(^{61}\) Clark's greatest official encouragement for this venture came from Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson, and Under Secretary of War, Robert Patterson.\(^{62}\) Both of these men had worked with Clark in the successful effort to pass the Burke-Wadsworth Bill, and each leader interpreted national service as a natural and desirable extension of selective service.\(^{63}\)

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59. *NY Times*, 15 November 1941.

60. *Hearings*, Clark on S. 666, 4 March 1943, p. 48; also see Clark *Report*, p. 2.

61. *Ibid*.


63. *Ibid*.
Soon after the formation of the Citizen's Committee for national service Stimson wrote Clark and told him that the War Department had already mentioned the possibilities of labor conscription at a number of recent Cabinet meetings. The War Secretary assured Clark that he would do everything possible to enlist Roosevelt's support for national service. It was evident that Clark was quite confident that the President was in sympathy with the desires of the National Service Committee although Roosevelt had not discussed the matter with him. Clark's mistaken assumption was strengthened even more after he sent a preliminary draft of his national service bill to the President 27 May 1942. Roosevelt replied to Clark that national service "might well bear a similar relationship to legislation of the future as did the first draft of the Selective Service Bill to the legislation of the past." The New York lawyer was certain at this point that Roosevelt was endorsing national service. Actually Roosevelt was interested in the idea, but most certainly was not convinced that it was necessary or desireable at that time. Shortly afterward, however, the President instructed Paul McNutt, Chairman of the War Manpower Commission to appoint a subcommittee to

64. Ibid.
65. Clark Report, p. 3.
study Clark's proposal and to make recommendations as to the feasibility of national service.\textsuperscript{66} At Roosevelt's suggestion Goldthwaite H. Dorr of the War Department was made chairman of the Subcommittee which also included two other key military figures, Brigadier General Lewis B. Hershey, and James V. Forrestal, Assistant Secretary of Navy.

The President's decision to allow McNutt and the War Manpower Commission to conduct the investigation of the possibilities of national service was very unfortunate for the advocates of labor conscription. The Commission, created by a Presidential directive 18 April 1942, proved to be a hinderance rather than an aid for facilitating the ideas of national service.\textsuperscript{67} This condition is easily explained. First the Manpower Commission was conceived by the President as a means of implementing more efficiently the voluntary method of labor distribution. The enactment of a national service bill would eliminate the necessity for such a commission. Second, and more important, was the enigma of the director of the War Manpower Commission, Paul McNutt. From 1942 through 1945 McNutt vacillated from strong approval of labor conscription, to an equally

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{67} SS Library, Special File, Executive Correspondence, Executive Order of 18 April 1942 to the Selective Service System.
adamant rejection of the idea. His position seemed to vary with the attitude of the President, and the possible role the Manpower Commission might play in developing national service. Whatever the motivation, one cannot deny that McNutt certainly obstructed demands for national service in 1942. When the Dorr Committee submitted a report 28 July 1942 recommending the immediate enactment of a comprehensive national service bill McNutt destroyed the significance of the recommendation by redirecting the proposal to another subcommittee. Clark's original plan, and the observations of the Dorr Committee were given to the advisory Management-Labor Policy Committee, headed by Arthur S. Flemming, Deputy Chairman of the War Manpower Commission. Eventually this committee reported that national service legislation might be needed in the future but it did not seem necessary in 1942. These two conflicting reports originating in the War Manpower Commission did not aid in eliminating the growing confusion over the conscription issue.

Moreover, the Management-Labor Policy Committee

68. Compare McNutt's statements recorded in the NY Times, 16 October 1942 and 3 March 1943.
69. Clark Report, p. 3; also see Fairchild and Grossman, pp. 221-222.
70. Ibid.; also note NY Times, 11 November 1942.
raised a series of other questions which plagued the proponents of national service during the next three years. The New York Times was particularly critical of the Policy Committee's report for this reason. Although the Committee stated that labor conscription was not needed at that time, it did not present alternatives to national service. "What the Committee entirely fails to recognize," stated an editorial writer, "is that compulsory labor service cannot be avoided unless far bolder steps are taken in removing artificial restrictions on production." The Times, as other proponents of national service, was also irritated by the Committee's denunciation of McNutt for stating that a national service act was "inevitable" and essential for maximum war production. Eventually, of course, the Chairman of the War Manpower Commission was convinced that his earlier evaluation of labor conscription was erroneous, and that the Committee's assessment was correct.

Fleming's Committee also questioned the possible effects that labor conscription would have upon the morale of American workers. "Conversion of the moral obligation

71. NY Times, 12 November 1942.

72. Ibid., 17 September 1942; also see McNutt's statement before the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, 77th Cong., 2nd Session, Hearings on S. 3297 and S. 2479; statement also quoted in Fairchild and Grossman, p. 223.

73. NY Times, 11 November 1942.
to serve in the war effort into a legal obligation," correctly observed the Committee, "will of itself not solve the manpower situation." The Fleming Report had a marked effect upon many persons who were seriously trying to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of national service. For instance J. Howard Pew, President of the Sun Oil Company of Philadelphia, reiterated many of the Committee's assertions in a major speech before the National Association of Manufacturers. "Compelling men to work where they do not desire," warned Mr. Pew, "would strip the worker of his dignity as an individual and reduce him to the status of a serf." This situation could destroy morale in defense plants, and ultimately lose the war for America, stated Pew.

The Management-Labor Policy Committee also struck upon another vital subject when it expressed the opinion that both the control of military and civilian manpower should be under the direction of a single authority. Specifically the Committee wanted this authority to reside in the War Manpower Commission. Most experts believed

74. Ibid.
75. Ibid., 3 December 1942.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid., 11 November 1942.
that such a move was inconceivable in 1942. There was a
general acceptance of the argument presented by the *Times*
that the director of military and national service
"should be divorced from politics," a criteria which would
have eliminated McNutt. 79 For sometime there had been
considerable speculation that McNutt had serious presidential
asperations. 80 Although this particular recommendation
surprised many government officials, it was quite in
accordance with the ambitions of the resourceful Chairman
of the War Manpower Commission.

Early in the fall of 1942 Paul McNutt indicated that
he was convinced that all manpower policies should be
coordinated under one authority. Speaking before the
American Hospital Association, McNutt forcefully stated that
the "pipe-and-slippers attitude of peacetime" labor
distribution must give way to the "cold steel and hot fury
of total war." 81 McNutt warned that this could not be
accomplished under the existing manpower policies. A few
days later he testified before the Senate Committee on
Military Affairs and again commented that American "manpower
policy must be unified and determined in a single agency if


80. Article by Frederick R. Barkley in *NY Times*,
1 November 1942.

the working force of the country is to be used most effectively."82 McNutt received unexpected support for his position when the highly respected Kilgore Subcommittee of the Special Truman War Policies Investigating Committee issued a statement urging the consolidation of all manpower activities under a single agency.83 However, McNutt chose to ignore the Subcommittee's warning that "the manpower problem is too difficult and complex to be solved by any simple solution such as creating a manpower czar or authorizing by statute a government agency to determine by coercion where each employee shall work."84 The Kilgore Committee went on to emphasize that "compulsion should be the very last resort in a democracy such as ours."85 McNutt was quick to grasp that this was the general opinion of both Congress and the President in late 1942. Slowly, but predictably McNutt moved away from his earlier contention that national service was inevitable.

Within two months the War Manpower Chairman could say that he was definitely for a voluntary method of distributing workers in key defense industries.86 "I am

82. Hearings, McNutt on S. 3297, 21 October 1942, p. 23.
83. NY Times, 13 November 1942.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid., 2 March 1943.
determined to try the voluntary method," stated McNutt, and "I intend to do all in my power, in all sincerity, to make the voluntary method work." McNutt's political inclinations were correct. On 5 December 1942 President Roosevelt, in a move bitterly and vociferously opposed by Henry L. Stimson and Lewis Hershey, transferred the direction of the Selective Service System from the War Department to the War Manpower Commission. Stimson and Hershey had both advocated some form of compulsory labor policy which would have been administered by Selective Service. They certainly did not want a voluntary plan controlled by the War Manpower Commission. Of course, the utilization of Selective Service was an essential part of the national service bill created by Grenville Clark, and Stimson did not want to abandon this concept.

The transfer of Selective Service from the War Department to the War Manpower Commission actually meant that President Roosevelt had temporarily abandoned any intentions he might have had for espousing national service.

87. Ibid.
89. Ibid., quoting Stimson's Diary, 11 December 1942.
90. Clark Report, p. 4.
In a very personal way it was also an unfortunate incident because it caused a fissure between Grenville Clark and the President which was never really spanned. As late as 1 December 1942 Clark had written to Presidential advisor, Samuel I. Rosenman, to implore him to prevent McNutt from gaining any more power with regard to the manpower situation. Thus, the transfer of Selective Service was a tremendous blow to the creator of the Burke-Wadsworth Bill. Clark was also deeply hurt by the President's refusal to endorse national service. Clark had firmly believed, at least until December 1942, that the President was in sympathy with labor conscription. It also seems quite likely that in later years when Clark reflected upon the whole episode he became disturbed because he believed that national service would have been enacted if Roosevelt had supported it in 1942 instead of procrastinating until 1944. One military expert has voiced the opinion that Clark misinterpreted the President's general interest in national service for an actual unqualified support of the idea. There is some validity in this assertion, however, Roosevelt's actions up until December would lead one to

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93. Clark Report, p. 16.

believe that the chief executive had more than a general interest in conscription.

In March 1942 President Roosevelt had told War Production Board Chairman, Donald M. Nelson, that "This is total war, we are all under fire -- soldiers and civilians alike." No one is a spectator warned the President, "to win, we must fight." Shortly after this, however, the President and Nelson issued a joint statement indicating that labor would not be drafted at that time, but such action was conceivable at any time military necessity demanded it. During the summer of 1942 there was considerable speculation that the President would endorse national service in the near future. Even at a Cabinet meeting 9 July 1942 the President indicated his desire for a national service measure, although he did not spell out what type of bill he wanted. In his private correspondence Roosevelt also gave indications of a growing interest and concern over national service. Suddenly, in the latter

95. NY Times, 1 March 1942.
96. Ibid.
97. Ibid., 19 March 1942.
98. Ibid., 30 July 1942.
100. Hyde Park Library, President's Official File 407, Labor 1941-1942. See telegram to the President from Harold P. Willett 9 March 1942, and the President's
part of the summer the President's interest in labor conscription began to wane.

There are a number of explanations for this apparent reversal of attitude by Roosevelt. First of all the President was naturally reluctant to saddle labor with a burden which it had vehemently opposed for such a long time. Moreover, the White House had been particularly gratified by the support that such labor leaders as William Green had given to the President's mobilization program. The adoption of national service would seem to be a poor way to express this appreciation. Secondly, even though most members of the War Department were definitely for labor conscription, J. Douglas Brown, special advisor to the Department and respected labor expert, warned the President against the adoption of national service.¹⁰¹ The last, and possibly the most significant factor, was the attitude of Secretary of Labor, Frances Perkins. On 1 August 1942 the Labor Secretary presented Roosevelt her analysis of the controversy over national service. "It is very drastic and unlike the American habit," advised the Secretary, "so I'd go easy on it until the need is real."¹⁰² She also advised Paul

attached memorandum to Secretary of Labor, Frances Perkins, 11 March 1942.

¹⁰¹ Fairchild and Grossman, p. 223.

¹⁰² Hyde Park Library, President's Official File 1413, letter dated 1 August 1942.
McNutt in similar fashion. Years later Secretary Perkins recalled that the President never really wanted to draft labor. "Roosevelt more than once told me," related the former Labor Secretary, that "he was glad 'we didn't have to resort to that.'" Perkins also had some kind words for the War Manpower Commission simply because the Commission accomplished its major defense tasks without resorting to conscription of labor.

Stimson and Patterson were deeply disturbed by the noticeable change in the President's attitude, but felt that there was nothing they could do to reverse the situation. The President was actually more realistic than either the advocates or opponents of national service. In late autumn after he had apparently decided to accept Perkins' advice to wait until labor conscription was really needed, the President cautioned the nation that although national service was not necessary at the moment it could become essential for winning the war sometime in the future.

103. Ibid., see attached copy of a letter Perkins sent to McNutt dated 31 July 1942.


105. Ibid.


107. NY Times, 13 October 1942.
At any rate the President had definitely decided to try the voluntary method of manpower procurement when he expanded the powers of McNutt's War Manpower Commission 5 December 1942. On 30 December 1942 the President formally notified the proponents of national service that he was not prepared to push for labor conscription at "any time in the near future."\textsuperscript{108} "This was a disappointment," commented Grenville Clark, "because until nearly the end of 1942 there had been every prospect that national service would be vigorously pressed as an administration policy."\textsuperscript{109}

Clark's next move was immediate and quite predictable. He decided to use the same general plan which had been so successful in 1940 with the Selective Service Bill. A national service measure would be introduced into Congress even if it did not have White House approval. When the necessity for labor conscription became obvious "administration support would later be forthcoming as had occurred in the case of Selective Service."\textsuperscript{110} Congressional sponsors for national service were much less difficult to find than had been the case in 1940 with the military draft. Clark's reputation as 'father of selective service,' attested to

\textsuperscript{108} Clark Report, p. 3; also see Fairchild and Grossman, p. 224.

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., p. 4.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
his renown in Washington. On 8 February 1943 Senator Warren R. Austin of Vermont and Representative James W. Wadsworth, co-sponsor of the Selective Service Bill, introduced into Congress the National War Service Act of 1943, a measure generally referred to as the Austin-Wadsworth Bill. The Bill was relatively short and followed the outline, with the exception of a few minor recommendations made by the Dorr Committee, of the conscription plan originally drafted by Grenville Clark.

With the introduction of the Austin-Wadsworth Bill into Congress organized labor prepared for its greatest conscription test. Labor opposition to national service was strong and, as one historian has noted, "for once the AFL and the CIO presented a united front." Anything less than unity on this matter would have invited inevitable defeat. Organized labor had already tasted the bitter cup of failure in the struggle over selective service. The leadership of American trade unionism realized that Grenville Clark and his associates were formidable foes, but they were more optimistic about the outcome of this

111. See Cong. Rec., 78th Congress, 1st Session, 8 February 1943; also note discussion in Fairchild and Grossman, p. 225.

112. Clark Report, pp. 4-5; see account in Fairchild and Grossman, p. 225, for a slightly different interpretation.

engagement. The most important factor seems to be that the executive leadership of both major labor organizations had prepared for the encounter. Much of the disarray which had hindered labor opposition in 1940 to the military draft was absent in the fight against national service. This was due to the efforts of William Green and Philip Murray, and the general difficulties faced by the nation's workers in 1942. Indeed, in the year since America's entrance into World War II the labor organizations had dealt with strikes, wage freezing, price ceilings, public disgruntlement with labor's defense efforts, and ominous threats about labor conscription. The Austin-Wadsworth Bill could be viewed as just one more of the seemingly endless problems caused by the wartime situation. 114

Both William Green and Philip Murray had constantly maintained a unified opposition to national service. In November 1942, before President Roosevelt had indicated that he would attempt to procure manpower for American defense industries by voluntary methods, Green and Murray discussed the question of labor conscription with the chief executive. They argued that successes labor had in 1942 with regard to meeting production schedules and output per worker would indicate that there could not be any

possible justification for compulsion in the form of a
draft of labor. Roosevelt refused to give the labor
leaders any satisfaction on the matter. The only thing
Green and Murray were certain of, was that the President
was determined to have defense production continued with
peak efficiency. If this could not be accomplished then
the President would probably support national service.

Possibly the best illustration of Roosevelt's deal-
ings with the leaders of organized labor can be found in a
revealing letter that the President sent to William Green
late in the summer of 1942. "Total war demands total
sacrifice," admonished Roosevelt, "there is no escaping it
for any of us." Roosevelt pointed out that in total
war victory could be achieved only by fighting simultaneously
on all fronts with each of the "interlocking" parts
contributing to the war effort. The labor leaders
accepted this need for unity but they were becoming
increasingly concerned that organized labor was the "whipping
boy" for all the ills which seemed to be plaguing the war
effort. Shortly after American involvement in World War

115. NY Times, 1 November 1942.

116. Hyde Park Library, President's Official File
142, American Federation of Labor, Box 2, letter of the
President to Green 6 August 1942.

117. Ibid.
II Green had written to the President to emphasize organized labor's firm belief that maximum use of the nation's industrial and manpower resources could only be attained when labor and management assumed joint responsibility for the successes, and failures of defense production.\footnote{Ibid., Letter dated 16 April 1942 from Green to Roosevelt.} Green contended that strikes were just as much the responsibility of industry and the government as they were the leaders of labor. The President was aware of the logic of this type of argument. However, he also realized that there was tremendous public pressure placed upon the White House to maintain uninterrupted war production, and that the man on the street, correctly or incorrectly, believed that the flow of goods to the man on the battlefield was being jeopardized by the selfish interests of labor. President Roosevelt constantly found himself trying to justify his apparent leniency with organized labor in the early stages of the war.

The very intense emotions with which the President had to deal is well illustrated by a letter to the White House from David E. Satterfield, Jr., a Congressman from the Third District of Virginia.\footnote{Ibid., President's Official File 407, Box No. 3, Letter of Satterfield to Roosevelt dated 27 February 1942.} Satterfield complained...
to the President that everyone in the country seemed to agree that production must not be interrupted, "and yet, my dear Mr. President, there are interruptions." The Congressman contended that only the President, Congress or the labor organizations themselves could remedy the situation. Satterfield quickly dismissed the possibilities that labor would bring about a change since "bossism is so firmly entrenched in some of the unions in certain parts of the country." The perturbed representative stated that his colleagues in Congress were being "cowed" by labor and labor leaders, so it was really only the White House which could effectively deal with the situation. Congressman Satterfield concluded that the President could not wait much longer before taking some kind of firm step to control labor. "The blood of our boys now slowly dripping," emphasized Satterfield "soon will be a crimson cascade."  

The President's reply was quite indicative of his attitude throughout 1942. Roosevelt commented that "I am, of course, aware that excesses have occurred in certain instances, but," continued the President, "I am advised that the unions themselves have taken some steps to remedy

120. Ibid.
121. Ibid.
122. Ibid.
123. Ibid.
the situation and that further improvements may be expected.\textsuperscript{124} The President also indicated that he desired "voluntary action instead of compulsion" in the government's dealings with labor.\textsuperscript{125} Roosevelt told Satterfield that the National War Labor Board which "is now proceeding under a voluntary agreement of labor and industry" was illustrative of the type of program that the White House hoped to employ throughout the war.\textsuperscript{126} Roosevelt's apparent willingness to use voluntary cooperative methods in handling labor problems, even where strikes were involved also irritated some members of his official family. Henry L. Stimson, for instance, "did not sympathize with the administration's unwillingness to take a flat stand against stoppages affecting war production."\textsuperscript{127} The Secretary of War went as far as to say that the President's conciliatory methods in his dealings with labor problems actually harmed the total war effort.\textsuperscript{128} The most vociferous government official in condemning the role of labor in America's production efforts, however, was Assistant Attorney General,

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., Letter of Roosevelt to Satterfield 10 March 1942.

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{127} Stimson and Bundy, p. 491.

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
Thurman Arnold. Arnold publicly castigated organized labor for hindering the war effort and preventing the efficient use of men and machines.\textsuperscript{129} Arnold's outbursts brought an instant rebuke from the leaders of organized labor. Green and Murray both argued that such irrational statements were the products "of a campaign to destroy the unions under a pretext of wartime necessity."\textsuperscript{130}

The President's position on labor's role during the early stages of the war was truly unenviable. On the one hand he had to justify his voluntary methods in dealing with labor and mobilization difficulties, and on the other he had to placate the growing fears of organized labor that soon the government would demand national service. The apparent fissure within the Executive Branch only further complicated the situation. One must, however, admire Roosevelt's attempt to maintain a moderate position in 1942. He was exerting extreme pressure upon the leadership of organized labor to maintain full production, and at the same time pacifying those who wanted strong restrictions on labor by promising that if voluntary methods failed the White House would demand national service. It seems that this solution was the most realistic in 1942 and

\textsuperscript{129} \textit{NY Times}, 22 March 1942.

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
1943. The President knew that his attempts to control rising wages and prices by the use of the Little Steel Formula in the summer of 1942, and the Hold the Line Order of April 1943 had already caused severe problems for both labor and business. To have vigorously moved in the direction of a 'work or fight' order, or to have openly supported national service would have created even more chaos and resentment in key defense industries. Perhaps the intensity of the situation was described most accurately by New York Senator, Robert Wagner. This well-known labor supporter warned that the nation "wants no part of dictators or methods of terror in the handling of production problems." The Senator emphasized that defense problems could be solved by "using the free enterprise and free institutions that democracy alone made possible." Organized labor certainly subscribed to this interpretation, and it was becoming increasingly apparent that a large portion of the business community wished to avoid labor compulsion. If labor could be commandeered, so could industry.

However, there was not much public sympathy for

131. Taft, pp. 223-225.
132. NY Times, 6 September 1942.
133. Ibid.
organized labor during the first years of the war. This was quite understandable. As one observer noted, "the public mind will be so obsessed with the grim problems created by war, the will to victory is going to be such a consuming passion, that there will be a general lack of sympathy for, and understanding of, any strike in any industry." It was also maintained that the public reacted against labor in this manner because labor was the only one of the economic factors which could bring about a total stoppage of production. Whatever the reasons for this attitude, it is certain that organized labor was aware of the antagonism that trade unionism aroused in the public. For instance, the California State Federation of Labor devoted a major portion of its *Weekly News Letter*, 25 August 1942, to this subject, and William C. Birthright, President of the Journeymen Barbers' International Union,


135. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

136. *Ibid*.

137. California State Federation of Labor *Weekly News Letter*, published in San Francisco, 25 August 1942. A copy of this is in SS Library, F-11, File of Francis Keesling, Director of Information for the Selective Service during World War II. Keesling had attached a note to the News Letter warning draft officials to be careful not to antagonize organized labor with unwarranted cancellation of draft deferments.
wrote to William Green in an attempt to persuade the AFL head to do something to eliminate the "misunderstanding" surrounding labor's role in the defense effort. Green counseled that the situation was not as grave as it appeared, and that when "public sentiment" began to demand severe labor restrictions he would defend labor's position.

Green, like the majority of other trade union leaders, recognized the increasingly negative attitude being directed against the seemingly powerful bargaining position held by American labor. Labor leaders also realized that a continuation of this feeling could result in serious demands for national service. This is what organized labor wanted to avoid at any cost. However, labor leaders were also under pressures from the various affiliated trade unions to protect labor interests, and to avoid restrictions on unionism through the guise of wartime necessity. The dilemma was quite similar to the situation faced by President Roosevelt in the greater sphere of wartime mobilization. Thus, labor leaders, like the President, attempted to find a middle course. An excellent illustration of the particular dilemma faced by the leaders of organized labor is found


in William Green's correspondence with H.W. Brown, President of the International Association of Machinists in 1942.

Brown wrote to the AFL chief to warn him that the no-strike position taken by organized labor had resulted in what he described as "undue advantages" for employers throughout the nation.\(^{140}\) The Machinists head stated that it would soon be impossible to negotiate a satisfactory agreement with any businessman. "The situation," wrote Brown, "is rapidly becoming intolerable."\(^{141}\) Brown then suggested that the AFL inform President Roosevelt that unless employers bargain in good faith the leaders of organized labor could not be responsible for enforcing a no-strike policy. The gravity of the situation was apparent. "I can't urge too strongly," commented the ruffled Machinist President, "the necessity of prompt and effective action to relieve a condition that is bound to retard the production of materials so vital to the successful prosecution of the war."\(^{142}\)

Green's reply appropriately reveals the precarious dilemma faced by the leaders of the two major labor organizations. The AFL head sympathized with Brown about

\(^{140}\) Ibid., Letter of 19 February 1942 from Brown to Green.

\(^{141}\) Ibid.

\(^{142}\) Ibid.
the plight of the no-strike policy, and he deplored the "unfortunate" attitude displayed by some employers who were undoubtedly trying to take advantage of labor. However, Green cautioned that "we must keep constantly in mind the public attitude." "I am confident," stressed the AFL chief, "that neither the government nor the public will tolerate interference with the production of war materials."

The fear of labor conscription was the key to understanding the policies of organized labor during the first years of the war. However, when the Austin-Wadsworth Bill was introduced into Congress, organized labor could no longer attempt to follow a cautious and middle course. Armageddon was upon labor, there could be no caution when dealing with national service.

The leaders of organized labor had faced one crisis after another from the outbreak of World War II to the introduction of the Austin-Wadsworth Bill in February 1943. The future looked even more bleak. Labor could only hope that President Roosevelt would not be converted to the idea of national service. The similarities between the fight over Selective Service and the growing demands for


144. Ibid.

145. Ibid.
labor conscription were too great to give any comfort to the trade unionists. Yet the leaders of labor realized that they were better prepared to defend labor interests in 1943 than they had been in 1940. However, the proponents of labor conscription were well organized, had keen leadership, but most of all had a dramatic setting for their demands for national service. As David Satterfield had so aptly stated, "we cannot afford to lose a moment or a single pair of hands" because the lives of America's sons depends upon the war effort at home. Labor geared itself for the long struggle ahead.

CHAPTER V

LABOR'S GREATEST BATTLE: THE CHALLENGE
OF NATIONAL SERVICE, 1943-1945

Labor can scarcely be blamed for the government's disorganized labor machinery. I do not see how any law based on the premise of utilization of manpower can get at the fundamental ills of our labor relations system. I am sure that the trade unions would not accept such a panacea to what they themselves are criticizing in the government — namely, a lack of labor policy and machinery to put it into effect. It would be most unfortunate to attempt to deal with these problems by compulsory service legislation, which would itself produce other complications and would be regarded by labor as reflection on its contribution to the war effort.

Harvey Smith

Harvey Smith, Director of the United States Bureau of the Budget, echoed the thoughts of organized labor in his penetrating analysis of the basic fallacies of compulsory service. Ever since the Austin-Wadsworth National Service Act had been introduced into Congress 8 February 1943, American labor leaders had argued that basic mobilization difficulties faced by the nation would not be solved by


230
labor conscription. Labor, like Smith, believed that national service could only complicate an already difficult situation. Smith's reluctant advice to the President in early 1944 was dictated by what the Budget Chief felt was an unfortunate reversal of attitude by the White House. President Roosevelt, who had initially refused to endorse labor conscription, had been subject to increased pressures in 1943 from the War Department, Departments of the Army and Navy, and the Maritime Commission to commit the prestige of the Executive Office to national service. Most insistent, of course, was the Secretary of the War Department, Henry L. Stimson. A national service act, Stimson advised the President, was "a natural and necessary corollary of the Selective Service Act," but even more important it was the "final step in the democratic system of sharing common duties and sacrifices in war." Organized labor attempted to offset this type of counsel by stressing the great mobilization accomplishments already evidenced by the many new production records established in defense industries. The trade union leaders, adopting the position formulated in World War I by Samuel Gompers, also stressed

2. *NY Times*, 21 April 1944; also see Clark Report, p. 17, and Fairchild and Grossman, p. 231.

the negative aspects of national service. That is, labor conscription could be used to destroy American labor organizations under the guise of defense necessity.

Confronted by the intense feelings of both the advocates and opponents of national service, President Roosevelt felt increasing pressures to either support or reject labor conscription in order to stop the seemingly endless controversy over the subject. Throughout 1943 the President refused to commit himself on the issue. He was apparently content to allow the War Manpower Commission to resolve mobilization problems. However, on 11 January 1944 Roosevelt, in his State of the Union Address, gave a qualified endorsement to national service which revived public interest in the matter, and greatly heartened the erstwhile proponents of the Austin-Wadsworth Bill. Finally in his Annual Message of 1945 President Roosevelt gave unqualified support to labor conscription. The President seems to have adopted this position because of some important military setbacks, and the almost vehement urgings of the War and Navy Departments. As Grenville Clark has noted,


5. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, State of the Union Address, 6 January 1945, 79th Congress, 1st Session; also cited in NY Times, 7 January 1945.
the President's timing was ill conceived. Many observers, including key government officials, felt that the greatest war crisis had passed. If national service were enacted "at this late date," warned Harvey Smith, "there is bound to follow deep resentment." Moreover there was a growing conviction, even in the mind of such a staunch advocate of national service as Selective Service Director, Lewis B. Hershey, that it would be impossible to administer such an agency. Socialist leader Norman Thomas probably expressed the dilemma best when he commented that "God almighty might make it work if He were foolish enough to try, but I cannot see its successful administration under our Washington bureaucracy."

Obviously organized labor had the greatest vested interest in the struggle over labor conscription. Labor leaders were quick to exploit any apparent weaknesses in


8. Interview with the author 14 July 1966; also see Hershey's statement in the question and answer period of an Army Industrial War College discussion on "Industrial and Agricultural Deferments," 15 April 1948, which was part of the post-war analysis of mobilization efforts, and the Industrial War College's presentation of "Social and Economic Conditions of the Government's Control Affecting Manpower," 30 April 1946, p. 208.

the national service scheme. Thus, one can find quotations from almost all of the prominent trade union leaders depicting alleged weaknesses of national service. This is also the reason that each of the major scholars who has written on the subject of compulsory labor service has found different reasons for the intense opposition of organized labor to national service.\(^{10}\) There is little question that in this episode, as in the fight against Selective Service, the trade unionists were opportunistic, advocating various negative aspects of labor conscription which individually or collectively could defeat the principles embodied in the Austin-Wadsworth National Service Act.

If there is any major theme, or thread of unity, in labor's three year struggle to defeat labor conscription, it is the oft repeated argument that national service would not really solve the basic problems of defense mobilization. In 1942, before the Austin-Wadsworth bill was introduced into Congress, CIO president, Philip Murray, had charged that America faced so many defense problems because the government had failed to provide a coordinated manpower policy.\(^{11}\) In fact the CIO Executive Committee had drafted a statement which concluded that "our manpower problems


\(^{11}\) NY Times, 9 November 1942.
today and in the future result only from failure to organize the entire productive unit." 12 Without this necessary centralized organization, warned the Committee, "neither compulsion nor voluntarism" would solve the nation's defense problems. 13 In conclusion the Executive Committee strongly urged that "labor, management and the government join in bringing the functions of procurement of industrial and manpower mobilization and organization under a single joint control." 14 Daniel J. Tobin, President of the Teamster's Union, made this same recommendation before the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, which was meeting to discuss mobilization problems. 15 Tobin, who had recently returned from England, observed that Great Britain had achieved success in her mobilization efforts because Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labor, had complete control of manpower policies. 16 President Roosevelt had made a token move toward centralizing America's mobilization policy when he placed Selective Service under the War Manpower Commission.

12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Hearings before the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, 77th Congress, 2nd Session, 26 September 1942; a portion of Tobin's testimony was carried in the NY Times 27 September 1942.
16. Ibid., also see Stimson and Bundy, p. 486.
However, the Commission's powers were more apparent than real, and Chairman Paul McNutt was ineffective in his efforts to expand control of his agency into all facets of defense production. McNutt's task was, of course, complicated by the fact that he was opposed by two successful and strong-willed men, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and General Lewis B. Hershey.

The proponents of labor conscription never tired of attacking the War Manpower Commission. The basic contention was that any manpower procurement policy based on voluntary action was doomed to fail. "With such a record of continuous failure," scorned Grenville Clark, "it is hard to see how it was possible for any member of Congress to consider seriously the use of the War Manpower Commission as a means of improving the manpower situation in time of war." Clark and his associates were increasingly irritated by McNutt and his references to "voluntary versus conscription" when discussing manpower problems. To the advocates of national service this was a false issue which aroused emotional connotations, while actually ignoring the

17. Stimson and Bundy, p. 486; Clark Report, p. 23.

18. Hearings, S. 666. For instance see the testimony of Robert Patterson, 18 March 1943, pp. 405-406; Emory Land, 10 February 1944, pp. 170-173; and Henry Stimson, 19 January 1944, pp. 40-45.

essentials on the debate over labor conscription. Perhaps Under Secretary of War Robert Patterson expressed the feelings of the supporters of the Austin-Wadsworth Bill best when he commented that wars are won "by mobilizing a nation's entire resources and making sure that all citizens do their part, some by fighting, the others by working." When national service was viewed in this framework, charges of "slave labor" would seem like empty rhetoric claimed the proponents of labor conscription.

The advocates of national service were so beguiled by their own arguments that it became increasingly difficult for them to tolerate the views of their opponents. "One of the chief obstacles in the whole manpower situation," complained Grenville Clark, "was that the official leaders of both organized labor and organized industry seemed unwilling to face the facts." Clark also castigated what he described as labor's "unwarranted" fears that national service would result in government regimentation, and a corresponding loss of trade union political and economic power. The New York lawyer sometimes gave the impression that he believed he had found in national service that

20. Hearings, Patterson on S. 666, 26 January 1944, p. 76.
22. Ibid.
much desired eternal law of "right reason" which St. Thomas Aquinas had advised man to pursue during the Middle Ages. At any rate Clark was certain that if organized labor really wanted a centralized agency to manage manpower problems it could easily accept the Austin-Wadsworth Bill.

Organized labor was never swayed or even tempted by the purported desirability of national service. Labor followed a path of unwavering opposition from 1942 through 1945. It is this opposition which provides the framework for the conclusion of this study which began with labor's opposition to conscription in 1917 and ends with the defeat of national service in 1945. Organized labor was the key opponent to compulsory labor service, and its activities provide one thread of unity through a very complex political battle during World War II. One dare not minimize the role of organized labor in this episode. "The first and most important factor" in the combination of factors which led to the defeat of national service, stated Henry Stimson, "was the violent opposition expressed by the leaders of organized labor."23 This opposition delayed President Roosevelt in his decision to support labor conscription, and thus could very well have been the determining factor in the ultimate defeat of national compulsory service.

The leaders of the trade union movement anticipated the introduction of a national service bill in 1943 before Grenville Clark had even found sponsors for his plan. William Green predicted that such a measure would be introduced into Congress, but he advised that "such proposals are dangerous and harmful and unnecessary." The AFL president voiced hope that the good judgment of Congress "will repudiate the unwisdom of forcing men and women to do that which they are willing to do of their own free will." Thus, one month later when the Austin-Wadsworth Bill was introduced into Congress labor was not surprised. The format of the Bill, however, did provide a few shocks. The national service act's major thesis was that "an obligation rests upon every person, subject to necessary and appropriate exceptions . . . to render such personal service in aid of the war effort as he or she may be deemed best fitted to perform." Each man, and to the surprise and dismay of many, each woman between the ages of 18 and 50 "shall be liable to contribute by personal service to the war effort in a non-combatant capacity, according to his or her abilities," with the exceptions regarding women to be worked

24. NY Times, 3 January 1943.
25. Ibid.
out carefully. Organized labor particularly disliked the provisions calling for conscription of women, and it found a sympathetic supporter for its objections in Secretary of Labor, Frances Perkins.

Secretary Perkins had for some time suspected that the President was interested in utilizing America's woman-power more effectively. She knew that Roosevelt was convinced that women could ease shortages in key defense industries and she guessed correctly that the President, although not supporting national service at this early stage of the war, might have suggested to Grenville Clark that he retain his provisions for the conscription of women in the event it became necessary to draft labor. The Labor Secretary wanted to avoid anything which even approached the drafting of women. Madame Perkins wrote to the President in November 1942 about a rumor which she had heard that the White House was considering the registration of women. "I recommend against the general registration of women for two reasons," commented Perkins, first, "it is not necessary," and secondly it will cause confusion and excitement within American families because it will seem

27. Ibid.

28. Clark Report, p. 3.

that women are to be forced into something, "and even worse that they are immediately needed and are immediately going to be called to serve their country." 30

The Labor Secretary's assessment was correct. Indeed, the President was very much interested in the matter of registering women with the thought of possibly using this information to bolster America's work force at some crucial period of the war. The President's interest had not been motivated by Clark's original draft of his national service bill, but by Selective Service Director, Lewis Hershey. Hershey had approached Roosevelt about registering women in the early stages of the war. 31 The Selective Service chief advised the President that "the registering of women will provide recognition that women are considered as having an equal place with men in registering for our national war effort." 32 Roosevelt was impressed by Hershey's suggestion. Shortly after receiving the Selective Service Director's recommendation he wrote Secretary of War Stimson about the possibilities of using women in war industries. The President told Stimson that he was "pleased" with Hershey's idea and felt that the matter should be

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., President's Official File 4905, Memo of Hershey to Roosevelt, 8 April 1942.

32. Ibid.
Roosevelt suggested that Stimson informally discuss the matter with other government agencies to see if it would be feasible to adopt such a procedure. The investigations dealing with the possible utilization of women in the war effort were carried out without the advice or consent Secretary Perkins. Of course, most government officials were well aware of the Labor Secretary's attitude on this subject, but many were surprised that Secretary Perkins would attack with such vehemence the female registration provisions of the Austin-Wadsworth Bill. It seems probable that the Labor Secretary hoped to call attention to the significance of these provisions so that public pressure would demand that they be deleted from the national service bill, and to forestall the desires of the War Department and Selective Service to register women. She believed that the enrollment of American women under either of these circumstances would have disastrous consequences. Grenville Clark never appreciated Perkins' objections to the idea of placing women under the provisions of a national service act. Years after the defeat of national service he had some rather caustic observations to make about those

33. Ibid., see attached memo from the President to Stimson, 11 April 1942.
34. Ibid.
35. NY Times, 22 February 1943.
women who opposed enrollment. "By and large the opposing women," fallaciously generalized Clark, "appeared to be more disturbed by unfounded fears and less animated by the spirit of sacrifice than the women advocates of National Service." Actually the drafting of single women for noncombatant jobs was exceedingly popular in the United States. Gallup polls conducted from 1943 to 1945 indicated that as many as 78% of those interviewed favored drafting of women. The lowest this percentage ever dropped was to 73%. One of the interesting things about this poll was that a large majority of the single women themselves preferred induction into defense industries, rather than the alternative of drafting fathers for this work.

Although the subject of drafting women received considerable attention after the introduction of the Austin-Wadsworth Bill, the proponents of national service were more concerned about the reaction of American labor. It was expected that organized labor would lead in the fight against national service, and quite in contrast to the defenders of American womanhood, labor could commandeer money and votes in the fight against compulsory labor


37. Washington Post, 2 April 1945, article by George Gallup, Director, American Institute of Public Opinion.

38. Ibid.
Thus the supporters of labor conscription largely ignored the question of drafting women, and concentrated their efforts on trying to convince trade union leaders that national service would not harm the basic interests of organized labor. Clark and his associates argued vainly. This thesis was never accepted by the trade unionists.

The main ideological battles between the proponents of national service and organized labor were waged before the Senate Military Affairs Committee in the Hearings held to review the Austin-Wadsworth Bill. Although these prolonged hearings provide some fascinating reading, a far more crucial battle was being conducted by the advocates and opponents of national service. This was the struggle to obtain the support of the White House. President Roosevelt was determined to remain on the sidelines, but many official members of the Roosevelt political family were already engrossed in this significant political battle. When a reporter asked the President about this situation he replied that he was not aware of anyone being intimately involved in the issue of national service, and he was certain there was no division in his administration.

over the question of labor conscription. However the pro-conscription statements of Stimson, Patterson, and Admiral Land on one hand, and the negative comments of Perkins, Nelson and McNutt on the other, indicated that there was indeed a serious split in the administration. President Roosevelt skirted the question of national service by arguing that the only question was when, if ever, such legislation was needed. "It might be avoided all the way through the war," commented the Chief Executive. By taking this position the President found himself in the unlikely situation of having to align himself with his predecessor in the White House, Herbert Hoover, who had just a few weeks earlier stated almost precisely these same sentiments on the subject of national service.

As opposition to national service increased, the proponents of the Austin-Wadsworth Bill became convinced that it was essential to gain the support of the White House. Organized labor did not have such lofty ambitions.

40. NY Times, 20 March 1943.

41. See comments in the NY Times of: Perkins, 22 February 1943; McNutt, 2 March 1943; Stimson, 28 February 1943. Also note the statements of Patterson and Land as cited above in Hearings S. 666.

42. NY Times, 20 March 1943.

43. Ibid., 9 February 1943.

44. Clark Report, p. 6.
It adopted the position it had held in 1940 during the fight over selective service. Labor did not care if the President did not issue a statement against labor conscription, but only desired that he did not actively support it. Moreover, the trade union leaders wanted to be consulted and informed of any change of opinion in the White House with regard to the President's position on national service. Shortly after the Senate began conducting hearings on the Austin-Wadsworth Bill, CIO president, Philip Murray wrote to President Roosevelt. Murray stated that organized labor was "very disturbed" about the rumors that the President was interested in national service, and that he planned to establish a special administrative committee to study the possible effects of compulsory labor service. The CIO chief counselled Roosevelt to consult with representatives of the labor movement if the White House intended to explore the possibilities of national service. More specifically Murray believed that organized labor should "be afforded an opportunity to discuss the entire question at a meeting between the combined labor victory committee and yourself which I hope will be at an early date convenient to you." 


46. Ibid.
President Roosevelt was evidently not too pleased with the tone of Murray's inquiry, because on the back of the labor leader's memorandum the Chief Executive wrote in pencil, "Tell her [Anna Rosenberg] to hold P. Murray's hand." The President never did call a meeting as Murray suggested. Roosevelt consistently refused to consult with labor leaders about either military or industrial conscription. Mark Starr, education director of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, was also deeply disturbed by the President's apparent unwillingness to discuss with labor the implications of labor service. "The great danger of industrial conscription," warned Starr, "is that its application will not be made by bodies having adequate labor representation." The leaders of organized labor wanted to avoid the minimization of trade union influence as had been the case in 1940 in the fight over selective service.

Certainly there were many analogies between the events in 1940, and the growing controversy over the Austin-Wadsworth Bill in 1943. But the most important similarity, according to Grenville Clark, was the President's reluctance to make the National Service Act an administration

47. Ibid.
measure during the crucial first six months of 1943. This situation was, of course, recognized by many persons other than those directly involved in the national service controversy. An editorial in the New York Times observed that although the President was standing on the "sidelines" just as he did when Selective Service was introduced in 1940, it seemed likely, because of Stimson's strong endorsement of the Austin-Wadsworth Bill, that Roosevelt would soon support national service. The Times concluded that the President would be driven to an acceptance of labor conscription because of the failure of Paul McNutt's War Manpower Commission to enforce total defense production.

The desire to influence the attitude of the White House is mirrored in much of the testimony given before the Senate Committee investigating the merits of the Austin-Wadsworth Bill. However, after deleting much of the rhetoric, and some of the testimony, one is able to gain an insight into the basic pro and con arguments discussed by those involved in the labor conscription struggle. A fairly detailed analysis of the arguments both for and against national service has been made in a recent study.

49. Clark Report, p. 46.
50. NY Times, 2 March 1943.
51. Ibid.
by army historians Byron Fairchild and Jonathan Grossman. Their discussion of national service presents the best comprehensive picture of the fight over compulsory service.

Basically the proponents of national service argued that labor conscription would bring the war to a rapid conclusion, that voluntary manpower procurement had failed, and that national service was just as democratic as asking a man to serve in the armed forces. Opposing these opinions were such employer groups as the National Association of Manufacturers, various women's organizations who opposed labor conscription for a variety of reasons, spokesmen for numerous minority groups who saw in national service a potential means for the government to discriminate against the underprivileged, and of course, organized labor. For the purposes of this paper only those


56. Hearings S. 666. See the testimony of such
presentations which directly pertain to organized labor will be examined in detail. Related discussions, however, are included where they give insights into the attitudes of the American worker.

Although many of the groups which opposed national service argued against compulsory labor conscription by using the concepts formulated by the trade union leaders, their motivations, goals, and views of the fundamental weaknesses of this idea were dramatically different from those of organized labor. This is particularly true, for instance, when one examines the various reasons that minority groups opposed national service. On the other hand the proponents of labor conscription also varied their arguments when trying to convince pressure groups, other than organized labor, of the validity of a national service bill. The best illustration of this is found in the arguments directed against the many women's organizations that opposed labor conscription. Obviously, then, there are many potential fields of exploration in unraveling the complex events surrounding the defeat of national

persons as Walter White of the NAACP; National Association of Manufacturers; United States Chamber of Commerce; Women's League for Political Education; and the National Committee to Oppose the Conscription of Women. Also note citation in Fairchild and Grossman, p. 228.


58. Clark Report, pp. 32-34.
service. However the examination of all these possibilities would go beyond the fundamental goals of this paper.

The proponents of national service stressed time and again when trying to gain the support of organized labor that labor conscription did not, as William Green and Philip Murray maintained, go against traditional American principles. Selective national service is not an abandonment of democracy, argued Henry Stimson, "but rather an evolution of intelligent democracy to meet the complex mechanical development of modern war." Grenville Clark extended this argument by stating that the prime merit of national service "is its adoption of the principle of equal obligation on the part of all mobile or available persons." But perhaps the most poignant pressure placed upon the trade unionists came from Robert Patterson who presented a strong and logical interpretation with his assertion that when a democracy is in peril everyone has "equal rights and equal obligations" which cannot be foisted upon one small segment of the population that has to bear arms. This type of argument had great emotional appeal for the general public, and is undoubtedly the reason many persons favored national

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60. NY Times, 29 August 1943.
61. Hearings, Patterson on S. 666, 26 January 1944, p. 75.
service. Organized labor avoided arguments about the whole concept of equal obligations during wartime, indicating that this was not a valid reason for national service. William Green even admitted that it was true that labor conscription would increase the burden of sacrifice for those living in America, but he stated he could not see how making life harder at home would aid America's fighting men. More pertinent for organized labor were the arguments which could affect the attitude of Congress. These include the attempts to prove that voluntary methods of defense production had failed, and that contrary to what trade union leaders were saying, national service would not harm the labor organizations. If these assumptions could be proven, then labor's opposition to national service would be discredited.

An impressive array of talent presented some convincing, and emotional arguments to dispel labor's demand for the continuation of voluntarism. Co-sponsor of the National Service Act, James Wadsworth, stated that the voluntary method of distributing manpower actually destroyed any attempt to procure workers in a systematic fashion. Maritime Commission chief, Admiral Land, adopted this same

63. Ibid.
64. War Service Bulletin, G-678.
argument, and actually pursued it more diligently than did Wadsworth. The proponents of national service were also convinced that the Austin-Wadsworth Bill would effectively control mobilization production by providing a ready supply of skilled workers, and preventing industrial strife between management and labor. National service would move "toward increasing effectiveness in production," advised Henry Stimson, "when the government itself takes a hand not only in keeping men on necessary jobs but also in finding men particular jobs where they are especially needed." Senator Austin and Representative Wadsworth felt their bill was so thorough that it "would enable government to cure the evils of unbalance, hoarding, piracy, absenteeism, inadequate training for management and supervision, labor turnover, and such shortages as those in agriculture." Labor leaders reacted immediately to such all-encompassing comments. Representative Charles Vursell expressed labor's concern

68. For instance see *AFL Weekly News Service*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 18 January 1944; in the *Hearings* S. 666, note testimony of Green, 17 March 1943, pp. 370-372; R.J. Thomas, President of the United Automobile Workers, CIO, 23 March 1943, pp. 472-474; and Van Bittner, Assistant to the President, United Steel Workers of America, 26 March 1943, pp. 546-547.
best when he stated that those who envisioned national service as a panacea which could cure every production evil should be aware that there is a danger in "such times of stress and struggle of such controls and regimentation and centralization of power being carried too far." Vursell also warned that the vast majority of the American people, not just organized labor, were afraid of more centralization of power in Washington. This opinion was strongly echoed editorially in the pro-labor Traffic World.

Possibly the weakest argument of the proponents of labor conscription was that national service would end, or to use Patterson's description, "minimize" strikes and industrial disputes between labor and business. This contention was categorically denied by all elements of organized labor. William Green, for instance, always illustrated his opposition to this thesis by pointing out that national service did not prevent strikes in Great Britain. "In 1942 the number of strikes in Britain," correctly asserted the AFL head, "was greater proportion-

70. Ibid.
72. Hearings, Patterson on S. 666, 26 January 1944, p. 74.
ately than in the United States."\textsuperscript{73} Stimson, despite the statistical evidence produced by Green, refused to accept the validity of this interpretation.\textsuperscript{74}

The most crucial thesis confronting organized labor as developed by the proponents of national service was the much discussed question of whether or not labor conscription would continue to allow organized labor to retain its basic rights. William Green had openly declared that "the issue is clear -- free labor versus slave labor. That is the issue."\textsuperscript{75} The AFL chieftain expressed his conviction that labor was determined to "prove for ourselves and to the world that the capacity, the spirit, and productivity of free labor is far and away superior of that of coerced labor."\textsuperscript{76} The CIO accepted this characterization of national service, but took the argument one step further. Not only did the CIO oppose the labor draft because it was "unjust, coercive and undemocratic, but more importantly because it is used as an excuse to evade a real solution for war manpower and production problems."\textsuperscript{77} "To dragoon

\textsuperscript{73} AFL Weekly News Service, 18 January 1944.

\textsuperscript{74} NY Times Magazine, 23 January 1944.

\textsuperscript{75} Hearings, Green on S. 666, 17 March 1943, p. 370.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.

labor in this war," warned the CIO, "will do downright mischief to war production." 78

The supporters of compulsory national service were quick to take issue with the labor organizations on the charge of slave labor. Grenville Clark was genuinely mystified by labor's attitude on this point. "The legitimate rights of organized labor and of individual workers," stated Clark, would be protected under the Austin-Wadsworth Bill. 79 Clark even thought labor was being unpatriotic in supporting such an illogical position, for after all "similar laws are whole-heartedly accepted by the labor movements of other English-speaking countries." 80 To a lesser degree Secretary Stimson, Admiral Land, and the Congressional sponsors of national service also became entangled in the attempt to prove that labor conscription would not be detrimental to the trade union movement. 81 However, the most violent attack upon organized labor's assertion that the Austin-Wadsworth Bill was synonymous with slave labor came from the pen of journalist, and sometime intellectual, Walter

78. Ibid.
79. NY Times, 29 August 1943.
80. Ibid.
Lippmann. "For what is slavery, which Mr. Green speaks about so readily?" asked the writer of "Today and Tomorrow." "Is it the compulsion to work?" "Not at all," answered Lippmann to his own rhetorical question. "It cannot be that because Mr. Green is not objecting to compelling men to work at Guadalcanal or in Tunisia." After castigating organized labor for trying to preserve and perpetrate this system of inequality, Lippmann concluded that "it is far more illiberal to draft the few than it is to draft all." Eventually the New York Times adopted Lippmann's argument that it was impossible to accept labor's description of national service as slave labor. This would mean, stated the paper, that the American army was a 'slave army.'

Although the labor organizations devoted considerable time and effort refuting arguments of the advocates of national service, one notes that quite in contrast to the struggle over Selective Service, the trade unionists often initiated positions which were not simply rebuttals to the challenges of the supporters of labor conscription. Instead labor tried to initiate arguments which would demand

83. Ibid.
84. Ibid.
85. NY Times, 11 January 1944.
a response from Clark and his associates. This was both good for morale within the ranks of labor, and it prevented the labor leaders from being pushed into the disadvantageous defensive pose all the time, as had been the case in 1940.

One of labor's key arguments, as has previously been indicated, was provided by the venerated mobilization expert of World War I days, Bernard Baruch, who claimed that it would be both impossible and dangerous to attempt to draft labor because such conscription was unconstitutional.\textsuperscript{86} Baruch was basing his contention on the Supreme Court's interpretation of the Thirteenth Amendment.\textsuperscript{87} Congressman Robert Ramspeck voiced basically the same sentiments when he commented that he did not believe Congress had "the constitutional power to require any citizen to work for a private employer."\textsuperscript{88} William Green had stated earlier that national service conscription was a violation of "our basic and most cherished concepts of freedom."\textsuperscript{89}

Closely tied to the charges that national service was undemocratic and unconstitutional, were assertions decrying labor conscription as a move toward fascism. This

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{86} \textit{Ibid.}, 2 March 1943.
  \item \textsuperscript{87} \textit{Ibid.}
  \item \textsuperscript{88} \textit{United States News}, 21 January 1944.
  \item \textsuperscript{89} \textit{Hearings}, Green on S. 666, 17 March 1943, p. 369.
\end{itemize}
point was made by Victor Reuther, assistant director of the war policy division of the United Auto Workers, in a fascinating radio debate with Grenville Clark. Reuther, in an emotional and dramatic presentation, argued that labor believed the United States should fight fascism with democracy, and "that is why we oppose the Austin-Wadsworth National Service Bill." The advocates of national service, claimed the CIO spokesman, were "borrowing the tactics of totalitarianism" in attempting to increase the efficiency of mobilization production. Reuther stated that "America would be admitting a lack of faith in the cause they presume to defend" if she borrowed such alien tactics.

The United Mine Workers Journal was even more scathing in its attack upon labor conscription. With the adoption of national service, warned the voice of the strong United Mine Workers Union, American businessmen and workers would soon "be forcibly marched hand-in-hand down the road of the fascist blueprint." Norman Thomas contributed to this thesis by stating that he could not imagine a more extreme example of "totalitarian power," than labor conscription.

90. NY Times, 23 November 1943.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid.
Another theme which generated a positive public response and demanded a retort from the proponents of labor conscription was the argument put forth by organized labor that national service would not solve the basic ills of mobilization. Coupled with this was labor's assertion that even if national service did do some of the dynamic things its advocates claimed, it really would not be needed since America's workers had already proved their capabilities by smashing production records and meeting defense needs.

These points are best illustrated by a joint declaration of the AFL and CIO in late fall of 1943. The declaration, closely following recommendations made by Philip Murray a year earlier, stated that most mobilization problems could be resolved if the government made an effort to coordinate all phases of production through a cooperative agency including representatives of labor, business, the armed services, and government. AFL representative on the Labor-Management Committee of the War Manpower Commission, Frank Fenton, warned that too many people saw national service as a panacea for all defense problems. This was unrealistic, he warned, because in actuality mobilization problems were so complex that there could not

95. *NY Times*, 9 November 1942.

be a simple solution to the difficulties. Fenton also stated that the great production problems of 1943 were solved by voluntary means despite the withdrawal of 2,400,000 men from industry for the armed forces. To tamper with such a successful operation would invite disaster. William Green even suggested that labor conscription would bring a reduction in defense efficiency because of the effect such a measure would have upon the morale of America's workers.

Grenville Clark refused to accept organized labor's evaluation of the efficiency of voluntary labor. In fact it was Clark who immediately responded to labor's assertion that voluntarism in defense production was more efficient than national service would be if it were enacted. Clark claimed, both during and after the war, that the effectiveness of the armed forces, particularly in the Italian campaign and the final phases of the war in the Pacific, was hindered by the lack of materials caused by strikes and the inability to maintain full production occasioned by the lack of skilled workers in key defense plants. The post-war findings of the Army Industrial College does not support

97. "Labor, 8 April 1944.
98. Ibid.
Clark's assertion. The Committee on Manpower which investigated labor effectiveness during the war stated that although there were many charges of labor inefficiency there was "not one single case known where fighting men did not get equipment on time due to a fault of labor."\textsuperscript{101} There were instances, of course, when the lack of supplies hurt American fighting men, but this was not due to any fault of labor. Commander William A. Saunders, who was chairman of the Committee, stated that the whole issue of defense production was confused in the public mind because "the red herring of the strike issue" had besmirched labor's defense record.\textsuperscript{102}

"To eliminate once and for all the unfounded arguments presented by biased and chronic misrepresenters of the truth," stated the Manpower Committee report, "let it be stated that hardly more than one tenth of one percent of the time available was lost by strikes affecting war production during World War II."\textsuperscript{103} When one considers that 85\% of all defense production was accomplished in union shops, it would seem that the trade union leaders' assessment


\textsuperscript{102}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{103}Ibid.
of labor efficiency was correct.

Byron Fairchild and Jonathan Grossman, the historians chosen by the War Department to record the activities of that branch of the army's military effort during World War II, state that the two major reasons the War Department wanted national service were because this plan would aid in the "all-out effort" to win the war, and it would prevent serious strikes which could harm mobilization. They imply that labor difficulties were endangering the war effort. Quite in contrast to this interpretation is the assertion by the Saunders Committee that costly delays in getting supplies to the armed services was due to inefficient administration of the mobilization program. This is the argument that organized labor had propounded throughout the war. There is a need to clarify these issues surrounding war production and the role of labor. Indeed nothing published to date has eliminated the confusion of the logistics of labor's war record.

Although there was widespread interest in the subject of national service, Congress seemed reluctant to deal with the matter. In fact a majority of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs could not be persuaded to


105. See report of the Saunders Committee of the Industrial War College, June 1946.
report the Austin-Wadsworth Bill to the Senate floor. Proponents of labor conscription became convinced that only President Roosevelt's intervention on behalf of national service would bring a favorable Congressional response. The War Department in particular continued to urge the President to support the Austin-Wadsworth Bill.\(^{106}\) Stimson pleaded with the President to support labor conscription because such a measure would shorten the war and save American lives.\(^{107}\) Organized labor was just as adamant in its opposition to national service as the War Department was for it. At the AFL Convention in the summer of 1943 the Executive Council warned the Chief Executive that labor conscription would irreparably damage the war effort.\(^{108}\)

The amazing record of free labor, stated the trade unionists, "should be convincing evidence that in our country the application of democratic method under free institutions is infinitely superior to the spirit and the method of conscription and compulsion."\(^{109}\)

The question of national service must have weighed

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\(^{107}\) See citation of Stimson letter to the President, 1 July 1943 in Fairchild and Grossman, p. 231.

\(^{108}\) Proceedings 1943, p. 552.

\(^{109}\) Ibid.
heavily upon the mind of the President during the summer months of 1943. Roosevelt, in a quite uncharacteristic fashion, refused to allow his official family to debate or discuss the issue of labor conscription. 110 One must conclude that although the President had not decided to support national service at this time, he certainly was disturbed about this subject and was giving it careful attention. There is no precise way to know when Roosevelt made his decision to support national service. Fairchild and Grossman indicate that the President's tour of war battle zones in November and December 1943, and his subsequent meeting with Churchill and Stalin at Tehran convinced him of the necessity for labor conscription. 111 These writers contend, moreover, that after these encounters with actual battle conditions, the President adopted the philosophy of Stimson and Patterson that only through national service would America's fighting men be given complete support at home.

Henry Stimson and McGeorge Bundy do not support this interpretation in their publication On Active Service in Peace and War. They give no indication that Roosevelt's tour of battle conditions or the Tehran meeting had any visible effect upon the President's attitude toward national

110. Stimson and Bundy, p. 483.

111. Fairchild and Grossman, p. 231.
service or the need to aid American fighting men by enforcing conscription at home. 112 Stimson relates that he "was as surprised as he was delighted to find" that Roosevelt had come out "strongly and persuasively in favor" of national service in his State of the Union Address 11 January 1944. 113 Either of these accounts, however, would lead one to believe that the President had made his decision to support compulsory labor service sometime between mid-November 1943 and early January 1944. This may be inaccurate. In a letter dated 16 September 1943 Secretary of War Stimson had written to the President stating, "I have just learned very confidentially that you are contemplating writing a message on the subject of a National Service law." 114 The War Secretary expressed the opinion that the labor conscription bill would be accepted by the nation if the President would indicate that the measure was a necessary supplement to the Selective Service Act." 115 If the President, as Stimson's letter suggests, had made up his mind to endorse national service in September, the earliest opportune time for announcing this support of national service would have been

112. Stimson and Bundy, p. 483.
113. Ibid.
115. Ibid.
in January. Roosevelt could not easily have announced his advocacy of such a controversial plan, and then left the country. Also, the State of the Union Address provided an ideal format for supporting labor conscription. It was certainly less dramatic than if the President would have announced his position at a press conference where all attention would be directed toward this one subject.

Regardless of the timing of the President's conversion, or the factors motivating him to make this decision, his State of the Union message left little doubt that he was convinced of the necessity for national service. Robert Sherwood and Judge Samuel I. Rosenman drafted the section of the President's address which dealt with national service. 116 The President's support of labor conscription was "softened" considerably by binding national service to a series of other recommendations. Sherwood and Rosenman felt that this was wise from a political standpoint, but as later events proved this was quite unfortunate. Grenville Clark described Roosevelt's address as giving only "qualified support" to labor conscription. 117 Clark also believed that the decision to tie national service to other


related wartime domestic problems prevented the passage of the Austin-Wadsworth Bill in 1944. The controversial passage contained a statement by Roosevelt that he "would not recommend a national service law unless other laws were passed to keep down the cost of living, to share equitably the burdens of taxation, to hold the stabilization line, and to prevent undue profits."\textsuperscript{118} After reading the President's address, however, none could deny that the greatest emphasis was upon national service. Roosevelt stated that everyone must bear a responsibility to aid the nation in time of peril. He further indicated that there could no longer be discrimination between the efforts of the men and women on the battlefront, and the men and women producing essential war materials.\textsuperscript{119}

Surprising to many people, but particularly to the leaders of organized labor, was Roosevelt's assertion that national service would act as a deterrent to strikes.\textsuperscript{120} Although the President had not made any public declarations about labor strikes prior to his State of the Union Address, his correspondence throughout the summer of 1943 reveals a growing disturbance over what the Chief Executive believed

\textsuperscript{118}. Roosevelt's State of the Union Address, 11 January 1944.

\textsuperscript{119}. Ibid.

\textsuperscript{120}. Ibid.
was a breach of faith upon the part of organized labor in obeying its "no-strike" pledge. The President was evidently well aware that one of labor's most forceful and successful arguments against national service was the assertion that there was no necessity for labor conscription in view of the tremendous successes America's workers had already attained in meeting production goals. CIO president Philip Murray had even gone as far as to state that organized labor would support national service if it were really needed. Murray, of course, indicated it would never be necessary. Forcefully combatting this argument, Roosevelt stated that for three years he had hesitated to recommend national service, but "today I am convinced of its necessity," because of the serious failures in mobilization efforts. The President's demand for national service, and his castigation of labor for production failures was warmly supported by the New York Times. The Times had always believed that "the greatest single obstacle" to the enactment of labor conscription was Roosevelt's

121. Hyde Park Library, President's Official File 407-B. See letter of Knox to the President 8 June 1943; and memo from Roosevelt to Justice Byrnes 12 June 1943.

122. NY Times, 11 September 1943, Murray address to the New Jersey CIO; and 13 September 1943, Murray address to the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America.

123. President's State of the Union Address, 11 January 1944.
refusal to endorse this plan.\textsuperscript{124} It was predicted that with
the President's commitment to national service the Austin-
Wadsworth Bill would soon be enacted just as the Burke-
Wadsworth Act had been in 1940.\textsuperscript{125}

The President's decision to support national service
was a tremendous blow to organized labor. Labor's dismay
was obvious. Immediately Roosevelt was besieged with
letters and telegrams from local labor organizations
denouncing the President's stand.\textsuperscript{126} The tremendous
disbelief and deep concern of the locals is well illustrated
by a letter to the President from Carl Swanson, Regional
Director of the United Auto Workers of the CIO. "American
workers are deeply shocked at your suggestion that our
nation institute a policy of slave labor," commented Swanson.\textsuperscript{127}
The CIO official also predicted that if national service

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{124} \textit{NY Times}, 12 January 1944.
  \item \textsuperscript{125} \textit{Ibid.}
  \item \textsuperscript{126} Hyde Park Library, President's Official File
  1413, National Service Legislation, 1939-1945, Box 15. See
  letter of Congressman Edward J. Elsaesser of Buffalo
  speaking for the Electrical and Steel Industries of New
  York, 13 January 1944; letter of 12 January 1944 from
  Allan D. McNeil, Field Representative of the United
  Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers Union of the CIO;
  telegram of 12 January 1944 from the Louisville Central
  Labor Union; letter of 14 January 1944 from Joseph Kuzman,
  U.S. Steel Workers, CIO, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; and
  letter of 14 January 1944 from Guy Johnson, United Federa-
  tion of Workers.
  \item \textsuperscript{127} \textit{Ibid.}, Letter of Swanson to the President,
  12 January 1944.
\end{itemize}
were enacted it would destroy organized labor in America. William Green and Philip Murray were even more disturbed at the President’s position. The day after Roosevelt delivered his State of the Union Address the leaders of the nation’s two largest labor organizations spent over an hour and a half with the President trying to persuade him to reconsider the consequence of his stand on labor conscription. Green and Murray warned the Chief Executive that his support of national service would open the "floodgates of arguments and disunity which could only harm the war effort." 

The *Times* immediately denounced the unpatriotic attitude of the labor leaders. The paper intimated that Green and Murray offered only a minority view of labor conscription. "There is often a wide gap between what trade union leaders are thinking and saying," philosophized an editorial writer, "and what the great masses of the people of the country are thinking and saying." Once again reference was made to labor’s defeat in 1940 over Selective Service. This led the writer to state that one could not really believe "that the judgment of trade union leaders

128. Ibid.
129. *NY Times*, 13 January 1944.
130. Ibid.
131. Ibid.
is infallible in matters of this kind." Much less emotional and definitely more realistic was Arthur Krock's studied analysis of the President's stand on national service. Krock commented that the President had presented a poor case for labor conscription. The columnist warned that unless Roosevelt indicated precisely what he wanted, national service, which "seems to have started on a rocky, uphill road," would not be enacted. Krock also stated that the opposition of organized labor was not enough to defeat national service. However this opposition, combined with Roosevelt's hesitation to push for labor conscription for three years, had made many people skeptical of the proposal. Thus, if the President wanted national service enacted he should spell out exactly why he now desired its passage. This Roosevelt refused to do. One week after his Address, the President was castigated for "leaving the whole subject in mid-air." "It is plainly the President's responsibility, as it is his opportunity," commented the Chief Executive's critic, "to focus the

132. Ibid.
133. Ibid.
134. Ibid.
135. Ibid.
136. Ibid., 16 January 1944.
attention of Congress and the country on a concrete plan of action.\textsuperscript{137}

During the following months numerous writers stated that organized labor was spearheading opposition to national service.\textsuperscript{138} This interpretation has been accepted by the two major works examining the subject.\textsuperscript{139} However, one must be cautious in not overestimating labor's role in this struggle. Charles Hurd, a political analyst who wrote about opposition to national service in April 1944, made an interesting observation with his comment that "now labor is about the only vocal opposition, but the other opposition, while silent, is none the less formidable."\textsuperscript{140} Hurd stated that Congressional "cloak-room conversation" indicated that Congressmen generally opposed the labor draft, but refrained for political reasons from openly differing with the President.\textsuperscript{141} There seems to be validity in Hurd's analysis. There may not be a true correlation between the vocal and public opposition of labor to national service,

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 8 March 1944, 12 March 1944, 4 May 1944, and 16 January 1944.


\textsuperscript{140} NY Times, 12 March 1944.

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid.
and the failure to enact the Austin-Wadsworth Bill in 1944. Labor was just one factor.

Another source of opposition to national service, but one which does not fit into Hurd's definition of "silent," was the considerable opposition of some members of Roosevelt's official family. Public disapproval of the President's position on national service was registered by Secretary of Labor, Frances Perkins, Donald Nelson, Chairman of the War Production Board, and Paul McNutt, head of the War Manpower Commission. When the Labor Secretary was asked if she approved of the President's demand for labor conscription, she refused to answer the query directly. Instead Secretary Perkins expressed the opinion that wartime production had reached its peak, and that "the coming months may bring a progressive decline in the total number of workers engaged in manufacturing."142 Perkins' statement prompted organized labor to once again argue that the President should have demanded labor conscription immediately after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and not at the present time when it seemed that mobilization production would decline.143 Nelson and McNutt made similar observations when testifying before the House Subcommittee on

142. Ibid., 16 January 1944.

143. Ibid., see statement of Green, 17 February 1944 and comments of the CIO leaders, 28 January 1944.
Military Affairs. Nelson indicated that the only type of labor conscription he would support would be if the President asked for the drafting of Four F's, and those men too old to serve in the armed forces, although he could not see any need for national service at the present time.  

McNutt's comments were more poignant. "I would have welcomed something of this kind eighteen months ago," said the Manpower Commission head, "but the job has been done on a voluntary basis . . . why undo it?" The Special Truman War Policies Investigating Committee's strong condemnation of national service is probably one of the major reasons Perkins, Nelson, and McNutt were so candid in their assessment of labor conscription. The Committee had advised the government to strengthen mobilization efforts "by other means that would do less violence to individual freedom." The AFL immediately noted the Truman Committee's recommendation, and began buttressing labor's fight against national service by indicating that support from this highly respected group attested to the righteousness of organized labor's position.
At any rate this open fight within the White House surprised and baffled many observers. In fact one writer was prompted to ask the obvious question, "Does the administration know its own mind?" 149

The most brilliant and logical argument against national service, as illustrated by the quotation at the beginning of this chapter, never became public knowledge. Harvey Smith's analysis of labor conscription was the most incisive of any developed in the executive branch of government. 150 Roosevelt had initially asked the Budget Chief about his reaction to labor conscription after a budget conference between the two men. At that time Smith was not prepared to discuss the matter, but a few days later he wrote to the President about his views on the subject. Besides advising Roosevelt that national service would injure the war effort "at this late date," Smith introduced the question of possible political repercussions. This possibility had certainly occurred to Roosevelt, and it may be the main reason the President refused to pursue national service throughout the rest of 1944. "If the Republicans, who nearly control the House and who do

149. *NY Times*, 29 March 1944.


151. Ibid.
actually control it on many issues, are smart . . . ,” warned the Budget Director, “they will join with wavering Democrats to defeat any proposal for national service legislation.”152 Smith also commented that if national service were defeated in that manner, the Republicans would “take the credit, with labor, for doing so.”153

President Roosevelt was undoubtedly concerned about the cool reception for national service. The President directed his advisor, Judge Samuel I. Rosenman, to evaluate the Austin-Wadsworth Bill, indicating its major weaknesses and determining what could be done to strengthen its appeal.154 Rosenman was to report his findings directly to the White House. Rosenman's analysis of national service was strongly influenced by the interpretations of Oscar Cox of the Foreign Economic Administration, Howard C. Peterson, Executive Assistant to the Under Secretary of War, and William Haber of the War Manpower Commission.155 Taking

152. Ibid.

153. Ibid.

154. Ibid., Undated memo of Rosenman to Roosevelt. Rosenman indicates that he had undertaken the examination of national service at the President's request. Also in the memo Rosenman makes reference to the fact that it has been three months since the State of the Union address when Roosevelt asked for the passage of national service. Thus the memo was written sometime in mid-April 1944.

155. Ibid., Rosenman Papers, National Service, Box 1. See letters to Rosenman from Haber, 19 January
into consideration the events of 1945 one must conclude that
the interpretation of Cox carried the most influence in the
White House. "It is my view," stated Cox, "that a more
limited bill is necessary if we are to have any chance of
obtaining manpower legislation." This is precisely
what transpired in 1945. Rosenman also indicated that it
was absolutely necessary to gain support from some segments
of organized labor. He suggested that any national service
bill presented as an administration measure should delete
any references to the compulsory assignment of workers. 157
The Judge also suggested a strong "educational campaign" to
overcome opposition to labor conscription. 158

From April to December 1944 national service was
essentially a dead issue. The only notable exception to
this generalization were the nasty, but sometimes humorous
exchanges between Philip Murray and William Green, and the
editorial staff of the New York Times. 159 Organized labor

1944; Cox, 11 February 1944; and Peterson, 16 February
1944. Also note an interesting letter of G. Clark to
Rosenman 21 February 1944 in which Clark discusses the
possibility of "two parallel" manpower agencies.

156. Ibid., Cox letter of 11 February 1944.
157. Ibid., Undated Rosenman Memorandum.
158. Ibid.
159. For labor's attitude see the NY Times, 25
34, No. 19, 9 May 1944. Editorial views of the Times can
be found in 8 March, 16 April, and 4 May 1944 papers.
exuded an air of confidence for the first time since the emergence of the conscription issue. In a March editorial in the *American Federationist* William Green expressed great pride in production accomplishments of organized labor.\(^{160}\) "Labor insists and demands," stated the AFL boss, "that our final victory in this war be recognized and acknowledged as a victory for free labor and the death knell for slave labor throughout the world for all time."\(^{161}\) Labor's new belligerency was slightly premature.

The question naturally arises as to why President Roosevelt abandoned his demand for national service in 1944. Even if the Austin-Wadsworth Bill could not get through Congress, the President could certainly have espoused another version of labor conscription if he so desired. Grenville Clark insisted that Roosevelt would have demanded, and been successful, in his quest for national service if his health would not have failed him. "By the time that his health might have enabled him to take up a hard legislative battle," stated Clark, "... the anxiety of the people had been relieved and again the moment had passed."\(^{162}\) A scholarly analysis of the President's health


\(^{161}\) Ibid.

\(^{162}\) Clark Report, p. 6.
during these months would indicate that although Roosevelt's health was declining, his mind was alert and he probably would have had the stamina to carry on the battle for national service if he desired. 163 A more likely explanation is that Harvey Smith and Samuel I. Rosenman had convinced the President of the political realities of labor conscription, and Roosevelt, at least for the moment, accepted the fact that any attempt to enact national service in 1944 would be doomed to fail. Indeed, Philip Murray's oft quoted description of national service as "quack medicine" and his equally popular assertion that labor conscription arose out of the frustration of the executive agencies inability to accomplish total mobilization was gaining increased credulence in Congressional circles. 164 Moreover, President Roosevelt was too much of a politician to back such a potential political liability in an election year.

Even Secretary of War Stimson did not push for national service during most of 1944. He was convinced that labor conscription would not be enacted unless the United States quite unexpectedly received a severe military setback. 165 He did not have long to wait for such a turn


164. CIO News, 17 January 1944.

of events. The German December offensive in 1944 and the slow progress of American troops in the Pacific after the capture of Iwo Jima provided the setting for a renewed demand of both the War and Navy Departments for national service. 166

President Roosevelt was quick to comply. In his State of the Union Address 6 January 1945, the President gave his unqualified support to national service. 167 He urged that labor conscription be enacted immediately. The President tried to dispel the argument that it was too late in the war for national service. "The closer we come to the end of the war," stated the weary Chief Executive, "the more pressing becomes the need for sustained war production with which to deliver the final blow to the enemy." 168 The President stressed in at least three different parts of his address that labor and management had performed in a superior fashion throughout the war, but he warned that the great industrial needs in the closing phases of the war were so vast that a voluntary policy would not be efficient enough. 169

167. State of the Union Address, 6 January 1945.
168. Ibid.
169. Ibid.
On the same day as the President's State of the Union address a new and limited national service bill, the May-Bailey National Service Act, was introduced into Congress. This bill completely excluded the registration of women, and was to cover men in the age group of 18 to 45. Although it omitted the controversial clause of the Austin-Wadsworth Bill, which stated that workers could be assigned to work in designated war industries throughout the nation, the act did state that American citizens had a legal obligation to serve in war work. The May-Bailey Bill incorporated most of Rosenman's recommendations. Grenville Clark was somewhat disturbed about the measure, and wrote to Rosenman expressing his concern that the May-Bailey measure was not as "comprehensive" as the Austin-Wadsworth act. However, Clark did concede that the administration's bill would have a good chance for adoption in 1945. Years later when reflecting on the compromise May-Bailey Bill, Clark commented, "therefore, while we deemed the bill incomplete and inadequate in scope, our Committee decided to support it, and we made an active campaign for its


enactment. 172

The next three months were strangely familiar. It was as if 1945 were restaging a revamped production of the 1944 fight over national service. Henry L. Stimson was demanding labor conscription for the same reasons he had in the previous year, 173 the leaders of organized labor once again decried "slave labor," 174 the National Association of Manufacturers, as in the past, vehemently defended the "fine" production record of labor and management, 175 and the New York Times advocated national service with the same tired editorials. 176 There was one added feature. President Roosevelt was making a determined effort to enact national service. In a press conference 16 January 1945 the President warned, despite one reporter's statement that organized labor "was knocking the bottom out of the argument for national service," 177 that voluntary manpower


173. Hyde Park Library, President's Official File 1413, Box 18, Stimson to the President, 5 March 1945; also see statements in the NY Times, 7 and 19 February 1945.


175. NY Times, 17 January 1945 and 4 February 1945.

176. Ibid., 11 and 19 January 1945, and 4 February 1945.

177. Ibid., 17 January 1945.
methods would fail.\textsuperscript{178} The following day Roosevelt made his last major effort to ensure the enactment of national service. In his now famous letter to Andrew J. May, Chairman of the House Military Affairs Committee, Roosevelt stated that "it is vital that total offense should not slacken because of any less than total utilization of our manpower on the homefront."\textsuperscript{179} "The urgent need of this legislation," maintained the Chief Executive, "has not lessened, but has increased since the sending of my message."\textsuperscript{180} Roosevelt's exhortations were to no avail. The beleaguered President was badly defeated in the last major legislative struggle before his tragic death.

Although the House of Representatives passed the May-Bailey Bill 246-165 on 1 February 1945, the Senate refused to report the measure out of Committee. Instead the Upper House substituted the O'Mahoney-Kilgore Bill, described by Senator Harry Byrd of Virginia as "a milk-and-water measure which would do more to confuse the situation than good it could possibly accomplish."\textsuperscript{181} The Senate

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{179} Hyde Park Library, President's Official File 1413, Roosevelt to May, 17 January 1945.

\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., also cited in NY Times, 18 January 1945.

\textsuperscript{181} Quoted in Clark Report, p. 10. The legislative battle is described in Clark Report, pp. 7-11, and Fairchild and Grossman, pp. 239-243.
substitute bill was quite innocuous, purporting only to strengthen the authority of the War Manpower Commission. During March 1945 the issue of national service went into Conference, with both Houses of Congress refusing to budge from their respective bills. Probably Grenville Clark is correct in his contention that by April the "branches of Congress were too far apart in their points of view to enact helpful legislation of any kind on the manpower issue." 182

Thus, organized labor had faced one of its greatest crises in the Twentieth Century and had been victorious. There are no simple explanations for labor's success in this fight against national service, just as there were none for the loss over selective service. The unity of the AFL and CIO, the question of the President's timing in his support for labor conscription, the division within the executive branch of government, and the reluctance of Congress to legislate in such a politically hazardous area were all important factors contributing to the defeat of national service. It is, of course, possible that changes in any one of these factors could have produced a victory for the proponents of national service. The significant thing about national service is that it is always a

current issue in time of grave military involvement. In the next fight over labor conscription organized labor might not be so fortunate. As Grenville Clark stated, it is quite likely that in some future world war the United States will "require both a more prompt and a much greater national effort than produced in World War II." Clark assumed that labor conscription was the key for solving mobilization difficulties. This assumption seems inaccurate. Mobilization problems involving labor, management, the armed forces, and the government most often developed because of the absence of a proper coordinating agency. To single out organized labor as the major problem in defense production, and then attempt to restrict labor activity with national service seems a gross miscarriage of justice.

The basic materials for this examination of the role of organized labor and its fight against military and industrial conscription are to be found in a number of manuscript collections. These include various files in the Selective Service Library, AFL-CIO Archives, and the Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Catholic University, all of which are located in Washington, D.C.; related materials on deposit at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York; the American Federation of Labor Papers held by the Division of Archives and manuscripts, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin; and the Henry Fountain Ashurst Papers, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona. The specific materials and files used at these respective libraries are described in the following sections.

Selective Service Library

The single most important source of information about organized labor and conscription for this research paper was found at the Selective Service Library. At present the Library is categorizing its holdings by placing specified information under various file numbers such as F-17, F-54, and F-59. Although much material has been filed in this manner the Library has a significant amount to categorize. It is expected that this process will be completed around 1972. Those materials used in this paper, and not yet filed are designated as Selective Service Special File, followed by an appropriate description of its content. The majority of references in this paper came from F-54, consisting of correspondence relating to Selective Service from World War I through World War II, and F-59, relating to industrial mobilization activities. Also of importance was a Special File consisting of classified correspondence of the Joint Chiefs of Staff with reference to Industrial Mobilization Planning, F-11, a file relating to the activities of Colonel Francis Keesling, Director of Information for the Selective Service System during World War II, a Special File now designated as, "Speeches and Correspondence of Lewis Blaine Hershey," and
a valuable collection of letters of the Provost Marshal General, 1917-1918, which presently are not consigned to a specific file. Certain other valuable information such as the activities of the Army War College and the Army Industrial College are also available in the Selective Service Library. Specific references to these are made in this Annotated List of References under the section entitled Labor Publications, Articles, and Army War College Lectures. The Selective Service Library also holds an extensive collection of World War II Army and Navy News Releases, and correspondence to Selective Service presently located in F-52.

AFL-CIO Archives

The AFL-CIO Library, besides providing a centralized depository for key trade union journals and special publications, also offered some valuable original source materials which indicated in part organized labor's attitudes toward conscription. Most important in this connection were: the two volume collection of the Personal Letters of Samuel Gompers; the Samuel Gompers War Files; AFL-CIO Files on Correspondence With Government Departments, 1941-1948; William Green Copy Books, 1925-1945; and CIO Historical File, 1934-1951.

Department of Archives and Manuscripts — Catholic University

Catholic University is also in the process of cataloging a vast amount of labor materials which the AFL-CIO Library recently donated to this University. Most of the materials deposited at Catholic University have been microfilmed and are available at the AFL-CIO Archives. However there are certain holdings which have not been retained in their entirety by the labor library. There were three sets of holdings in this category which provided some insights into labor's fight against conscription. These include the John Brophy Papers, 41 boxes, Philip Murray Papers, 1943-1946, 27 boxes, and the CIO National Office Correspondence, Alpha File, 1937-1941, 18 boxes.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library

Second only in importance to the Selective Service Library were the valuable source materials located in the
Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York. Essential information for understanding the role of President Roosevelt in the struggle over both military and industrial conscription can be found in this depository. Indeed, materials gleaned from this library provide the framework for Chapters Four and Five of this research paper. The bulk of the information came from the President's Official Files. However, files 1662 and 1958 of the President's Personal File provided some important data, as did the Rosenman Papers, Group 32, Item 17, Correspondence, 1942-1944, and a special section in the President's Official File 1413, entitled Rosenman Papers, National Service. The following file numbers of the President's Official correspondence were used extensively in this study. These include: 407 and 407-B, which includes a section labeled Labor, 1941-1942, Box No. 3; 142, AFL, Box No. 2; 1413, National Service Legislation, 1939-1945, Box No. 15, Box No. 18; 2546, CIO, 1942-1945, Box No. 3, and OFF 4905. Some interesting related information is located in the President's Official File 25, which deals with the attitude and activities of the War Department.

Division of Archives and Manuscripts -- Wisconsin State Historical Society

The Wisconsin State Historical Society provided one major source of necessary and valuable information for this study. This was its holdings of Files of the Presidents of the AFL, 1881-1952, American Federation of Labor Papers. There were certain segments of these papers which greatly aided in the writing of the first two chapters of this paper. Particularly true in this respect were the Gompers' Correspondence, 1917-1918, Boxes No. 24 and No. 25. Other valuable information was found in the William Green Papers, File B, 1915-1945, notably Boxes No. 9 and No. 10. Also see File E, William Green Papers, 1925-1952, and Labor Speeches, 1937-1942, Box No. 3. In Box No. 10 of File E a complete record of AFL News Releases, 1939-1945, can be located. Some interesting comments on the subject of conscription were made by Boris Shishkin, in the Files of the Economist, General File and Box No. 1 also located at this library.

Henry Fountain Ashurst Papers -- University of Arizona

The Ashurst collection offered some valuable insights
into the "grass-roots" reaction of organized labor toward the whole subject of peacetime selective service. This data was of particular significance for the discussion in Chapter Three. The basic information was found in Ashurst's Correspondence, 1913-1940, Box-1, File for April--September 1940.

PUBLIC DOCUMENTS, SPECIAL GOVERNMENT REPORTS, AND PERSONAL ACCOUNTS

A. Public Documents

The United States Congressional Record, although not providing a great deal of interpretative information about the struggle over conscription, did prove to be valuable for tracing Congressional debates over the draft issue. Moreover this source aptly illustrated the key popular issues which revolved around the conscription issue. The materials from the Congressional Record used in this paper include volumes 53, 54, 55, 56, and 59 during the period of World War I, and volumes 86, 87, 88, 89, and 90 in the era of the Second World War. Committee Hearings also provided a significant forum for determining public attitudes toward the many problems relating to conscription. Those Hearings held by the United States House of Representatives and incorporated in this paper include: Committee on Foreign Affairs, Hearings, Referendum on Declaration of War, 64th Congress, 2d Session, 1917; Committee on Foreign Affairs, Hearings on the Selective Service Act, 65th Congress, 1st Session, 1917; Committee on Military Affairs, Hearings to Establish a War Policies Commission, 71st Congress, 2d Session, 1931; and Committee on Military Affairs, Hearings on the Selective Military and Training Bill, 76th Congress, 3d Session, 1940. Those Hearings relating to the investigations of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs include: Hearings, Selective Military and Training Bill, 76th Congress, 3d Session, 1940; Special Hearings, War Manpower Problems, 77th Congress, 2d Session, 1942; Hearings, National Service Legislation, 78th Congress, 1st Session, 1943; and Hearings, National Service Legislation, 79th Congress, 1st Session, 1944.
B. Special Government Reports

Most of the Special Government Reports used in the research for this examination of organized labor and the conscription issue were published under the auspices of the Selective Service System. However, in recent years a number of general works, written for the Department of the Army, have presented unique, comprehensive views of some of the fundamental problems surrounding the military and industrial draft. These works are valuable because they provide a thread of unity in attempting to bring together the sometimes confusing, and seemingly unconnected ideas surrounding mobilization activities. These include:


activities of Brigadier General James Oakes during the American Civil War. The first of these was written by Oakes in the form of a "Final Report to the Secretary of War by the Provost Marshal General of the United States," dealing with the years from 1863 through 1866 and printed by the United States Government as Document No. 11, Historical Report of the Office of the Assistant Provost Marshal General of Illinois. The contributions of Oakes to Selective Service have been clarified in a recent publication by Selective Service, "A Tribute to General James Oakes," Washington, D.C., Special Manual of Observance, Published 17 March 1966. Two other specialized works dealing with the complexities of wartime mobilization are Industrial Deferment, Special Monograph No. 6, Selective Service System, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1948, and Industrial Mobilization for War, 1940-1945, Historical Reports on War Administrations, War Production Board General Study No. 1, United States Government Printing Office, 1947. Several other special reports delivered to the Army Industrial College were also extremely helpful. Both of these reports originated in the Committee on Manpower. The first of these, "Laws, Agencies, and Organizations Dealing With Industrial Relations and the Settlement of Disputes," a report headed by Colonel William A. Saunders, and published in 1946 presented some interesting statistics in reference to the efficiency of organized labor during the Second World War. The Second report, "Social and Economic Conditions and Government Control Affecting Manpower," Chairmanned by Colonel Fielder P. Greer indicated some of the key difficulties between labor and the government during the Second World War. This report was also published in 1946. One last special government of value for this paper was the significant "Report of the Joint Army and Navy Selective Service Committee," Washington, D.C., 10 June 1933.

C. Personal Accounts

Although the various personal accounts used in the writing of this paper provided some interesting commentary on the question of conscription, they were not a basic source for original and interpretative materials. The only possible exception to this general rule was Grenville Clark's work, The Effort for a National Service Law in World War II, 1942-1945, Privately Published, 1947. A number of unusual and unique publications originating in California provided interesting background for the


LABOR PUBLICATIONS, ARTICLES AND ARMY

WAR COLLEGE LECTURES

A. Labor Publications
One of the primary sources for determining the attitudes of organized labor toward military and industrial conscription can be found in a number of major publications. For this paper the publications cited usually were affiliated with either the American Federation of Labor or the Congress of Industrial Organizations. The AFL materials used include the very helpful American Federationist. Specifically Volumes 24, 25, 31, 32, 46, 47, 50 and 51 were incorporated into this study. Another major source was the AFL Annual Convention Proceedings. Convention material, either from statements of the Executive Council or discussions held on the Convention floor, was taken from the Proceedings of 1922, 1923, 1924, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1939, and 1943. Particularly useful for the last two chapters of this study were the materials taken from the AFL Weekly News Service. These include the years 1943-1945 and represent Volumes 33, 34 and 35. The CIO News represented the public stance of the Congress of Industrial Organizations with regard to the issue of conscription from 1940-1945. The materials used in this study include Volumes 3, 4, 6, and 7. The only other labor journal cited was an editorial in the United Mine Workers Journal, 15 January 1944.

B. Articles

Numerous articles in both scholarly journals and popular magazines contributed interpretive and basic information for this examination of the draft. Two of these articles were written for a specialized audience and never did become available to the general public, although the information was not classified at the time it was written in the early 1930's. The first of these was written by James Cox for examination by the War Department, and was entitled, "Labor in War." Cox submitted the article to the War Department 28 October 1930. The second article was written by Dwight D. Eisenhower and circulated in the Army Industrial College, and then went to the War Department. The publication was entitled, "Changing Conceptions Regarding the Creation of Super-Agencies," and was originally submitted to the AIC, 2 October 1931. Articles pertaining to World War I include some significant observations made by the founder of the AFP, Samuel Gompers. Gompers' analysis of the whole conscription issue is well illustrated in the following selections: "Voluntary vs Compulsion," American Federationist, Vol. 24, December, 1917; "Don't Conscription -- Mobilize Labor," American
C. Army War College Lectures

Of a particularly controversial nature were a number of lectures, both pro and anti labor, delivered between the wars at the Army War College. These speeches, although quite rhetorical, were calculated to emotionally sway the attitudes of the military men attending these sessions. The most notable speech made on behalf of labor was delivered by Samuel Gompers 7 March 1922 and entitled, "Organized Labor and the War of 1917." On 13 October 1931 John B. Colpoys also spoke on the positive aspects of labor's activities during the Great War in his lecture, "The Role of Labor in World War I." Two other lectures cited in this study were decidedly anti-labor. This includes Colonel H.C. Kramer's, "Discussion of Selective Service," delivered 11 October 1934, and General Hugh Johnson's provocative comments in his speech entitled "The Drafting of Industry and Labor," 20 October 1939.

SECONDARY BOOKS

There were a number of secondary works which aided in bringing some thread of unity to the complexities surrounding mobilization. The most significant for this work was Philip Taft's excellent books, The AFL in the Time of Gompers, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957, and The AFL from the Death of Gompers to the Merger, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959. Two other books dealing with labor, although not as significant for this study as Taft's writings, provided some excellent insights into particular aspects of labor activity with regard to mobilization difficulties. These were Matthew Josephson's study of Sidney Hillman: Statesman of American Labor, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1952, and James Oliver Morris' book, Conflict Within the AFL: A Study of Craft Versus Industrial Unions, 1901-1938, Cornell University Press, 1958. Some general studies which added interesting literary observations about the general public, and labor attitudes between the wars were the works of D.W. Brogan, The American Character, New York: Vintage Books, 1956, and Frederick J. Hoffman, The Twenties: American Writing in the Postwar Decade, New York: The Free Press, 1962. There were a number of secondary works which were used exclusively in this paper for background information. These works discussed American military and mobilization

**NEWSPAPERS**

The story of organized labor's opposition to both military and industrial conscription was basically traced through news accounts and editorially in the *New York
Times from 1915 through 1945. However other newspaper
accounts were used. These were usually selected for
editorial opinions. In the World War I period a number of
references were made to the Cleveland Plain Dealer, and in
the years from 1940-1945 various citations were taken from
the Arizona Daily Star, Arizona Republic, Baltimore Sun,
Philadelphia Enquirer, Washington Evening Star, and the
Washington Post.

MISCELLANEOUS

A. Unpublished Manuscripts

There were two unpublished manuscripts which aided
in the interpretation of labor's role in the fight against
conscription: Samuel R. Spencer, Jr., "A History of the
Selective Training and Service Act of 1940 from Inception
to Enactment," an unpublished Doctoral Dissertation written
at Harvard University, 1951, and J.R. Sperry, "The War
Referendum: Innovation for National Pure Democracy,
1862-1938," unpublished Master's Thesis written at the
University of Arizona, 1963.

B. Interviews

Two interviews were cited in this research paper,
both with key men in the Selective Service System. These
include an interview with Lewis Blaine Hershey, Director
of Selective Service, 14 July 1966, and Kenneth McGill,
Director of Research and Statistics for the Selective