

THE UNITED STATES MANPOWER CRISIS OF 1943

THESIS

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PREFACE

This paper will address the manpower shortage that occurred both within the United States military and within the defense industry during World War II. The shortage of men influenced curtailed production schedules and influenced military decisions, and eventually forced the induction of thousands of previous exempted pre-Pearl Harbor fathers. This thesis was submitted to the graduate committee on October 20, 2000.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1943, at the midpoint of its war effort, the United States government faced a manpower shortage, despite its best efforts at prewar planning. This manpower crisis was the result of conflicting demands between the military's needs as identified by the War Department and the defense industry's needs as defined by the War Manpower Commission. Early in 1943, Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall notified Congress that the military would require an additional 1.2 million men by the end of the year to reach its projected strength needs in anticipation of the invasion of Europe scheduled for 1944.¹ To obtain the needed manpower, the Director of the Selective Service Administration General Louis B. Hersey informed Congress that at least 466,000 pre-Pearl Harbor fathers would have to be drafted. Hersey's statement touched off a storm of public protest and became a pressing issue for the 78th Congress, as it sought ways to

¹ George C. Marshall, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol. 3, "The Right Man for the Right Job" December 7, 1941-May 31, 1943. Larry I. Bland, editor. (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1991), 315-316. In a secret 1942 memorandum for Admiral W. D. Leary, President Franklin Roosevelt's military advisor, Admiral Ernest King, Chief of Naval Operations, and General Henry Arnold, Chief of the Army Air Corps, Marshall outlined the needs for the size and structure of the Army for 1943. The Selective Service could "provide a total of 10,000,000 men by the end of 1943 if the 18-19 year-old group is inducted." The prospect of reforming the draft law was unlikely in an election year. To meet the necessary troop strength would require the drafting of married men to raise the projected shortfall of over one-half million men.

placate the outraged public and yet meet its obligation to provide an Army capable of winning a two-front war.

Critics of the married father's draft blamed the manpower shortage on the failure of the military to properly use the millions of men currently serving under arms. The critics charged that the military had too many men undergoing training in the states. The military continued its policy of stockpiling selected military personnel on college campuses, in research laboratories, and at private training facilities. At its peak, the Army Air Corps had a minimum of ninety-thousand air cadets attending college while they waited for a slot to open in the flight training program. The Navy had a similar program to protect its potential aviation cadets from the Selective Service. The shortage of single, unmarried draft-age men, and the threatened drafting of married men to fill the understrength infantry divisions, placed these programs at risk.² Other critics suggested that there was no manpower shortage beyond the government's improper utilization of the millions of American men and women already mobilized for the war industry. There was no need to draft married fathers, the critics argued, if only the government would draft the shirkers hiding in the ranks of war workers.

This thesis will examine the manpower crisis, its causes, and its consequences.

Was the United States' prewar mobilization planning flawed, and the manpower crisis a

² David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1949* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 631-644. Criticism for the drafting of married fathers came from various sources. The traditional defenders of family values, church leaders and small town editors, feared the drafting of fathers would cause a breakdown in families and lead to an increase in juvenile crime. Traditional enemies of President Roosevelt's administration, Republican leaders and the business community deplored the civilian and military bureaucracies that created the wasteful misuse of men just as they had opposed the New Deal's waste of money.

result of poor planning; or as some critics charged, was the administration of the plan improperly executed, creating an imbalance in the allocation of manpower resources? Did the military wisely use the men assigned to its needs or did it hoard men while other sections of the war effort suffered from a labor shortage?

To answer these questions, we must begin by examining the government's plans for war. United States military planning for the next war began shortly after the end of the First World War. Since the United States had limited experience in mobilizing for a modern war, and since its efforts to gear the nation's industry for the First World War took far too long to have a significant impact on the war's outcome, the government began to plan for a future conflict shortly after the country demobilized. The military planning in the years between the wars would culminate in the Victory Plan, a comprehensive blueprint to wage and to win the country's next major war.

CHAPTER I

THE VICTORY PLAN

American war planning during the 1920s and 1930s was limited to tactical operations. The United States military had devised a series of plans, designated by specific colors and called the Rainbow Plans, to wage war against an individual or a combination of potential enemies. Projecting the war plans did not mean that the United States had the ability to execute them. On the eve of World War II, the country was still recovering from the grievous injury its economy had suffered as a result of the Great Depression. The depression had far greater economic impact on the United States than it did Europe. For example, in 1938 the U.S. production was at 143 per cent of its 1913 levels. The Axis nations' production levels were much greater. Germany was at 149 per cent of its prewar level, while Japan's was at 552 per cent of its 1913 level. In July 1940, the newly appointed Secretary of War Henry Stimson realized that correcting this discrepancy was one of the four major challenges that he would face as the new secretary. Stimson had to convert America's manpower into a modern army, use the country's underutilize production capacity to develop weapons and munitions, develop the country's defensive position, and assist President Roosevelt in preparing the nation for its eventual

involvement in the war.³

General George Marshall also recognized the shortcomings of American planning efforts and he recalled the confusion that occurred when the country tried to mobilize its resources for the First World War. Marshall did not want a recurrence of the bedlam created by assembling divisions from their widely scattered regimental components and shipping them overseas without proper organization. These problems had plagued the country in previous wars. What was needed was a scheduled military mobilization manpower plan; however, before Marshall's subordinates made much progress, President Roosevelt directed the Army and Navy to determine the production necessary to defeat their enemies. Marshall incorporated the President's request into the scope of his earlier request. The finished document would become the Army's Victory Program.⁴

The task was given to Major Albert C. Wedemeyer, who began by setting all the parameters of possible U.S. involvement. He had to determine all the potential enemies and combinations of enemies together with their intentions and potential strength. In estimating the strength of the forces necessary to defeat the enemy, Wedemeyer used the optimal ratio of between 2-to-1 and 4-to-1 as the acceptable difference between attacker and defender. The Army estimated that the Axis would have approximately four hundred

³Godfrey Hodgson, *The Colonel: The Life and Wars of Henry Stimson, 1867-1950* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 224-226.

⁴Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall, vol. 2, Ordeal and Hope, 1939-1942* (New York: The Viking Press, 1966), 139-140. For background on the confusion of the economic mobilization of World War I, see R. Elberton Smith, *The Army and Economic Mobilization United States Army in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959; reprint Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991), 35-39. (page citations are to the reprint edition).

divisions available in 1943; therefore, in order to reach the minimum 2-to-1 superiority, the Allies would have to deploy at least eight hundred divisions.⁵

The United States Army of 1941 was ill-prepared by size, training, or capability to undertake a war against the Axis powers. When the war broke out in Europe, the Army's strength was 187,893 men, with only 13,039 officers. It lacked the strength needed to undertake any of the Rainbow plans. To increase the Army's strength, Congress narrowly passed the Selective Training and Service Act on September 16, 1940.⁶ Marshall feared that a haphazard increase in the Army's strength would create chaos. The Army already had a plan for gradual mobilization, the Protective Mobilization Plan (PMP), which Marshall wanted to follow. The PMP had an accompanying Industrial Mobilization Plan (IMP). Both plans were considerably out of date by 1941 when Marshall directed Wedemeyer to develop the Victory Plan.⁷

The Protective Mobilization Plan provided for an increase in the Army's strength by using the regular army and the National Guard as a nucleus to be supplemented by volunteers. Eventually the Army would reach a strength of 1,150,000 men. The

⁵ Albert C. Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1958), 63-66.

⁶ Originally entitled the Burke-Wadsworth Bill, the Selective Training and Service Act was the first peacetime program of compulsory service in the U.S., all men between the ages of 21 and 35 were required to register for a one year training program. Over 16.4 million were registered in the first draft to supply a proposed army of 1.2 million men with a reserve of 800,000 men. John Whiteclay Chambers II, editor. *The Oxford Companion to American Military History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 181.

⁷ Charles E. Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present: Writing the Victory Plan of 1941* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990), 44-48.

Industrial Mobilization Plan was designed to provide the equipment for this expanded military force. The plans were flawed for a number of reasons. The PMP's maximum strength was designed for defense of the Western Hemisphere alone, far too little for a global war. Additionally, the plan would take 240 days to reach full mobilization. The gradual mobilization was intentional since it was expected that U.S. industry would not fully convert to a war footing until after war had been declared.⁸

The passage of the Lend-Lease Act in August 1940 placed an additional burden on the military's planning.⁹ Under its provisions, equipment and munitions that would have supplied the expanding U.S. Army had to be shared with lend-lease recipients. Under-Secretary of War Robert Patterson, in charge of the lend-lease program, feared that the country's industrial capacity could not supply both the American and Allied needs. He therefore requested that the military estimate the amount of production needed to defeat its enemies. Patterson's request was married to Marshall's idea to form the two elements of the Victory Plan. Wedemeyer realized that if he could determine the size of the military, he could determine the amount of production necessary to equip, supply, and transport that military.¹⁰

⁸ Ibid, 48-49. Smith, *The Army and Economic Mobilization*, 73-74.

⁹ The Lend-Lease Act was approved by President Roosevelt on March 11, 1941. The act enabled any country whose defense the President deemed essential to the interest of the United States to receive arms, supplies, and other equipment by sale, transfer, exchange, or lease. Warren F. Kimball, *The Most Unsondred Act: Lend-Lease, 1939-1941* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1969), 243-251.

¹⁰ Ibid, 50-53.

Wedemeyer began by addressing the big picture. To know the projected size of the military, Wedemeyer believed he had to determine the mission of the Army and the Army Air Forces (A.A.C.) based on the national objectives. Realizing the national objectives would allow one to ascertain the military strategy and the forces necessary to achieve these objectives.¹¹

At the beginning of his study, Wedemeyer was dismayed to find out that there was no long-term national objective; all of the planning seemed to be directed toward immediate short-term goals. Because the United States government was not at war with the Axis nations, no official policy or statement had been or could be made which committed the country against the Rome-Berlin Axis. Many officials feared making plans for any action beyond the defense of the Western Hemisphere because they were concerned that they were playing into the hands of the isolationists, who viewed any contingency defense plans as another sign that Roosevelt was plotting to get the country into the war.¹²

In the absence of a definitive policy statement, Wedemeyer elected to write his own in as much as he understood the goals of the United States. The United States intended “to eliminate totalitarianism from Europe and, in the process, to be an ally of Great Britain, and further, to deny the Japanese undisputed control of the western

¹¹Mark Skinner Watson, *Chief of Staff. Prewar Plans and Preparations, U.S. Army in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950; reprint Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991), 342-343.

¹² Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present*, 61-63.

Pacific.”¹³ Wedemeyer’s supposition reflected the scenario of actions in the war plan numbered Rainbow 5 and the earlier discussions between the United States and Great Britain at the American British Conversations (ABC Meetings).¹⁴ Wedemeyer expected the United States to direct the bulk of its military force in operations against Germany, allocate enough force against Japan to ensure a political balance in the Pacific, all the while maintaining a defensive attitude in the Western Hemisphere.

Having determined what he perceived as the overall national objectives, Wedemeyer moved toward his next step: determining the military strategy needed to obtain these objectives. If Germany was the principal enemy, the United States and its allies in Wedemeyer’s opinion would eventually meet and defeat German ground forces in order to break their will to fight. To achieve this goal, Wedemeyer next determined German strength and capabilities so that sufficient U.S. forces could be deployed.

Wedemeyer turned to Colonel Truman Smith for assistance in determining the German military’s proficiency. Smith, a member of military intelligence, had been the military attache in Berlin and possessed a thorough understanding of the German army. Following the fall of France in 1940, military intelligence had identified four potential

¹³ Ibid, 63.

¹⁴ Pogue, *Ordeal and Hope*, 126-129. The ABC Meetings were begun in January 1941 between United States and British Army and Navy representatives to discuss American strategy and what assistance the U.S. could provide to Great Britain. Held in secret, top American political and military figures kept their distance to avoid encouraging the isolationists. The Americans stressed their commitment to the defense of the Western Hemisphere, and the Atlantic, and outlined a basis for collaboration with the British in event of a war. The U.S. agreed to permit the U.S. Navy to accept some responsibility for defense of the Atlantic permitting the British to move naval forces to the Far East. Germany was identified as the principle Axis power and the Europe First strategy was adopted.

enemies that the United States might face. They included Germany (the strongest and most dangerous), Japan, Italy, and Vichy France. In that late summer of 1941, Smith told Wedemeyer that he expected the Germans to concentrate most of their efforts against the Soviet Union in hope of a quick victory. Should Germany defeat Russia, Adolph Hitler, the German Chancellor and defacto leader of the German nation, probably would seek a negotiated peace with Great Britain, and if that failed, would move to eliminate British influence in the Mediterranean-North Africa area with the help of the Italians. Germany was not in the position to threaten the Western Hemisphere without acquiring major components of the British fleet.¹⁵

Italy had little military capacity to expand beyond the Mediterranean area of operations. Smith felt that Hitler maintained his alliance with the Italians to gain the influence of the Vatican in soliciting world opinion, especially in Catholic countries, for Germany's military efforts against communism in the Soviet Union. Smith also believed that the fascists had a perilous hold on the Italian government, and that with the right amount of pressure Italy's war efforts would collapse.¹⁶

Smith supposed the Japanese would show more aggression in the Pacific in response to the Nazi successes in Europe. U.S. intelligence estimated that the Japanese military would attempt to extract itself from their entanglement in China so that they would have a more free hand in the Pacific. German success against the colonial powers

¹⁵ Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present*, 64-66.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 66.

of Europe (French, Dutch and English) had sharpened the Japanese appetite for obtaining these countries' Asian possessions. Certainly a move south by the Japanese military would result in the seizure of the Philippine Islands, and possible feints against Hawaii, Alaska, Panama and the West Coast of the United States.¹⁷

Vichy France was identified as a potential enemy because U.S. intelligence felt that the French would cooperate more closely with the Axis based on the degree of German success. However, if the Germans experienced any reverses, the French were expected to pursue a course of action designed to meet its best interests. The U.S. intelligence community realized that the French would resist any attempt to use North Africa as a springboard against the Germans.¹⁸

Military intelligence made an evaluation of the Allies' potential strategies. Great Britain's position was dependent on whether or not the Germans defeated the Soviets. Furthermore, if the Germans won, what would the cost be in terms of men and equipment? How long it would take Germany to reconstitute losses to its army also would be a determining factor as to how soon the Germans could concentrate their forces against Great Britain. Great Britain's capacity to wage war was dependent on Russian resistance and the eventual U.S. entry into the war. Smith believed that the earliest Germany could defeat Russia would be 1942, and the earliest the Germans could turn their entire force against the British would be the following year. Coincidentally, U.S. planning had

¹⁷ Ibid, 66, 71

¹⁸ Ibid, 71

projected July 1943 as the earliest date the U.S. would be able to implement the provisions of Rainbow 5.¹⁹

Time was essential to the United States- time to build facilities and train the necessary manpower to fill the military's needs, time needed to convert American industry to a war footing, and most important time to build the shipping and air forces necessary to defeat the Axis. In his report, Wedemeyer underscored that the United States' strategic needs could be met only by building an army of sufficient size to defeat the German ground forces. While this army was being raised and trained, the United States needed to build a navy capable of winning the sea lanes, and construct a merchant marine adequate to the task of transporting and supplying U.S. ground forces during a European land campaign. The third key to winning against the Axis was to build an air force that could establish air superiority over the battlefield and deliver a strategic blow against the enemy's industrial capacity. None of the belligerents faced the problems of the United States in building forces to meet such global commitments.²⁰

Now that Wedemeyer had a basic strategy for committing U.S. forces, he tackled the next problem, determining the size of the military forces and the distribution of the manpower between the services. This determination, an essential building block in analyzing the amount and type of military hardware that U.S. industry needed to produce, and in turn, would indicate the manpower necessary for industrial labor. Realizing that all

¹⁹ Ibid, 71-73.

²⁰ Ibid, 73-77.

the services (army/army air force and the navy/marine corps) would require substantial allocations of resources, Wedemeyer confronted the primary questions in his study. How much manpower could he afford to take from America's industrial capacity for military logistical support and still not disable U.S. troop deployment forces? Furthermore, once he determined the manpower level, would it be adequate to meet the country's overall strategic goals?

To arrive at an answer, Wedemeyer set certain boundaries to his questions. In a life and death struggle, a nation might exercise no limits to the amount of manpower mobilized for its military. The United States certainly did not face this immediate life-threatening situation, but still wanted to end the war as swiftly as possible. To achieve this objective, the country would have to commit the best and brightest men to winning the war; however, Wedemeyer believed that there were limits to the number of the best trained, the best educated, the best disciplined men that could be pulled from society into the military without jeopardizing the nation's long-range survival. One thing seemed certain: to win the war swiftly, the United States would have to commit its best men to the effort. The solution to the problem was to obtain the right number and mix of men that would lead to the swiftest completion of the war without disrupting the internal needs of society. To find the solution, Wedemeyer turned to historical examples of mobilizations by studying all the major wars since those during the era of Gustavus Adolphus.²¹ He found that roughly 10 per cent of a nation's total population could be

²¹ Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden and military leader, fought on the Protestant side in the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). Wedemeyer was interested in Gustavus because the Swedish leader had reorganized the Swedish military establishment and introduced a nationally conscripted army, however,

taken into the military without adversely affecting the country's economy or social fabric.²²

Using an approximate population of one hundred and forty million, Wedemeyer concluded that the United States could afford to draft twelve to fourteen million men into its armed forces. The remaining manpower pool would serve the war industry and agriculture and provide the social network necessary to keep the country's social fabric intact. Having determined the maximum number of men who could be provided for the armed forces, Wedemeyer allocated them between the services. The Navy would receive four million men based on estimates they had provided Wedemeyer. The remaining eight to ten million men would go the Army and the Army Air Forces.²³

With amazing accuracy, Wedemeyer's estimates reflected the actual manpower levels used by the military. If Wedemeyer's study were accurate, there should have been sufficient manpower remaining to provide the labor necessary to expand the war industries to full capacity. Why then, after only eighteen months into the war, did the United States find itself facing a manpower crisis with war industries clamoring for more people to man the machines or risk a halt in critical production? How could this occur when the military was so desperate for men that it was willing to draft middle-age fathers to fill out its

near the end of the war, Sweden's limited manpower forced Adolphus to rely on foreign troops. Because of the shortage of troops, Adolphus perfected a fighting system that increased the fighting potential of his limited infantry. Robert Cowley and Geoffrey Parker, editors, *The Reader's Companion to Military History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), 196-197

²²

Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present*, 78

²³

Ibid, 78-79

combat divisions? The answers can be found in analyzing the methods industry and the military used and misused the country's manpower resources.

CHAPTER II

MOBILIZING INDUSTRIAL MANPOWER

Wedemeyer's plan permitted the use of a maximum of fourteen million men to fill the military's manpower needs without having a serious impact on the nation's social and economic fabric. The remaining manpower would be more than adequate to provide a labor pool for both industry and agriculture and for those organizations serving the country's needs not related to its war effort. By 1943, however, America's wartime industries experienced a shortage of labor in at least two critical areas, the manufacture of aircraft and the construction of merchant ships. This shortage occurred even though the military limited its manpower ceiling to two million men below the level set in Wedemeyer's report. Was Wedemeyer incorrect in his calculation of the country's manpower resources? Had industry misused the labor pool available for its needs, as some critics charged? Or did the fault lie in poor planning by the government or poor execution of the plans already in place?

Planning for Industrial Mobilization

The United States had been chagrined by its efforts to prepare, mobilize, and commit its resources to fighting a major military campaign in the First World War. American industry did not begin to convert to a war effort until after the declaration of war. The time required for industry to retool and gear up its production efforts forced the

American army to train without adequate weapons. Once committed to battle, the military was compelled to use equipment obtained from its allies to supply its armed forces. The fledgling army air force flew French aircraft during the war. The time required for the infant American aircraft industry to gear up to produce military aircraft in sufficient quantities was so great that the first American-built aircraft could not reach Europe in any numbers until the Armistice had already been signed.²⁴

From that experience, American military planners learned that future wars would dictate comprehensive planning of America's resources, including its industrial resources, to fill the military's manpower and equipment needs. During the 1920s, as a result of the chaos created by America's earlier war effort, the War Department's military planning for future wars included an industrial mobilization component. The earliest plans focused their industrial segments on procurement of equipment. The plans estimated the specific amount and types of equipment and munitions needed to meet the army's needs at each stage of its mobilization. There was no realistic planning for how industry would obtain the materials and labor to provide this equipment. While acknowledging that the War Department had an obligation to estimate labor requirements, most of the planning maintained a "hands-off policy," or envisioned that manpower needs would be recruited and supplied through federal employment agencies. These agencies would match the man to the job, much like the military's plans to utilize men to meet its skill needs. Most of these plans envisioned a super agency to handle the problems of mobilizing industry,

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John H. Morrow, Jr., *The Great War in the Air. Military Aviation from 1909 to 1921*, Smithsonian History of Aviation History (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 265-273, 336-343.

supplying resources, and allocating transportation needs. These super agencies matched the scope and control of similar organizations established to correct the confusion caused by the unorganized mobilization in the First World War.²⁵

The War Department continued to improve and update its planning for mobilization throughout the decade of the 1920s. The Army's military planning was seriously impeded during the 1930s by two forces. The first was the Great Depression. Military planners experience an uncertainty in their planning because of the turmoil in industry and labor created by the effects of economic collapse.

A far more serious obstacle to the military planning was the Congressional investigations that directly or indirectly involved industrial mobilization. The first of these investigations resulted from the bitterness in the American public caused by the Great Depression. Congress formed a commission to investigate the military's use of private property for public purposes. The War Policies Commission, as the commission was named, obtained reproductions of the War Department's industrial mobilization plan, and held public hearings on its contents in 1931. The outcome of the hearings seemed to indicate that the military's policy was to control or even conscript labor in a national emergency. Military spokesmen, including Chief of Staff General Douglas MacArthur, testified before the Commission that the War Department had no plans for an emergency labor draft. The Commission's hearings raised the bugaboo of militarism, especially with

²⁵ Byron Fairchild and Jonathan Grossman, *The Army and Industrial Manpower United States Army in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1959; reprint, Washington, D. C. : U. S. Government Printing Office, 1970), 4-5 (page citations are to the reprint edition). Smith, *The Army and Economic Mobilization*, 73-75.

organized labor.²⁶

The public airing of the military's plans forced the War Department to redraft its mobilization plans. The new plan created four super agencies, including selective service, war industry, public relations, and war labor. The agency for war labor was tasked with developing policies to persuade men to voluntarily fill vacancies in industry. In addition, the director was given the task of supervising relations between employers and employees, and resolving labor disputes. To assist the director, an advisory committee was established. Membership on the committee would include at least five members appointed by organized labor. While the plan was acceptable to organized labor, and defused labor's criticism of militarism in the Army's planning, the revised plan was seriously castigated within other branches of the War Department. Many in the War Department felt the plan was designed to protect the interests of organized labor, and not supply the critical labor needed to mobilize war industries. Criticism of the plan also surfaced among Navy representatives who resented their exclusion from the planning. As a result of the criticism, a new plan was developed.²⁷

The new plan, entitled the Industrial Mobilization Plan (IMP), drew criticism from the second Congressional investigation committee. In 1934, Congress began an investigation into war profits in the munitions industry during the First World War. The special Senate committee was headed by Senator Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota. Nye's

²⁶ Ibid, 7-9. Smith, *The Army and Economic Mobilization*, 74.

²⁷ Ibid, 8-11.

committee focused its attention on “the social and economic effects of the proposed wartime controls.” The Nye Committee’s investigation twisted the provisions of IMP to show that the same link between the “merchants of death” (munition makers and Wall Street bankers) and the military existed. That link had “dragged the nation” into the First World War. The committee’s report condemned the IMP as a blueprint for military dictatorship, especially that portion of the plan detailing the commandeering of plants as an emergency measure. To stem the damage done by the Nye Committee, the 1939 version of the plan included in the foreword an assurance that the plan was not intended to change or modify the country’s constitutional process.²⁸

With the approach of World War II, U.S. military planners urgently began to rework the IMP. This time the planning was done in secrecy. The new plan was made public in October, 1939; however, the plan’s appendices, containing the detail planning, were kept secret on the grounds of national security. The planning board intentionally kept portions of the plan secret because they feared antiwar groups would compromise the implementation of the plan’s provisions. A major revision in the plan involved the labor administrator established in earlier plans. The advisory committee was reduced from a ten-member panel to two deputies, one of who would be appointed from organized labor. A second major concession to labor was the establishment of occupational deferments from the selective service. An industrial advisor would be appointed to local draft boards to assist them in deciding who should be deferred. The plan encouraged the establishment

²⁸ Ibid, 12 Smith, *The Army and Economic Mobilization*, 75-76.

of machinery to provide for an equal and voluntary distribution of labor. It identified pro-labor legislation passed during the depression that the military believed might restrict production, and thus would have to be temporarily suspended during a war. The “work or fight” principle was discussed, and its use proposed for special occasions. To control strikes and lockouts, the plan contemplated the use of coercive methods as a means to keep workers on the job. These included the reassignment of workers, loss of industrial deferments, or withholding of jobs for striking workers. Recognizing the severity of these proposals, the plan stressed that these decisions must be exercised by civilians rather than military men.²⁹

While the planners devised and revised their plans depending on the prevailing pressures, the War Department’s attempts to implement the plans were frustrated by President Roosevelt. Assistant Secretary of War Louis Johnson attempted to establish the framework for a super agency to control industrial mobilization. Johnson sought to establish the War Resources Administration from the existing War Resources Board. However, the President was opposed to the super agency concept in the IMP, and proposed a series of agencies sharing power. The proposal to share power made more sense in the Roosevelt administration, where presidential leadership was based on the premise that the President was the ultimate power broker and decision maker over a series of agency heads.

Johnson’s proposal also fueled a Cabinet feud between the isolationist Secretary of

²⁹ Ibid, 15-16.

War Harry Woodring and members of Roosevelt's official family that favored preparedness. Realizing that the public was not receptive to any proposal that might involve the country in the war just beginning in Europe, President Roosevelt tabled the War Resource Board's report, and thus ended any hope that the United States would convert its industry to a war footing prior to a declaration of war. The President's actions killed the gradual mobilization of America's industry and the IMP plan. When the war intensified in 1940, the United States was forced to accelerate its military expansion by expanding the draft, and to try and shift its industry to a war footing to meet the needs of the expanding military and provide lend-lease materials to the Allies. The same problems-- troops training without weapons, confusion in the prioritizing and assignment of raw materials to the appropriate industries, etc.-- that had occurred in World War I would befall America's efforts to mobilize its industry in World War II.³⁰

During the summer of 1940, President Roosevelt appointed Henry L. Stimson to replace Woodring as Secretary of War. With Stimson came Robert P. Patterson, who assumed the Assistant Secretary's job. The chaos caused by the increase in war-related procurement orders, and the increases of labor friction, and the implementation of the Selective Service Act were problems inherited by Patterson. By February, 1941,

³⁰ Ibid, 18-20. In 1940, when Sidney Hillman assumed his duties at the National Defense Advisory Commission, he was asked to review the IMP. Hillman was responsible to insure that an adequately trained supply of labor was available for defense production. Hillman recognized there was a shortage of trained mechanics and skilled artisans. Therefore providing training was primary importance because without the skilled labor the implementation of the IMP would be delayed. War Production Board, *Industrial Mobilization For War: History of the War Production Board and Predecessor Agencies* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947; reprint New York: Greenwood Press, n.d.), 81-82 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

Patterson realized that he needed assistance and created a Labor Section to formulate a War Department labor policy. Additionally, the new Labor Section would coordinate labor policy between the various branches within the War Department, study and resolve problems between labor and industry, and represent the War Department in its relations with other government agencies on matters of labor. In March, 1942, another reorganization within the War Department transferred the Labor Section's duties to the Army Service Forces (ASF). The Personnel Section divided manpower needs into those for the military and those for industrial needs. The Industrial Personnel Division (IDP) was subdivided into three branches: Civilian Personnel, Labor Relations, and Manpower. The Manpower Branch was assigned all matters pertaining to the supply of manpower.³¹

While the military organizations controlling manpower issues underwent a number of reorganizations, civilian organizations were experiencing similar structural changes. Supplying the military manpower needs was the responsibility of the Selective Service Administration. Civilian manpower needs became the responsibility of the War Manpower Commission; however, the continuing and conflicting demands for men for the military and for industry resulted in the transfer of the Selective Service to the War Manpower Commission in December, 1942. The War Manpower Commission was given the responsibility for the use and classification of critical manpower for industry, agriculture, and government employment, but not for the military.³²

³¹ Ibid, 22-26.

³² Fitzpatrick, Edward A., ed., *Selected Service in Wartime: Second Report of the Director of Selective Service, 1941-1942* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), xv

Defining the Industrial Manpower Problem

Both the military and the civilian agencies dealing with manpower faced a myriad of other related issues that would influence the allocation of manpower. Before the U.S. entry into the war, the authorities already experienced difficulty in organizing war industry. Additionally, problems existed in obtaining the cooperation of labor to meet scheduled delivery dates without labor using the production deadlines to force concessions from the manufacturers. There were a number of New Deal labor laws passed during the 1930s would influence the country's efforts to mobilize and utilize its industrial manpower. The Davis-Bacon Act and the Walsh-Healey Act established minimum wages and maximum hours for work performed on government contracts. The Wagner Act required employers to bargain collectively with employees through representatives of the employee's choosing.³³ The laws had some direct influence on war industry contracts, and they created problems for government agents enforcing the contract with employers who refused to comply. Organized labor persuaded the government to issue a statement of principles that all defense work "should comply with federal statutory provisions of the labor standards whenever such provisions are applicable." In addition, the defense contractors were asked to comply with state and local laws pertaining to labor relations, wages, hours, workmen's compensation, safety, and the like.³⁴ Assistant Secretary of

³³ Fairchild and Grossman, *The Army and Industrial Manpower*, 35.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 36

Labor Patterson decided that the statement of principles would govern the issuing of defense contracts. Organized labor now moved to test the government's willingness to enforce the provisions of the statement of principles.

The test came when union leaders charged that the Ford Motor Company was not complying with the provisions of the Wagner Act. The Ford Motor Company was a substantial defense contractor. When the issue was raised, Patterson soft peddled the seriousness of the charges. Patterson defended the government's position of continuing to award contracts to Ford by charging that the awarding of contracts would not be based exclusively on that company's labor relations. How well and how rapidly a company completed a contract influenced the government's decision to award contracts.³⁵

Patterson's statement permitted the War Department to identify certain contracts as exempt from complying with labor laws because the contract was essential to the nation's need. The government clarified its position by requiring contractors submitting bids to include the appropriate clauses pledging their support of the labor laws. The War Department issued Procurement Circular 43 in December, 1940, informing contractors of the new requirements.³⁶

The conflict between the War Department and labor continued. Labor charged that the War Department's policies regarding the Ford contract were seriously threatening the government's labor policy and was undermining the morale of war workers. In

³⁵ Ibid, 37-38.

³⁶ Ibid, 39

response to this pressure, the Army broke off negotiations with Ford for armored reconnaissance cars. The contract was reopened for bids and eventually awarded to a Chrysler subsidiary, even though Ford's bid was lower and had an earlier delivery date. Ford, taking a cue from the labor offensive, complained to Congress that the War Department had pulled the contract to provide a "sop to labor." Ford charged that the actions of the government were intended to blacklist the company out of the defense program.³⁷

Ford Motor's stand was copied by other defense contractors, especially those with essential contracts that the government would have difficulty in replacing, or those that would take too much time to rebid. As a result, the Army reinterpreted Circular 43 to apply only to those companies who were identified as "habitual violators" of the labor provisions. By June, 1941, the circular was quietly buried in the rush of defense spending. President Roosevelt asserted that all defense contracts were issued to meet a national emergency, effectively neutralizing the requirements of the circular. Labor was left with the strike as its last remaining weapon. Throughout 1941, organized labor used the strike to make a headway against the defense industry giants like Ford Motor and Bethlehem Steel. Smaller companies, who were more dependent on government contracts, changed their labor practices to comply with the guidelines of the larger firms.³⁸

Besides the labor problems that hindered the United States' efforts to gear up its

³⁷ Ibid, 39-40.

³⁸ Ibid, 42-43.

war industry, the country experienced the first symptoms of manpower shortage as early as 1941. The expansion of the Army in 1941 impacted the country's efforts to supply manpower for its expanding industry. The Army's Victory Plan did not foresee a general shortage of manpower. The War Department refused any input from civilian authorities on the maximum size of the military. The size of the military was strictly the prerogative of the War Department based on its strategic assessment of the country's needs. When President Roosevelt committed the nation to the role of "arsenal of democracy" in the summer of 1940, the nation began its allocation of manpower toward industrial mobilization. As the war situation intensified in Europe, the Army requested a larger portion of the available manpower to meet its strategic needs.³⁹

It was during this period that the War Department issued the Wedemeyer report. The proposed troop levels forecasted in the report came under immediate attack. The War Production Board⁴⁰ and the War Manpower Commission objected to the proposed levels because they would unbalance the nation's economy, and the proposed size of the army, 8.2 million, would be too large to use effectively. The two civilian agencies and the Selective Service disputed Wedemeyer's numbers. The civilians argued that Wedemeyer's thinking was flawed. Calculating America's industrial labor needs by providing industry

³⁹ Ibid, 34, 45-46.

⁴⁰ Created in January 1942, the War Production Board was designed to direct the strategy of wartime production. It was responsible for assigned priorities to certain industries for scarce raw materials, ration tools and equipment, and attempt to be production and the flow of raw materials in balance. See Jack Goodman, ed., *While You Were Gone. A Report on Wartime Life in the United States* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946), 216-219.

with the military's leftovers was not the proper method for allocating America's manpower resources. What was needed was "a thoroughgoing study of military requirements, civilian requirements, production programs, and manpower resources."⁴¹

The argument about the size of the military and its effects on the industrial labor pool continued after the U.S. entered the war. In 1942, shortages in labor were hidden by production slowdowns caused by scarcities of raw materials. Industries competed for critical materials, such as steel and aluminum, that met the needs of a variety of industrial products. Until the government straightened out the priorities of individual industries, and defined its short-term and long-term production goals, other problems, such as the shortages in labor, were hidden but would surface in 1943.

The United States did not feel the full impact of the war until 1943. The country had spent most of 1942 expanding its industry and developing its military strength. U.S. forces had been sparingly committed to battle. Throughout 1942, draft calls had increased with noticeable consequences on the home front. One significant shift was the change in the labor pool between December, 1940, and December, 1942. The number of men serving in the armed forces increased from 800,000 to 6.2 million. The labor force working in war related industries rose from 1.5 million to 17.5 million. The increase in agricultural workers was not as great, from 8.7 million to 8.9 million. There was an expected decrease in the number of employees in non-war-related industries from 31.5 million to 21.4 million. Self-employed workers declined from 5.9 million to 4.1 million.

⁴¹ Fairchild and Grossman, 47.

The most alarming statistic for those monitoring the labor pool was the decline in the number of unemployed from 7.1 million to 1.5 million.⁴²

Projecting the country's needs through December, 1943, the Selective Service Administration expected the military's size to increase by 4.6 million men to a total of 10.8 million men. The number of war industry workers would also rise by an additional 2.5 million workers, to a total of 20 million men. It was expected that most of this increase would come from a decrease in non-war-related workers. This group was expected to decline by 2.4 million to a level of 19 million. Another expected source of men would come from a decline in the number of self-employed workers. No more than one-half-million workers were expected to be obtained from the ranks of the unemployed. At least one million men would be left in this category, but these were the most difficult to employ. The one-million-man-level included the physical and mentally disabled, the habitually unemployed, and others who were not expected to be able to provide relief from the manpower problems.⁴³

The manpower problems predicted in the Selective Service report caused the government to make another reorganization of its civilian control of the war efforts. In December, 1942, President Roosevelt issued an executive order intended to unify and integrate the various manpower agencies. The order placed all manpower allocation

⁴² Fitzpatrick, *Selective Service in Wartime*, 357.

⁴³ Ibid WPB estimates calculated a shortfall of 5.1 million workers over the same period. See War Production Board, n.d., 414. The WPB warned that the size of the army (10.6 million) would injure the nation's manpower reserves. Analyzing the U.S. shipping capacity available to transport an army, the report recommended that the Army be limited to 7.5 million men.

decisions in the hands of the War Manpower Commission. The Selective Service Administration was transferred to the War Manpower Commission. Military manpower needs would now have to be approved by the Committee. Another consequence for the military was the termination of voluntary enlistments, and an end to their practice of stockpiling men in the enlisted reserves until an acceptable opening could be found in their training programs.⁴⁴ The War Manpower Commission would have the responsibility of determining all civilian and military manpower needs.

Despite the government's attempts to put its manpower allocation house in order, labor shortages occurred in the aircraft industry, in the ship building industry, in mining, and in agriculture during 1943. At the start of the war, organized labor made a no-strike pledge as their commitment to the war effort. By doing so, labor had given up its major means of influencing conditions in the workplace. Labor was forced to revert to production slowdowns and similar restraints to win concessions from employers. Shortly before the U.S. entered the war, the War Department already observed signs of organized labor's efforts to maintain its bargaining position. Army Air Corps investigators identified more than a hundred instances of slowdowns at one plant producing aircraft parts during a one-month period. The machinist unions instituted the slowdowns to protest increased production levels required by management to compensate for a shortage of skilled workers. The Army investigator revealed that essential machinery had been damaged, and that workers were threatened by their coworkers if they did not comply with previously

⁴⁴ Ibid, 360-361.

established and agreed-upon production levels. Although a number of employees were fired, the company officials were reluctant to take more vigorous actions for fear of triggering more labor problems. A war time survey indicated that 17 per cent of workers in Detroit and 4 per cent of the workers in Pittsburgh admitted they were involved in work slowdowns. The union was able to force management, by threatening a strike, to fire workers who exceeded production goals.⁴⁵

Another cause of labor shortages was the practice of featherbedding (maintaining a prescribed employment level). The union insistence on prescribed production levels increased the number of workers needed per unit of output. One of the worst cases occurred at the American Car and Foundry plant in Berwick, Pennsylvania. The company, which manufactured tanks for the Army, streamlined its production process by rearranging its plant layout, improving its machinery, enhancing its flow of supplies, so that it could produce a tank with fewer workers. However, the union insisted that the ratio of assembly line workers must be maintained despite the increase in efficiency in production.⁴⁶

The government reacted to showdowns by attempting to separate incidents that involved legitimate labor issues from subversive activities. Security became a prime concern, and the Army took steps to provide security in the plants to prevent acts of sabotage. A procedure was established to dismiss workers suspected of damaging

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Fairchild and Grossman, *The Army and Industrial Manpower*, 68-70.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 70.

machinery or leading slowdowns.

In late 1942, spot shortages of labor began to occur. The War Manpower Commission recognized that the problem was not caused by an actual shortage of manpower, but rather by the inequity in the availability of labor in certain parts of the country. The government's practice of awarding contracts to employers that already had contracts produced the artificial labor shortages.⁴⁷ Many of these plants were running at maximum capacity, and by placing orders with these companies, the War Department taxed the company's ability to meet the production schedules. The local labor pools had already been drained when these companies expanded to full capacity. Employers found it difficult to recruit additional workers to meet the increased production demands.⁴⁸

Toward the end of 1942, the War Manpower Commission recognized the problem and took steps to minimize the effects of spot labor shortages. A proposed board of review would be created to review the issuance of contracts to those companies experiencing labor shortages. The proposal was opposed by the War Department because it interfered with its procurement functions. The War Department was more concerned with awarding contracts based on the speed of delivery. Receiving the products on time

⁴⁷ Smith, *The Army and Economic Mobilization*, 237. Many of the labor shortage problems were blamed on the Army's procurement efforts. The military's practice of awarding contracts to proven employers caused a great migration of labor to cities where these employers were located. The emigration of labor from rural areas and small towns to industrial centers denuded local communities of farm-workers, skilled and unskilled laborers, and population in general. From May to September, 1942, eighty per cent of contracts were awarded to companies in areas already suffering labor shortages. War Manpower Board, n.d., 423.

⁴⁸ Fitzpatrick, *Selective Service in Wartime*, 77.

was more important than in providing work to areas where there was a surplus of labor. The War Department further objected to the reassignment of contracts because many of the employers already under contract, had specialized equipment and trained workers. The short-sighted policy of the War Department created greater labor problems in 1943, when manufacturers had a backlog of uncompleted contracts without a labor pool to expand their production facilities.⁴⁹

The mobility of the workforce created additional problems. The work force was extremely mobile during World War II. Workers changed jobs for a number of reasons. For example, the high turnover rate at Ford's Willow Run bomber plant was blamed on worker dissatisfaction. Workers were forced to commute thirty miles daily from Detroit or reside in temporary housing and dormitories erected near the plant's rural setting. Most housing was cramped and squalid, and often located miles from shopping, laundry facilities, and schools. Workers were obliged to car pool or ride crowded buses at a cost of 8 to 9 per cent of their daily wages. The company experienced a 50 per cent turnover in the workforce every month. By the end of 1943, the Willow Run plant employed only thirty-five thousand of the estimated fifty-eight thousand employees needed to run the plant efficiently. Absenteeism ran an average of 17 per cent, the highest in the nation.⁵⁰

Many workers in agriculture left for better paying jobs in industry. Miners left the

⁴⁹ Fairchild and Grossman, *The Army and Industrial Manpower*, 116-118.

⁵⁰ Richard R. Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On? The American Home Front, 1941-1945* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1970), 108-109. William L. O'Neill, *A Democracy at War: America's Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), 218-219.

western mining areas for less strenuous work in the ship building or aircraft industries on the West Coast. Large employers like Kaiser Shipyards sent recruiters throughout the rural South, and to Midwestern cities to enroll workers. By 1943, the decline in the number of agriculture workers created a concern within the Department of Agriculture that the number of remaining workers was insufficient to harvest crops at the end of the next growing season. The Department of Agriculture's concerns resulted in Congress establishing a special investigative committee to examine the shortage of agricultural workers and its impact on the national health and security.⁵¹

Manufacturers also lost people to the military, especially employees with unique skills. For example, Boeing Aircraft lost trained aircraft mechanics to the Army Air Force. The military was desperate to obtain qualified men to immediately fill their skilled speciality positions, rather than take the time to fully train an unskilled serviceman. Shipyards lost skilled shipbuilders to the Navy. The military conducted special recruiting campaigns in which employees with specific skills could be recruited. The practice forced companies, such as Boeing, to petition the War Department to end the practice. They argued that a skilled civilian airplane mechanic was just as important in producing aircraft as he would be repairing the same aircraft while he was in uniform.

Numerous people were lost to the labor pool because of deferments for agricultural work. In late 1942, the War Manpower Commission announced that a "critical nationwide condition exists in dairy, livestock, and poultry farm production."

⁵¹ Fairchild and Grossman, *The Army and Industrial Manpower*, 197.

Draft boards were asked to reconsider classifications of registrants working in these areas. To determine the number of men necessary for agricultural employment, an elaborate conversion factor was proposed that measured the amount of labor necessary to care for a unit of livestock. By November, 1942, care for selected crops were included in the scope of agricultural deferments. The agricultural community lobbied Congress to enact legislation regarding agricultural deferments. Senator Millard Tydings attached an amendment to the bill making 18- and 19-year-olds eligible for military service. The Tydings amendment required men deferred for agricultural work to remain at their jobs or face immediate induction, the first instance of the work-or-fight principle.⁵² Employers engaged in agricultural work hailed the Tydings Amendment, not so much for deferring workers, but for the provision which required them to remain on the farm. During 1942, farm labor decreased by 1.3 million men. Most of these men were lost to either the military or better paying jobs in the war industry. Now men who had received a farm deferment risked being drafted before they could obtain another defense industry job.⁵³

By 1943, agriculture faced a scarcity of labor. Experts estimated that at least 1.5 million additional men above the 1942 levels would be needed. At least 250,000 fourteen-year-old farm boys would be available, and another 50,000 older men were expected to

⁵² Prior to the passage of the Tydings Amendment, the agricultural leaders in the South used their influence with local draft boards to obtain draft deferments for agricultural workers. The decentralized organization of the Selective Service and other agencies responsible for allocating manpower allowed authorities in agricultural communities to use the system to their advantage. Charles D. Chamberlain III, "On the Train and Gone': Worker Mobility in the Rural Southwest During World War II, 1939-1945," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 53 (April, 2000) : 438.

⁵³ Fitzpatrick, *Selective Service in Wartime*, 202-208.

come out of retirement. Additional labor would be supplied by women, and by hiring temporary town residents, migrant workers, and prisoners-of-war.⁵⁴

Perhaps the greatest factor contributing to the manpower crisis was the vast pool of persons unemployed and who were not seeking work. There were approximately 44 million people, 80 per cent of them women, who fell within this group. Workers too old or physically unable to contribute to the war effort were included in this category. The number of people not seeking employment was as great as the total work force already involved in the war effort. By 1943, the reserve of available labor had been reduced to about one million persons, almost half of whom were women.⁵⁵

Two examples illustrating the effects of the manpower shortage occurred on the West Coast. Shipbuilding and the aircraft industry literally expanded overnight and absorbed much of the excess local labor. The increased production demands on these companies and the difficulty in obtaining workers forced these employers to fall behind their production schedules early in 1943. In February, 1943, representatives of Boeing Aircraft Company warned government officials that they would not meet production schedules set for that summer unless the shortage of manpower could be rectified. Other aircraft manufacturers soon echoed Boeing's concerns. Officials from the War Manpower Commission investigating the allegations concluded that the alleged shortage was the result of a high rate of turnover of workers caused by the company's employment

⁵⁴ Ibid, 208-209.

⁵⁵ Fairchild and Grossman, *The Army and Industrial Manpower*, 155.

practices. Hiring additional workers would be the same as “pouring water down a rat hole” as long as the poor labor practices continued. What was needed, argued the inspectors, was a comprehensive survey of the plant’s use of its existing labor, and a determination on how those workers could be more effectively employed.⁵⁶

However, the War Manpower Commission’s report disagreed with the report submitted by the War Department based on its own investigation. The latter’s report attributed the problem to a true shortage of skilled labor, and not merely to employee turnover. The conflicting information in each of the reports illustrated the philosophical dispute between the two agencies.

While the aircraft industry struggled to resolve its manpower shortage, the West Coast shipbuilding industry suffered similar problems. Labor problems in the shipbuilding industry surfaced as early as 1940, when President Roosevelt began the nation’s rearmament by announcing a building program designed to produce a two-ocean navy. The emphasis on building combat naval vessels caused the shipbuilding companies to raid other shipyards for scarce labor. By October, 1940, the problem threatened to destabilize the rearming effort. The President returned to a solution that had been utilized in the First World War when he was Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Roosevelt ordered the creation of the Shipbuilding Labor Stabilization Committee. The Committee divided the country

⁵⁶ Ibid, 131-132. Labor-management problems also caused problems at the Willow Run plant. Workers chafed under Henry Ford’s no smoking policy and complained about price gouging in the plant cafeteria. The turn over caused by the employee dissatisfaction contributed to production slowdowns because the company was forced to continually train new workers. See Lingeman, *Don’t You Know There’s A War On?*, 109-110.

into four districts (Pacific, Gulf, Great Lakes, and Atlantic). Each district would recruit labor from its area alone. To further stabilize the migration of labor from one area to another for higher wages, the shipbuilders entered into a Master Agreement to establish a base wage for all workers. The unions accepted the agreement in exchange for a requirement that employees must join the union as a condition of employment.⁵⁷

The Shipbuilding Labor Stabilization Committee was intended to prevent the pirating of labor from one section of the country to another. Yet the problem still persisted within each district as shipyards competed with each other for scarce skilled labor. One solution was to form local agreements. Henry J. Kaiser and other San Francisco Bay area shipbuilders joined with the union to form a Shipbuilding Stabilization Committee. The organization was designed to increase production, control labor migration, and resolve labor problems. The union agreed to a no-strike pledge in exchange for a maintenance of membership provision that made the shipyards a closed shop. In addition, the Bay Area shipbuilders agreed to the highest wages on the West Coast. Under the agreement, the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Shipbuilders and Helpers of America gained control of hiring, seniority, and advancement of its members.⁵⁸

The most noticeable change in the shipyards was the shift from skilled to unskilled

⁵⁷ Gerald D. Nash, *World War II and the West Reshaping the Economy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 57.

⁵⁸ Marilyn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush Oakland and the East Bay in World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 34.

labor. Henry J. Kaiser revolutionized shipbuilding by developing assembly-line and prefabricate construction techniques for building merchant ships. The new construction methods relied more on semiskilled and unskilled workers than on skilled craftsmen to complete the vessel.⁵⁹ The emphasis on unskilled labor should have eased the shipbuilders' labor demands. However, the massive shipbuilding program undertaken after the war began demanded an increase in the number of workers that any surplus labor was soon absorbed.

To meet these new manpower demands, the Federal government and the employers imported workers from out of town. The War Manpower Commission and the U.S. Employment Service took over California's state employment office and began to redirect unemployed labor to areas where there was a shortage. The prewar policy preventing the recruitment of workers from outside an employer's area vanished. Large numbers of workers were taken from agriculture and the mining areas of Northern California. Once the small towns had been drained of underutilized labor, the shipbuilders began to recruit in urban areas, particularly in the city of Los Angeles. The Los Angeles city government resented the recruitment drives because the city's aircraft industries were expanding and needed additional labor. To dissuade Kaiser and other shipbuilders from recruiting in their area, city fathers of Los Angeles County announced the "work for drunks" program. Vagrants and petty offenders were given suspended sentences in exchange for signing up to work in the shipyards. Soon the Los Angeles recruitment

⁵⁹ Nash, *World War II and the West*, 42.

drives were experiencing a 50 per cent attrition rate. Bus loads of drunks arrived at the shipyards, so many that the local jails could not handle the output. The tactic worked for the shipbuilders suspended the recruiting drives, and turned to other parts of the country to obtain new labor.⁶⁰

Kaiser employed more than 170 recruiters to visit Midwestern and southern cities in a major recruiting drive throughout 1942 and 1943. The company provided train fare to the West Coast to prospective recruits. At its peak in 1943, the Kaiser recruitment scheme sent at least one hundred men a day from four major shipment centers located in Minneapolis, Kansas City, Chicago, and Memphis. Recruiters were paid by the number of men shipped and often were unscrupulous in the techniques they used to persuade workers to migrate to the west coast. Almost 100,000 workers were convinced to migrate, but many defected along the way or quit after working for a short time. Less than one quarter of the workers hired in this fashion remained with the company for more than one year.⁶¹

The high turnover rate prompted Kaiser to form an investigating committee to determine the sources of the high attrition rate. Their investigation revealed that some of the migrant workers used the recruitment drive to obtain a “free ride” to California. Like the shortcomings in the Los Angeles recruiting drive, the company found that a number of the candidates selected were troublemakers, mentally ill, or alcoholics. However, the majority of workers who left Kaiser’s employment did so because of the hardships and

⁶⁰ Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, 36-38.

⁶¹ Ibid, 38-39. Fairchild and Grossman, *The Army and Industrial Manpower*, 39.

difficulties in adjusting to wartime living conditions. Others expected to learn a skilled craft, and were disillusioned by mass-production shipbuilding using unskilled labor.⁶²

The investigation also revealed that men recruited from the South were more likely to quit than those recruited from the North. Besides the standard complaints of homesickness and high cost of living, southern whites were more likely to resist mingling with blacks and women hired by the company to make up for the labor shortages. The turnover rate averaged between 10 per cent and 15 per cent each month. Of those that left their jobs, 26 per cent left for other jobs. The military took another 13 per cent. Others left because of illness, poor housing, or simply because they were homesick for their families.⁶³

Disillusioned with the recruiting efforts, Kaiser set the precedent for Bay Area shipbuilders by hiring local blacks and women in late 1942. The Boilermakers Union resisted the company's efforts to hire minorities. As the labor shortage became more acute in 1943, the unions gave in on the hiring issue because of the pressures of meeting war production schedules. Attracted by the promise of a decent paying job, women and men migrated to the West Coast shipyards in equal numbers. At its peak, the shipyards employed 30,000 women, fully 27 per cent of their workforce.⁶⁴

⁶² Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, 39-40.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 44-45.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 44-47.

By the end of 1942, the Selective Service issued a report which forecasted potential problems involving manpower that they predicted would have to be addressed in 1943. The report warned that without imposing limitations on the size of the army, America's manpower resources would be severely depleted. The report suggested that the limited manpower reserves be conserved, and if their use was necessary, a balance between the needs of the military and that of industry must be exercised. Women and minorities were the most extensive reserve of manpower not fully employed. The number of women in the workforce increased from 12 million to 18.2 million between 1940 and 1944. However, the number of women entering the durable manufacturing sector, including steel, machinery, shipbuilding, aircraft, and auto factories, was only 1.7 million over that same period. Only one in six employed women worked in the war sector.⁶⁵ In addition to expected problems in agriculture, the report recognized that the spot labor problems that were occurring would continue to get worse in the next year.⁶⁶

Summarizing the problem, the report stated the 1943 labor problems facing the nation included an increase in the armed forces from 6,200,000 to 10,800,000, or an additional 4,600,000 men, or more than 383,000 men per month. Secondly, the number of war workers would have to be increased from 17.5 million to 20 million to meet industry's expansion plans. Thirdly, while it was anticipated that full-time agricultural workers

⁶⁵ D'Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 72.

⁶⁶ Fitzpatrick, 355-357.

would remain at practically the same level of 8,900,000, there would be a need for workers for special projects, particularly the next year's harvest. An additional two million workers, consisting of women, high-school students, city workers, and men furloughed from the armed forces would be needed for these special projects.⁶⁷ The total increase in war-related and military personnel was estimated at just more than seven million. Reducing the number of non-war workers and the self-employed, and adding additional labor from the ranks of the unemployed would only account for 3.5 million men and women of the needed seven million. Obtaining the additional labor would be the challenge the country would face in 1943.⁶⁸

Attempting a Solution to the Industrial Manpower Shortage

A number of solutions were attempted as the result of the manpower crisis. The government recognized that one of the problems was the imbalance in the distribution of the labor pool. The War Department tended to provide new contracts or extend existing contracts with proven companies. Many of these companies were located in established areas where the pool of available surplus labor had been reduced during the years of the depression. To meet the new production levels, the companies expanded to maximum capacity. However, running at maximum capacity, employers found that even if it was possible to increase the existing plant facilities, there was little chance of obtaining additional workers from the numerically depressed labor pool.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Ibid, 357.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 357-360.

The government's solution to this problem was the establishment of GOCO plants. The GOCO plants (for government-owned contractor-operated) addressed two serious shortages. A shortage of risk capital inhibited many plants from building new facilities. The government would build the facility and allow the companies to operate the plants for the duration of the war. At the war's conclusion, each leasing company would be given the option to purchase the facility or return control of it back over to the government.

The second problem, that of a shortage of labor, was also addressed by the government's proposal. GOCO plants would be built in areas where there was an excess of labor or in areas where the majority of the labor pool was working in non-war-related industries. Many of the aircraft plants were headquartered on the West Coast near their manufacturing facilities. The government built facilities for the aircraft industry and located them throughout the Midwest, where the labor pool worked in agriculturally related industries. Although the first companies utilizing the government-built facilities were often manufacturers of critical small parts to larger industries, larger industries would soon move their manufacturing and assembly plants to the government-owned facilities. For example, Boeing Aircraft built its new B-29 bomber in a GOCO assembly plant in Omaha, Nebraska, while it continued to build B-17 bombers on the west coast.⁶⁹

In addition to moving the work to where the labor was, other schemes were tried by Boeing Aircraft to deal with the labor shortage in its plants. The U.S. entry into the war caused a rapid expansion of Boeing's Seattle facilities, which absorbed most of the

⁶⁹ Ibid, 129-131.

available labor supply. By 1943, the pool of unemployed labor was gone, and the resulting shortages threaten aircraft production schedules. The War Department's first solution was to reduce the number of contracts offered to subcontractors in the area, and move that work to areas where the labor pool was plentiful. The surplus labor then could be absorbed by the Boeing plants, which would allow them to meet their schedules. However the plan was widely criticized within the local community, and as a result, local congressmen objected strenuously to the loss of work in their districts.⁷⁰

Critics felt the proposed plan was wasteful. The Boeing Company had built a working relationship and trust with its subcontractors. These same contractors had worked so closely with the aircraft giant over the years that their relationship was more than contractor-subcontractor, but a working partnership. Boeing knew the quality of the work produced by its subcontractors, and transferring work to new, inexperienced companies would cause work slowdowns as much as the shortage of labor. The critics included officials in the War Department responsible for procurement. According to Assistant Secretary John J. McCloy, the practice of finding new suppliers for the critical air craft parts was "a wasteful practice, one that interfered with essential procurement, caused delays in deliveries, worked severe hardship on the contractors, and all in all was one of the least effective methods of alleviating labor shortages."⁷¹

⁷⁰ Ibid, 133.

⁷¹ Ibid. McCloy notified the head of the War Manpower Commission Donald Nelson that interrupting the established relationships between Boeing and its traditional subcontractors would cause delays in meeting production schedules because the aircraft giant would need a break-in period to become familiar with the quality of work produced by the new contractors.

The local community went beyond merely criticizing the proposed contract transfer. Local businesses, facing the loss of revenue, cooperated to find additional labor sources. Additionally, the officials at Boeing established a special projects team to attempt to reduce the competition between local defense contractors for the scarce labor that remained in the area. The Boeing team began to look for new sources of labor, and to reduce the turnover rate among current employees.

A major obstacle to resolving the problem was the myriad of organizations involved in finding a solution, and their conflicting views as to the cause of the problem. The Army blamed the War Manpower Commission because the labor supply to the aircraft industry was too restrictive. The commission, in turn, blamed the labor shortage on the assignment of labor to higher priority industries, such as ship building, which also competed for labor in the Seattle area. The commission also blamed the loss of labor on low wages and poor labor practices at Boeing. Boeing blamed the production problems on subversives, the company term for labor agitators.⁷²

Regardless of the causes, by June 1943, the Boeing Company needed 2,300 workers to meet its current workload, and an additional 8,500 employees to meet its future commitments. The Boeing Special Projects team was authorized by the War Manpower Commission to recruit workers outside the Seattle area. To encourage workers to transfer, the company offered to provide free transportation to Seattle, and paid a ninety-dollar subsistence allowance to new recruits. Both costs would be charged

⁷² Ibid, 134.

to the Army. Still, the company could not obtain the necessary recruits. Boeing's major competition for labor, the Seattle shipyards, paid almost thirty cents an hour more in wages. Boeing was forced to raise its wage levels to effectively attract new workers.⁷³

Although recruiting new workers solved one-half of Boeing's labor problems, reducing the rate of worker turnover and absenteeism was equally important. Boeing was one of the industries that suffered from skilled employees leaving to join the military. The Army further exacerbated the problem by targeting Boeing's employees for recruitment. The problem was so bad that manpower officials asked the War Department to suspend recruiting on the west coast. The War Department agreed to a two-month suspension for aircraft workers. Eventually, the labor shortage caused the Selective Service to reevaluate its occupational deferment policy.⁷⁴

The Special Project team identified numerous reasons why the turnover rates were so high at Boeing. Many of the problems were symptomatic of conditions in war industries across the country. Dissatisfaction over housing, working conditions, and transportation headed the list of issues concerning employees. Emergency wartime housing had been built for Boeing's workers, but many workers could not obtain furniture for up to six months. Wartime workers were frustrated by standing in line for services. Transportation systems had been taxed to maximum capacity.

The Special Project team instituted a number of immediate changes. The War

⁷³ Ibid, 135.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 136.

Department was persuaded to provide furniture and linen to new workers attempting to set up homes. The Seattle transportation system was revamped to provide express routes to the plant. Perhaps the most revolutionary changes were made in conditions in the plant. Childcare facilities were established to accommodate working mothers. Expenses for the daycare were charged to the Army. Other improvements included the remodeling of the plant's eating facilities.⁷⁵

Correcting physical conditions in the plant did not correct the major problem at the Boeing plant. Labor relations were judged by the Special Project team to be the greatest problem at the plant. Boeing responded to the criticism by hiring a labor management specialist to address issues with the union. In exchange for management's attempts to improve labor relations, the union toned down its inflammatory attacks against company officials. By early fall, the changes implemented by the company and the government reversed the manpower losses experienced by Boeing.⁷⁶

The labor shortages experienced by Boeing occurred at all of the West Coast aircraft plants. A total of 95,000 aircraft were scheduled to be produced in 1943, but the labor shortage lowered these estimates to only 80,000 planes. The lower estimates prompted the War Department to begin an investigation. Certainly the causes for labor problems at Boeing were symptomatic at all of the facilities. The investigation revealed that 20,000 workers left their jobs in the aircraft industry every month. The study also

⁷⁵ Ibid, 136-137.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

showed that more than 45 per cent of all women and 39 per cent of all men hired in the industry left before one year's service was completed. The study revealed that men left their jobs because of personal reasons, working conditions, or because they had been drafted. Most women left because of personal reasons.⁷⁷

The investigation proposed a number of solutions to correct the labor problems experienced by the aircraft industry. The report recommended that all aircraft workers be deferred from the draft, and that those aircraft workers already enlisted by the Army should be released and returned to industry. The industry was encouraged to look for workers in areas not previously touched, such as sixteen- and seventeen-year-old high school students. Another solution was to freeze employees at their jobs. Should a worker leave his job, he would have to obtain a release certificate before getting another job. The aircraft industry was encouraged to recruit workers from outside the area. The government would need to continue to assist defense industries by providing improved amenities for employees. The report warned that if the proposed changes were not implemented, aircraft production would continue to fall behind production schedules.⁷⁸

As a result of the report, the Area Production Urgency Committee was created.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 139-142. In a survey conducted in Pacific coast aircraft plants from January 1943 until June 1943, men were found to leave their jobs for the following reasons: 26.3% left for military service, 4.6% quit because of their health, 27.3% because of working conditions, 3.1% left because of living conditions, 30.7% resigned for personal reasons, and 8.0% were dismissed. Women during the same period left for the following reasons: 1.4% to join the military, 9.4% for health reasons, 20.8% left because of working conditions, 4.2% for problems with living conditions, 57.8% because of personal reasons, and 6.4% were dismissed

⁷⁸ Ibid, 144-145.

The committee was composed of representatives of the various government agencies involved in war production. To streamline the production problems, including labor shortages which had become the chief production bottleneck, the committee reviewed all contracts that would demand an increase in employment. The committee identified employers within their area conducting war-related production, and prioritized their importance to the war effort. Each company was assigned a fixed manpower ceiling. The plants were classified by importance. Class I plants were permitted to increase the workforce. Class II plants could retain their current workforce levels and replace workers who left their employment. Class III plants could not hire workers, even to replace workers who left, and they might be required to reduce their workforce to supply labor for class I or class II employers. The committee also had the power to transfer contracts from one area to another if labor shortages forced a delay in meeting production schedules.⁷⁹

Similar area stabilization plans were successful on the East Coast. The Connecticut Plan was an “exclusive hiring plan” to deal with labor shortages in the brass industry. The plan shifted workers into plants experiencing the tightest labor problems. In the Buffalo Controlled Referral Plan, employers agreed to hire employees only through the U.S. Employment Service. The Employment Service referred workers to companies on a priority list. A worker could refuse the referral, as could the company. However, if the company rejected too many workers, had their names from the priority list.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Ibid, 146-149. Robert H. Connery, *The Navy and Industrial Mobilization in World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 309-310.

⁸⁰ War Production Board, n.d., 706-710. The stabilization plans were eventually used in Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, Hartford, Akron and Detroit.

Once employers had been identified as to how essential they were to the war industry, the next step was to classify workers as to their importance to the war effort. Beginning in 1942, the War Manpower Commission identified eleven occupations and twenty-nine industries that were essential to the war effort. Local draft boards were notified that men working in a specific occupation or for an exempted war industry were to be deferred from the draft for occupational reasons if the worker could not be replaced. As the labor shortage deepened, the Selective Service subdivided men who received occupational deferments between those men with dependents and those without dependents.⁸¹

Occupational deferments were intended to relieve the labor shortage in critical skills and in essential industries. However, the Selective Service Administration quickly found that war industries used the occupational deferments to stockpile workers. The industries, anticipating war contracts that would require them to expand their workforce, kept surplus workers on the payroll performing nonessential jobs. To correct the problem, the Selective Service withdrew the industrial deferments, but the shortage of critical workers forced them to reinstate the policy. A related problem occurred when men registered at their local draft boards and then moved away to work in war industries. The employer would furnish the employee with a letter for his local draft board stating that the registrant was employed in an industry identified as essential to the war effort. The local draft board was unable to determine if the employee was performing essential war work at the plant, or if

⁸¹ Fitzgerald, *Selective Service in Wartime*, 113-118. A report indicated that "one out of every nine jobs in America were classified as vital to war production." War Production Board, n.d., 418-419.

that employee was just on the payroll as a surplus worker. To correct this problem, the Selective Service Administration required all migrant workers to register again with a draft board near their place of employment.

Stockpiling workers was not confined to manufacturing industries. Many of the farm communities reported labor shortages for fictitious farms to get the War Manpower Commission to allocate more workers for harvesting crops. The increase in labor, and the illegal importation of Mexican migrant workers, particularly in the Southwest, permitted farmers to maintain low wages.⁸²

The government explored other sources of labor to help farmers. Temporary workers were utilized to handle short-term labor shortages until permanent workers could be employed. The government recruited workers from Jamaica to help in harvesting crops. The Mexican government was approached about providing immigrant workers for agricultural work in the Southwestern States. The importation of farm labor began with requests by farmers for assistance in harvesting a particular crop. By the end of the war, the Mexican government was asked to provide 250,000 workers annually to help with the harvesting.⁸³

Foreign labor was used in other areas of the economy where employers found it difficult to maintain a stable workforce. Fifty thousand Mexicans were employed on American railroads. The Mexican government agreed to provide the requested manpower

⁸² Chamberlain, "On the Train and Gone," : 436.

⁸³ Ibid, 79

provided the workers did not have to work in states, such as Texas, where they were discriminated against. The foreign workers formed a mobile reserve, especially in agriculture, that could be shifted to fill temporary, spot labor shortages.⁸⁴

Men already in the army were often used to provide labor in areas where there was a critical shortage. When the Western States' strategic metal mines experienced a shortage of labor because of the exodus to the West Coast shipyards, the War Department at first attempted to recruit Mexican miners to replace the lost manpower. The War Department quickly realized that to permit miners to immigrate to the U.S. would hamper Mexican production. The U.S. war effort was already using the full production output from the Mexican mines. To meet the demands for labor, the Army agreed to release approximately 4,300 men from active service so that they might work in the nonferrous mines.⁸⁵

The Industrial Personnel Division (IDP) was given the responsibility of transferring active duty military personnel to work in critical civilian jobs. At first, the transfers involved individual soldiers who had been removed from an essential job that the employer was having difficulty replacing, but the labor shortage in the mines was the first instance of a mass release of soldiers. Once the Army permitted its manpower to be tapped, the War Department found it difficult to resist further demands from industry. Soldiers were released to provide manpower to bring in the harvest. Other soldiers were asked to perform part-time work in their off-duty hours. Other military units had their training

⁸⁴ Fairchild and Grossman, *The Army and Industrial Manpower*, 177-180.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 178. War Production Board, n.d., 424-425.

suspended to work in agriculture. Besides mining and agriculture, the Army was asked to provide men for the aircraft industry and shipbuilding, two areas that chronically experienced labor problems.⁸⁶

The Army futilely objected to the release of men to industry, but the War Production Board insisted that the military was the last reservoir of skilled men. Reluctantly the Army released more than 4,500 men to the copper mines in 1943. Merchant seamen, who had lost their jobs after the outbreak of the war in Europe and had been drafted into the Army, were released to man the new merchant marine being built in 1943. The Army authorized 7,500 men to be released from service to work in the West Coast aircraft industry. Many of those released were kept in the Enlisted Reserve, where they could be recalled into active service if necessary.⁸⁷

The continued requests for the release of servicemen to work in war industry forced the War Department to prioritize establishments based on their essential nature to the war effort. Four industries received a “must” rating: tire, forge and foundry, cotton duck, and heavy ammunition. The “must” industries were permitted to request specific former employees by name for release from the military. The Army was also required to pair soldiers with specific job skills to industries requesting someone in those skills. Sometimes the Army found it difficult to get men to leave the military to take low-paying jobs in industry. The Army resolved the problem by keeping the soldiers in uniform and ordering

⁸⁶ Ibid, 178-180.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 182-183.

them to perform the civilian jobs.⁸⁸

War Department civilian and military leaders objected to the furloughing of soldiers for use in industry. Employers gave the program mixed reviews. When the Army supplied skilled men in sufficient numbers, employers applauded the success of the program. However, when unqualified men were sent, or when soldiers resisted the transfer, company officials reported the program as a failure. Many of the soldiers who were involuntarily transferred hated the system. They were subjected to military discipline and could not leave their jobs. Often they were given the worst jobs on the worst shifts, and their performance reflected their displeasure. Labor unions objected to the military workforce because they felt it weakened their bargaining position with employers. Labor organizations in closed shops forced soldiers working in their facilities to join the union. The War Department elected to transfer soldiers who refused to join the union if the issue was raised. The program was not very successful in providing additional manpower. By 1945, the War Department estimated that not more than 17,000 soldiers had been transferred to the industrial labor pool.⁸⁹

Another source of potential manpower was the thousands of German and Italian prisoners of war. The number of prisoners interned in the United States rose sharply in 1943 from approximately three thousand men in March to more than 163,000 by September. The use of prisoners of war was restricted by provisions in the Geneva

⁸⁸ Ibid, 184-185.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 188-189.

Prisoner of War Convention of 1929. Only privates were permitted to perform work, and they could not work in jobs that were “unhealthful, dangerous, or directly related to war operations.” Use of prisoners was further hindered by the location of camps. Prisoners of war camps were located at least 75 miles away from the coast and 150 miles away from the Mexican and Canadian borders. Furthermore, the camps could not be located near shipyards, aircraft manufacturing plants, and similar essential war industries. Another factor limiting the use of prisoners was the inadequate numbers of military police available to guard them when they were away from their camps. The conditions on their use forced the government to restrict the prisoners use to harvesting crops, and to special projects like building railroad right of ways. The unions, fearing competition for jobs for their members, resisted the use of prisoners of war. Objecting to the use of prisoners because of possible acts of sabotage, and because of the impact their work would have on the American worker’s moral and productivity, the unions forced the War Department to rethink its policy. Eventually the War Department agreed to use the prisoners only as a labor source of last resort.⁹⁰ Most prisoners were used in agriculture, where there was little unionization.

Reaction to the use of prisoners varied across the country. Many workers, especially in industry, objected to having prisoners working alongside of them. Some employers, such as the Eastman Kodak Company, refused to use prisoners to protect their trade secrets. Prisoners were used in one of the four “must” programs. By 1944, about

⁹⁰ Ibid, 189-193.

4,000 prisoners were employed in the forge and foundry industries. Prisoners' greatest contribution was the reduction of temporary and seasonal shortages of agricultural labor. The real impact of their labor was never measured by the War Department. While the War Department can account for the number of prisoners employed, the amount of work actually performed was never determined.

The government also attempted to use the labor of conscientious objectors. Men who were exempted from military service were required to be employed in non-war-related work where they would free up men for the military or for use in war industries. Conscientious objectors who refused service work were sent to camps operated by the Selective Service Administration. Many conscientious objectors worked in state mental hospitals, correctional institutes, general hospitals, and in agriculture. Of an estimated 18,000 conscientious objectors, one-third refused service and were confined for the duration of the war. The remainder performed service work.⁹¹

Perhaps the greatest untapped source of labor was the millions of women who remained at home. The 1940 census indicated that there were more than 37 million women not in the labor force. The census revealed that 56 per cent (28.5 million) were homemakers, almost 9 per cent (4.4 million) were in school, and 4.5 per cent (2.2 million) were unable to work. Excluding the elderly, physically disabled, and others who could not work, the census indicated that more than 28 million women were available for the labor pool. Many of the women had no industrial skills. The Selective Service's Report

⁹¹ Fitzpatrick, *Selective Service in Wartime*, 268-270. For statistics see Michael C. C. Adams, *The Best War Ever America and World War II* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 78

cautioned that the number of women available in a labor pool reserve had to be used carefully. Of the 28 million women presumed to be available for employment, almost 23 million were married and not likely to join the work force.⁹²

Attracting married women to the workforce required employers to overcome a number of restraints. Fully two-thirds of the married women between the ages of 18 and 44, who were not in the work force had one or more children under the age of ten. When the Kaiser Shipbuilding Company began to employ women in large numbers, the company had to deal with the issue of childcare. The company built childcare facilities at the plant and permitted women time during their shift to visit their children. Married women were further restrained from joining the workforce by the cultural perception that married women belonged at home, and that it was the responsibility of men to earn the paycheck.⁹³ Other families opposed a second income for fear that they would earn enough money to require them to pay income tax. At that time, a family's income had to exceed \$1200 per year before they had to pay income tax.⁹⁴

⁹² Ibid, 391-394

⁹³ Although D'Ann Campbell challenges the idea that women were restricted from entering the workforce because of the single bread winner bias, most of the women entering the workforce during World War II did not make careers away from being a homemaker. See Campbell, *Women at War with America*, 104-137. For the debate on whether or not women should be made to return to the kitchen after the war, see Goodman, *While You Were Gone*, 278-281, and Sherrie A. Kossoudji and Laura J. Dresser, "Working Class Rosies: Women Industrial Workers during World War II," *Journal of Economic History* 52 (June 1992), 431-446. Kossoudji and Dresser argue that single women entering the higher paying jobs of war industry were reluctant to return to the home after the war, and in many instances were forced to give up their jobs.

⁹⁴ Fitzpatrick, *Selective Service in Wartime*, 395.

In examining the potential use of women as a source of labor, American experts reviewed the practices of the British government. In 1941, Great Britain had passed a National Service Act, which gave the government the power to draft all women between the ages of 18 and 50 into the uniformed services, with the exception of married women with children. Women were registered for the draft the same as men. Women were called to duty and given the option of military duty or work in a war industry. By 1942, more than seven and one-half million women of the seventeen million registrants were either in uniform or employed in defense jobs.⁹⁵

U.S. manpower experts realized that major hurdles would have to be cleared before the British model could be applied in America. First of all, the government would have to overcome the argument that a woman's place was in the home. Secondly, changes would have to be made to induce women to want to voluntarily join the workforce. The objections from the union against having women members in their trade unions would have to be overturned. A temporary suspension of the membership restrictions for the duration of the war was the compromised worked out between the government and unions. A second concern, equal pay for equal work, was never met. Women continued to be paid less than men throughout the war. A third issue, that of promoting women to team leaders and managers, received mixed results. Few women were promoted to front line supervision positions because of the resentment from their male co-workers.⁹⁶ Housing for

⁹⁵ Ibid, 398-401.

⁹⁶ Johnson, *Second Gold Rush*, 63.

single women living away from home was another concern that had to be addressed by employers. Many companies assisted employees in obtaining housing, or had the government build new housing to attract and keep married workers. Single workers usually had to fend for themselves. As the war progressed, this policy changed. The increased numbers of migrant workers, men traveling without their families, and single men and women, forced the companies to build dormitories to provide cheap housing for the influx of new workers.

The year that saw the greatest influx of women into the manufacturing workforce was 1943. Women workers increased by 77 per cent in the Ford plants and by 139 per cent in General Motors plants. Many of the women entering the industrial sector were white. Initially, black women did not enter the industrial workforce except as “janitoresses or restroom matrons.” Black women seeking employment outside of these areas suffered from a dual prejudice because of their race and their gender. Before 1943, many of the women employed in the manufacturing sector were under the age of forty, but the crisis caused employers to rethink this policy. Management now opened production jobs to women over the age of forty. Aircraft manufacturers found that older women were adept at jobs that permitted them to sit. Jobs such as quality inspectors appeared perfect for older women, who performed the job more dependably than younger workers.⁹⁷

Women were hired for skilled positions as more men were drafted into the army. Typically women working in a plant were concentrated in a limited number of jobs. By

⁹⁷ Campbell, *Women at War With America*, 113-115.

1943, this had changed, and women worked at both skilled and unskilled jobs. The most dangerous jobs, such as those in mining and construction, or jobs that required strength were still reserved for men.⁹⁸

Many of the skilled jobs previously monopolized by men were broken down into operations that a semiskilled or unskilled laborer could do without much strength, training, or experience. Women were assigned these jobs, while the more complex jobs were left to craftsmen. The practice of simplifying jobs allowed employers to hire more women for manufacturing jobs. However, employing women had its drawbacks. Employers found that many women would only work a select number of hours. Women had to balance work with their responsibilities at home. The split responsibilities caused some managers to believe that women did not take their jobs seriously and could not do the work as well as men.⁹⁹

Women were also employed in a highly publicized program called the Women's Land Army. More than 750,000 women volunteered to work on farms performing tasks normally handled by men. The program was featured in magazines and became a film short to improve wartime morale. Women also took over traditional male jobs in the service industries, such as driving taxis, dispatches, and railroad conductors. However, the majority of women entering the workforce entered into the traditional roles reserved for women. The expansion of wartime bureaucracy created thousands of additional

⁹⁸ Ibid, 115-116.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 116-117.

administrative and secretarial jobs that were filled by women.¹⁰⁰

While women made great strides in entering areas of the workplace previously reserved exclusively for men, many employers still felt that men were more productive and therefore expanded the opportunities for another group of under utilized labor, the Afro-American males.

Besides women, the second greatest source of unused labor was minority groups, particularly Afro-Americans. West Coast employers, desperate to tap any source of under utilized labor, recruited heavily in the rural South. Fully 80 per cent of Afro-Americans working on the West Coast immigrated from four Southern states: Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana. More than 200,000 migrant farm laborers of the approximate 350,000-400,000 laborers immigrated from Texas between 1941 and 1943. The loss of migrant farm labor was so great in Texas that officials petitioned the War Manpower Commission to suspend the recruiting of labor in their area for fear that the decrease in labor would force a rise in wages.¹⁰¹

Many blacks left because racial prejudice excluded them from the war prosperity in the South. The prefabricated shipbuilding programs instituted by Kaiser were perfect for the unskilled laborer from the South. Many black and women workers were channeled into low skilled jobs in the shipyards such as welding, burning, and shipfitting. In a form

¹⁰⁰ Goodman, *While You Were Gone*, 280-282.

¹⁰¹ Charles D. Chamberlain III, "'On the Train and Gone': Worker Mobility in the Rural Southwest During World War II, 1939-1945," *Southwest Historical Quarterly* 53 (April, 2000) : 430-435.

of occupational discrimination, minorities were kept in the lower paying jobs. Positions as foremen, lead man, and other supervisory positions were seldom opened to minorities.¹⁰²

Management had to resolve unique problems created by the influx of minority workers. Prior to the war, the shipyards had been a segregated workforce of skilled labor. Managers were concerned that the intermixing of races would decrease productivity. In the Southern shipyards, the mixing of races led to increased racial tensions, and in May, 1943, to several days of rioting in Mobile, Alabama. The problem was further exacerbated when white women worked beside black males. The employment of blacks and women was opposed by the unions. The unions resented the influx of unskilled minority workers replacing the traditional skilled craftsmen. Old-timers in the shipyards resented the newer employees as “freeloaders” because they had not participated in the union’s struggles with the company. Newcomers were denounced as misfits, lazy and irresponsible, and safety risks. Many of the old-time union members felt the newcomers owed no allegiance to the union, and were more loyal to the company. Union officials conspired to exclude women and blacks from the union, but federal requirements forced them to admit all employees. Their solution was to admit women to the union, realizing that their employment would not last beyond the end of the war. The blacks were treated differently. Auxiliary unions were formed exclusively for black employees. The auxiliaries were controlled by their “white” parent units. The discriminatory practices within the company and the union

¹⁰² Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, 63-65.

surfaced in 1943 in a confrontation between the company and its minority employees, and between the parent and auxiliary unions. Solving the manpower shortage by employing new workers and techniques that created another set of production problems that would have to be resolved.¹⁰³

Another source of previously untapped labor was the millions of sixteen and seventeen-year-old men and women. In the chronically labor scarce West Coast shipyards and aircraft industries, the local community adopted the “Four and Four” program as early as September, 1942. The “Four and Four” program was a part-time work program for local teenagers. Students were allowed to drop four hours of nonessential courses each day to work four hours in local service or industry. Many of these jobs served as apprenticeship programs. By mid-1943, more than half of the high school students on the West Coast were working part time. Employers were careful to comply with local child labor laws, which although somewhat relaxed for the duration of the war, still prohibited teenagers from working in certain hazardous jobs.¹⁰⁴ Teenagers were also used for agricultural work. The California State Board of Education delayed the open of school for three weeks in 1943 to allow teens to help in the harvesting. Teens were also employed in the canning industry. The Californian agricultural community had lost large numbers of workers to the better-paying jobs in the shipyards.

A spin-off of the part time employment of teens was the resurrection of training

¹⁰³ Ibid, 54, 64-65, 67-76

¹⁰⁴ Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, 48-49.

programs from the defunct National Youth Administration. Kaiser shipyards recruited young men for a four-week training program. Kaiser obtained 1,500 workers through the program. The program was terminated because local officials objected to the presence of large numbers of unsupervised teenagers in their communities. To replace the recruiting program, Kaiser contracted with local schools to provide vocational training for high school students.¹⁰⁵

With the supply of labor disappearing, industries looked for other methods to maintain production schedules. One obvious method was to increase the hours worked by the existing workforce. In February, 1943, President Roosevelt established a forty-eight hour work week as the minimum for the munitions industry. The average work week for all industries rose to forty-five hours.¹⁰⁶ Increasing work hours had a negative effect on employee morale, and during the summer of 1943, a wave of strikes threatened the entire production effort.¹⁰⁷ The strikes created an anti-labor backlash in Congress and the passage of the War Labor Disputes Act of 25 June 1943 (Smith-Connally Act). The act

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 49-50.

¹⁰⁶ Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's A War On?*, 136. The British found that working extended hours was actually counterproductive. Production declined because employees failed to get adequate rest.

¹⁰⁷ John L. Lewis and his United Mineworkers challenged the no-strike pledge made by organized labor at the beginning of the war. Lewis and the mineworkers were in the unique position that the government could not cancel contracts or use other economic deterrence to force employees to work. In 1943, Lewis challenged the "hold-the-line" order which froze wages and prices by demanded an increase in wages for the miners. The government seized the mines and threatened to draft the miners, but in the end Lewis won the wage challenge at considerable cost in public and Congressional support. The public's anti-union feelings permitted Congress to pass the Smith-Connally War Dispute Act. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear*, 642-643.

prohibited strikes during a thirty-day cool down period after the union issued a strike notice. After thirty days, the National Labor Relations Board would conduct a secret vote of union members to determine if the employees still favored a strike. The act also permitted the President to seize any plant that shut down because of a strike. The War Department developed procedures for seizing and running plants shut down by strikes. The first plant seizure did not occur until November 1, 1943, but by the end of the year, another four plants were seized. Essential workers in plants that were seized were required to remain at their jobs, or to face the possibility of being drafted. The War Department's goal used plant seizures as a means of maintaining production but in the end it served as a deterrent for strikes and slowdowns.¹⁰⁸

Less intrusive measures to maintain production levels and prevent the loss of workers were also attempted. Efforts were made to reduce absenteeism and workers lost because of industrial accidents. Companies tried a number of methods to reduce absenteeism. Employees who were often absent were singled out by conspicuously posting their names in the workplace, or by requiring them to receive their pay in special envelopes. Company officials hoped that they could shame employees into regular attendance.¹⁰⁹

Reducing the number of workers lost to the labor pool because of death or disabling injury became a priority of the government. More than 19,000 employees were

¹⁰⁸ Johnson, *Second Gold Rush*, 80-81.

¹⁰⁹ Fitzpatrick, *Selective Service in Wartime*, 83-84.

killed, 100,600 workers were permanently disabled, and two million workers suffered temporary disabilities in 1941, and these statistics occurred before there was a significant increase in the labor force. These injuries cost employers 251 million lost days of work, or the equivalent of an additional 800,000 full time employees. To decrease the loss of employees to accidents, many major employers established management-employees committees to survey plants to identify and remove safety hazards and improve processes to speed efficiency.¹¹⁰

To maintain production schedules, the War Department threatened to use the draft to force striking workers to return to work. In 1943, when the coal mines were closed as a result of a strike, the government made plans in a bluff to induct the striking miners into the army, only to order them to return to work in the mines. Similar plans were made to end a strike at Ford's Willow Run airplane plant outside Detroit. Often the threat of induction, or the reclassification of strikers, was enough incentive to settle a strike. In January, 1943, the policy to draft striking workers was strengthened when the Selective Service ordered draft boards to disregard deferments because of dependents if the individual was being inducted as a striking employee in an essential industry.¹¹¹

The possibility of drafting fathers was severely criticized. Opponents, including the authors of the Selective Service Act, opposed the use of the draft to coerce workers. In the opinion of Representative James Wadsworth, the policy changed the Army to the

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 84-89.

¹¹¹ Fairchild and Grossman, *The Army and Industrial Manpower*, 197-199.

equivalent of a penal institution. Employees were required to be on their best behavior or face losing their freedom. The policy was attacked on two fronts, by opponents who objected to a defacto national-service policy, and by those objecting to the drafting of fathers. Throughout 1943, Congress debated the policy, and in December, 1943, passed the Kilday bill prohibiting the induction of fathers until registrants without dependents had been drafted. Kilday believed the Selective Service had been enacted to raise an army, not to force men into industry. Kilday's bill forced the Selective Service to reverse its January policy.¹¹²

Congress, although it passed the Kilday bill, realized that a solution for the labor shortage must be found. A possible solution was national service already in place in Great Britain. American manpower experts had studied universal service in Britain and in the Soviet Union. These countries had already taken steps toward national service. The Selective Service deferment policy for men working in essential industries or in essential occupations made those jobs attractive to men who wanted to avoid military service. The problem with the draft was that once a man was disqualified from military service, he was under no other physical obligation toward the war effort. Married men with children were deferred and could sit out the war. The proponents of national service wanted this lost manpower to be utilized. Men unable to serve in the military and fathers could work in some capacity in war industry. The debate over the "work-or-fight" legislation would continue until the end of the war because Congress was reluctant to tackle such an

¹¹² Ibid, 199-200.

unpleasant measure. In late 1944, when the repercussions of the manpower decisions made in 1943 with regards to the Army's size were felt, the government resurrected the work-or-fight policy, using the draft as a means of enforcing the policy.¹¹³

Justice James Byrnes, the head of the Office of War Mobilization, a super agency to coordinate all war production and manpower issues, implemented a work-or-fight policy to keep workers at their jobs. Selective Service was encouraged to draft men under the age of thirty-eight who were not working in essential war industries or who had left their jobs in those industries. Men inducted by under this order who were too old or unfit for military service would be placed in the enlisted reserve and returned to industry in uniform. If they refused, they were assigned to the general service with the army. More than 12,000 men were inducted as a result of Brynes's policy. Many were incapable of serving in the military, but the Army reluctantly kept them rather than discharge them to make the program credible. The policy had an impact on the war effort because it halted the exodus of men from essential jobs, and increased the number of requests by men seeking referrals to jobs that might earn them a deferral.¹¹⁴

The labor problems that surfaced in industry late in 1942, and worsened in 1943, continued sporadically until the end of the war. The United States was forced to reduce

¹¹³ Ibid, 200-201.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 201-203. David Robertson, *Sly and Able: A Political Biography of James F. Byrnes* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 370. Byrnes also order professional and college athletes, who continued to play sports after claiming an injury which made them ineligible for the Army, drafted. In December 1944, the "work or fight" order was used to keep employers committed to war production, rather than switch to the production of consumer goods.

its optimistic production goals because of the impact of labor shortages. Perhaps the greatest impact on the war effort of the labor shortage in industry was the influence it had on the size of the army.

CHAPTER III

THE MILITARY AND THE MANPOWER SHORTAGE

Major Wedemeyer's Victory Plan estimated that the military could withdraw between 12 and 14 million men without impeding the nation's economic productivity. However, the Army's strength was only at 4,350,000 when manpower shortages began to appear in industry. Civilian critics said that the Army, already too large, was not utilizing the men in uniform properly. The War Department refused to discuss the size of the military with civilians, arguing that only the military had the proper background to determine the number of men necessary to defeat the Axis.

The military had problems obtaining men in sufficient numbers in early 1943. Early in the war, the number of volunteers had overwhelmed the facilities available to train them. Many were turned away. President Roosevelt had signed legislation to end voluntary enlistment and require the military to obtain men exclusively from the draft.¹¹⁵ The President ended voluntary enlistments because many men, knowing they had been classified 1-A, elected to join a particular branch of the service to avoid placement by the draft. Forced to rely exclusively on the draft, the Army's ground forces received the

¹¹⁵ Fitzpatrick, *Selective Service in Wartime*, xxiv.

leftovers from the other branches. The President ordered the end to voluntary enlistments to redress this imbalance.

The military now had to rely on the draft exclusively. The President's proclamation was the first indication to the armed forces that there potentially limits to the manpower available for their needs. The draft had its origins in the Military Training Camps Association in early 1940.¹¹⁶ The original bill proposed to require all males between eighteen and sixty-five to register, and made all men between twenty-one and forty-five liable for military service. The final version reduced the maximum age to thirty-five to be liable for the draft.¹¹⁷

Shortly after the United States entered the war, the Selective Service began a series of registrations which expanded the number of men liable for military service. In February, 1942, twenty-year-old men, and men between thirty-six and forty-five were added to the draft pool. By April, 1942, men between the ages of forty-five to sixty-five were required to register for the draft. It was not until the end of 1942, when there appeared the first signs that the manpower reserve was running short, that eighteen and nineteen year olds were added to the draft pool.¹¹⁸

Men entering the draft pool were assigned a classification ranging from 1-A,

¹¹⁶ The Military Training Camps Association was composed of former members of the World War I Plattsburg, New York volunteer preparedness group that trained 100,000 men in anticipation of the U.S. entry into the World War. See David L. Porter, *The Seventy-sixth Congress and World War II, 1939-1940* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1979), 128.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 168-169.

¹¹⁸ Fitzpatrick, *Selective Service in Wartime*, xviii-xxiv.

available for military service, to IV-H, registrants who either were over the age of 37 and had not been inducted into the service, or had been discharged from the service because of their age. Each major ranking, Class I-eligible for service, Class II-registrants essential to civilian activity, Class III-registrants with dependents, Class IV-registrants not eligible for service, was subdivided into various groups. For example, men deferred because they had dependents were subdivided into Class III-A and Class III-B based on whether or not they worked in an essential war industry. Registrants could move from one class to another depending on changing requirements.¹¹⁹

Local draft boards determined a registrant's status. The boards were composed of five members: one from labor, one from industry, one physician, one lawyer, and if an agricultural area, one from agriculture. Registrants could appeal their classification to the state appeal board. More than 59 per cent of all appeals were based on requests for deferment based on occupation.¹²⁰

The mechanics of the draft were fairly simple. The Army decided how many men it would need and notified the Selective Service. The Selective Service's National Headquarters would set a quota for each state. The State Director would increase the number to be called to factor in the expected number of rejects, and he would then assign a number to each local board. Each local board would then notify a sufficient number of

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 34-35.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 38-43.

I-A registrants to fill their quota.¹²¹

Of the 18 million men examined by the Selective Service, 29.1 per cent were rejected for military service. During 1940 and 1941, fully 50 per cent of men who were called for the draft were rejected because of bad teeth, poor eyesight, and venereal disease. About 10 per cent were rejected for illiteracy. Thirty-two per cent of all the men found not eligible were rejected because of psychological reasons. Many were rejected because they were uncomfortable with their nakedness in a room full of strangers. Others were eliminated because they expressed a fear of women.¹²² By 1943, men rejected earlier by the draft were re-evaluated, and many were inducted. Many Army leaders felt the country had reached the bottom of the barrel.¹²³ A sampling of 12,000 combat troops at the end of 1943 confirmed their concerns. The combat troops were “below the Army average in height, weight, in intelligence, and education.”¹²⁴

In 1943, approximately 2.6 million men were processed into the Army. About 40 per cent were assigned to ground combat arms. A higher percentage of men who had the

¹²¹ Ibid, 47-48. In Fitzpatrick’s report on the Selective Service, Class I-A are registrants available to the military. Registrants with Class II, III, or IV numbers were in one of the deferred classes. The letter behind each number denote the nature of the deferment category, therefore, II-A deferred for essential work, II-B for essential work in war industry, II-C for essential work in agriculture. See chart on page 35.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Adams, *The Best War Ever*, 78.

¹²⁴ Robert R. Palmer, Bell I. Wiley and William R. Keast, *The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops United States Army in World War II* (Washington, D. C.:U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948; reprint, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991), 3

lower intelligence and aptitude scores were assigned to the ground combat arms. Military leaders felt that the “American soldiers were sustaining avoidable casualties and perhaps taking longer than necessary to win the war, because men assigned to ground combat units did not represent a fair cross section of the nation’s manpower.”¹²⁵ Restrictions on the size of the armed forces created the problems for the ground forces. There were fewer highly qualified men to go around, and the branches of the service with higher technical requirements received a larger portion of the more intelligent inductees.

The military was criticized in 1943 for not using, more effectively, the manpower already in uniform. Many of the men singled out by this criticism were still undergoing training before being assigned to their units. General George C. Marshall countered the criticism, insisting that the Army could only use the men once they were fully trained. Marshall said it was important that the men complete their training before entering battle. In a statement to Congress in October, 1942, he explained that men inducted in 1943 would not reach their combat units until 1944, and some not until the beginning of 1945.¹²⁶

A modern army, with modern weapons and tactics, required sufficient training to use those weapons and tactics. Marshall was unwilling to commit the bulk of the American Army until it was fully trained to use the latest technology. The Army’s dependence on technology influenced the method by which men were assigned to units.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 3-4.

¹²⁶ Marshall, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, 396-397.

The Army filled its technological slots first because the duration of training was longer than for combat infantrymen. The training objective was to have a complete military force with supporting arms, trained and ready to deploy at the same time. The military's dependence on technology, and the competition it created between the Army and the Navy, and between the Army ground forces and the Army Air Corps, influenced the military's manpower crisis in 1943. It is important to examine the background behind this change toward technology and the influence technological demands had on the competition for men, especially after 1943, when restrictions were placed on the military's manpower ceiling.

The Army Becomes Specialized

Armies have always attempted to make use of the latest in technological change. However, it was not until the 20th century that technology became a dominant factor. The typical nineteenth-century army was predominantly made up of men filling combat positions. For example, approximately two million men served in the American Civil War. All of these soldiers and sailors, with the exception of about one hundred thousand, served in combat arms. The army had few support troops, many of whom were involved in the specialized logistical support. Most military support needs were contracted out to civilian employers. This distribution of manpower served the Army's needs throughout the years following the Civil War and into the beginning of the next century. The small army of the western frontier was composed primarily of fighting men. Since few men occupied supporting roles, supplying the frontier outposts had to be contracted out to civilian freight companies.

Shortly after the beginning of the twentieth century, Secretary of War Elihu Root observed that the difficulty with America's mobilizing for war was not in the raising of troops, but in equipping, supplying, and transporting them to battle. America's experiences in fielding an army in World War I proved Root's predictions to be most accurate. During the war, the Army made major changes in its technology, which caused it to transform itself into an organization dominated by specialists. The number of men serving in combat arms became a numerical minority, as the number of support troops required to keep the troops supplied in the field increased tremendously. Soldiers filled many of the occupational skills that previously had been contracted out to private employers. The use of new weapons, such as the airplane, tank, and poisonous gas, created new branches of the military. Each of these new branches was staffed with specially skilled men. Even the existing Army's specialized branches, such as the engineers, ordinance, quartermaster, and medical corps, experienced unprecedented growth. These branches grew from approximately one-tenth of the total Army's strength at the beginning of the war to approximately one-third of its strength at war's end.¹²⁷

The shift in the number of men serving in each branch of the service from the beginning of the U.S. involvement in the war until the Armistice can be observed in a War Department study published in 1919. The Army, on the threshold of war in March, 1917, had an estimated strength of approximately 190,000 men. A total of 137,000 men (or

¹²⁷ Harold Wool, *The Military Specialist: Skilled Manpower for the Military* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968), 15, John Whiteclay Chambers, ed., *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*, 162-165, 399-401.

approximately 72.1 per cent) were assigned to combat arms, which included the traditional combat branches of infantry, artillery, and cavalry. The technical branches, composed of the combat engineers, medical, quartermaster, ordnance, signal, transportation, and chemical corps, accounted for only 22,000 men. This figure represented a mere 11.6 per cent of the Army's total prewar strength. Approximately 31,000 additional men were assigned to administrative support duties, including finance, the Adjutant General's Office, military police, and those men not assigned to a unit but undergoing some form of training.

By November, 1918, a noticeable shift in the strength in each of these branches had occurred. This shift was the result of the introduction of new technology in weapons, and the increasing support demands previously assigned to contract employers. At its peak strength, the U.S. Army of World War I included approximately 3,665,000 men. Of these, 1,543,000 men (or 42.1 per cent) were assigned to combat arms, including fourteen thousand men assigned to the newly-created armor branch. This shift in strength reflected a decrease of 30 per cent in the portion of troops occupying combat slots from the prewar statistics. The technical services increased to 1,159,000 men, a number which represented 31.6 per cent of the army's total strength. The newly formed Army Air Corps was staffed with 202,000 men. The administrative support strength of the army peaked at 761,000 men by the war's end.¹²⁸

The military still relied on private contractors for many of its support needs.

¹²⁸ U.S. War Department. *Annual Report, 1918*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1919), Vol. 1, 13.

However, by the end of the war, military personnel were deeply involved in providing services that had previously been the exclusive domain of civilian contractors. Army leaders were aware of the manpower shift away from a combat speciality and toward noncombatant assignments. An examination of the roles of the 1,920,000 support troops revealed to the service chiefs that 60 per cent of the soldiers occupied that were positions identified as semiskilled or low-skilled occupations, such as police or cooks. The remaining 40 per cent were considered craftsmen. This latter group included metal workers, mechanics, repairmen and skilled construction workers. Even men assigned as clerks were considered craftsmen because of the administrative skills required for the position.¹²⁹

To meet the demands of the new army, the military leadership developed an Index of Occupations. This Index was used to classify 714 civilian-related occupations which could be identified with a particular military speciality. For its future needs, the army would now be able to identify an inductee with a useful prior work skill, and assign him to the branch of service that could best utilize his skills. Exercising proper care, the Army could match the right man for the right job.

Despite its best efforts, the Army soon found itself short of skilled soldiers. The military cutbacks following the end of World War I, and the limited military budget for the inter-war years, had decreased the number of soldiers in the standing army, especially those with the necessary skills to meet its technological demands. Military leaders realized that

¹²⁹ Wool. *The Military Specialist*. 17.

simply obtaining numbers of men “irrespective of their training or skill” was not the solution to staffing a modern army.¹³⁰ To fulfill its needs, the Army developed a number of in-service schools to train new recruits in the skills the Army required. Often, the Army relied on civilian educational systems to provide this training.¹³¹ This link between the military and private educational resources would become extremely useful as the United States began its prewar expansion on the eve of its entrance into World War II.

While the Army endured a radical revision, the Navy did not experience a such a dramatic change. The Navy’s shift from sail-powered to steam-powered vessels in the nineteenth century, required the Navy to identify those men with the special skills needed to maintain and repair its ship’s steam engines. The technological demands of the modern warship compelled the Navy to solicit a higher caliber recruit than the men enlisted by the Army. The Navy also developed the naval ratings system, which helped it identify and retain its more skilled sailors. The rating system required sailors to demonstrate their skills before receiving a promotion, thus rewarding the more experienced and trained sailors with increased pay.¹³²

The move toward a more technological military was accelerated by the outbreak of World War II. An analysis of occupational groups within the military revealed that only

¹³⁰ Ibid, 3.

¹³¹ Ibid, 17-18.

¹³² Ibid, 12.

24.1 per cent of the military's total manpower was committed to ground combat arms. This number was down from 42.1 per cent in World War I. Electronic and other technical positions absorbed another 13 per cent, while mechanics, repairmen, and craftsmen occupied 29.2 per cent of the total manpower. The larger bureaucratic military structure required another 15.3 per cent of the Army's personnel resources. The shift to a larger percentage of support personnel was greater in the more technologically advanced branches, such as the Army Air Corps and the Navy. These branches required larger numbers of skilled men, more so than the less complex Army ground forces and the Marines.¹³³

The Development of the Military Training Program

As World War II approached, the military found itself woefully unprepared to train the millions of men it would need to fight the war. Of the 14.9 million men and women who would eventually serve in the U.S. military in World War II, 4.4 million would receive some form of specialized training in Army or Army Air Forces' schools; a further 1.2 million personnel in the Navy would complete some form of technical training.¹³⁴ To accomplish this training, however, the military found itself with inadequate facilities, insufficient instructors, and a shortage of training aids and materials. The Army Air Corps' effort to meet the challenge of training adequate pilots to fulfill its projected needs was an

¹³³ Ibid, 21.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 23. These figures do not reflect the hundreds of thousands of men and women who received flight training or those individuals who were attending medical or dental technician schools at the expense of the military.

example of the herculean effort made by all branches of the military to field a technologically trained force.

Prior to the war, it took almost two years to train a pilot, but as the situation in Europe deteriorated in the late 1930s, President Roosevelt made a commitment to increase U.S. airplane production. For the Army Air Corps, the increase in the number of planes required the Army to train crews to man and maintain those aircraft. Training a pilot was labor intensive. Each candidate was assigned a personal instructor who stayed with the cadet until he either graduated or washed out. Each pilot candidate was required to pass through four levels of flight training. Beginning with primary training, the air cadet received his initial flight orientation. If he succeeded in completing his primary training, he advanced to basic flight. If successful at this level, the student was sent to advance training in either single-engine or two-engine aircraft, depending on whether the Air Corps needed bomber pilots or pursuit pilots. After completing this training, the pilot was awarded his wings and proceeded to a unit in which he would receive operational training. The complicated process produced only seven hundred and fifty qualified pilots each year.¹³⁵ The Air Corps thus found itself facing an unprecedented challenge: how to quickly expand its pilot training program with a shortage of trainers, bases, and equipment?

The Army Air Corps Pre-War Training Programs

Pilot recruiting for the Army, as well as the Navy, was highly selective. Both services recruited flight candidates directly from college campuses. A competition existed

¹³⁵ Norman Carlisle, ed., *The Air Forces Reader Army and Navy Air Forces* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1944), 95, 393.

between each service to recruit the most promising candidates. College presidents from prestigious schools, especially those with an existing Reserve Officer Training Corps program on campus, were approached by the Army's Adjutant General's Office for assistance in promoting a career in military aviation. The military also used the services of former First World War pilots, civic leaders, and other professional and influential leaders. They were asked to approach promising college seniors in the hope of luring them into a military career in flying.¹³⁶

The prospective student had to pass a rigid set of examinations before he would be accepted into the program. The process for acceptance was cumbersome. To be considered, the student had to submit to the Adjutant General's Office a completed application, including three letters of recommendation, and verification of his college degree. If the application was accepted, the paperwork was then forwarded to the Office, Chief of Air Corps (OCAC) for its approval. A qualifying candidate was then sent to one of twenty-eight flying cadet examination boards. These boards made an initial assessment of the applicant's physical, mental, character, and personality qualifications. If the candidate passed this review and was recommended by OCAC, his name was placed on the eligibility list to become a flight cadet. This list was prioritized so that college graduates were offered a chance at flight school before other acceptable candidates, including men who already had some flight experience but who lacked a college diploma. It was possible

¹³⁶ Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate., *Men and Planes* Vol. 6 The Army Air Forces in World War II (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955; reprint, Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 437.

for an individual without a degree to pass the screening process, but his placement on the priority list precluded an offer of a chance at flight school. Prior to 1938, the number of candidates for flight training exceeded the quota of military pilots permitted by Congress.¹³⁷ Thus, the vast majority of candidates chosen were college graduates.¹³⁸ Many applicants, frustrated by the process and bureaucratic red tape, were lost to the Navy's aviation program.

In 1938, General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, Chief of the Army Air Corps, realized that the current process of recruitment and training flight cadets would not meet the country's needs to fight the next war. To speed up the process, Arnold instructed the OCAC to decentralize the application process. Candidates could now submit their applications directly to the examination boards. Aspirants who did not have a college degree could still submit an application. However, they would have to pass an examination prepared and graded by the Department of Ground Training. Qualified candidates would then report to an Air Corps Training Center.

As part of the decentralization policy, the country was divided into recruitment districts. Each local commander was required to submit a minimum number of qualified candidates. Meeting the quota often depended on the interest and energy of local commanders. The Air Corps tried to stimulate an interest in flying by printing recruitment

¹³⁷ Ibid, 434. Congress had set a legal limit that restricted the Army to no more than 2500 flight cadets each year. Since almost half of all the cadets washed out of flight training, the usual number of pilots graduated averaged a mere 750 men, far short of the Army's needs to man the 50,000 aircraft President Roosevelt had set as a manufacturing goal for U.S. industry.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 438.

posters to be prominently displayed. Other methods designed to encourage recruitment included the use of newspaper and magazine advertisements, and the sponsorship of a weekly radio show. Short film presentations, which featured cadets in training, were produced to be shown with feature movies.¹³⁹

Probably the most successful method of recruiting college candidates was the use of traveling recruitment boards. Members of these boards conspicuously flew into a city with a college or university. Smartly attired in their dress uniforms, the recruiters distributed information on the Army Air Corps. The first use of the boards began in 1936. Initially the boards provided information on the cadet programs. However in spring 1938, in an effort to reach a larger collegiate audience, the traveling boards visited sixty-three colleges that were not called upon by the previous recruitment efforts. The boards expanded their function to include completing the initial examination. The success of the first traveling boards encouraged the Air Corps to visit an additional fifty-four campuses. The first tour qualified 388 candidates from the 485 applicants. This was a very high percentage when compared to the regular examination boards, which qualified only 836 candidates from 4556 applicants. The boards were so successful that in 1940, when Congress removed the limitations on the number of military pilots, the Army Air Corps increased the number of traveling boards to eighteen.¹⁴⁰

In 1940, when Congress passed the Selective Training and Service Act (Burke-

¹³⁹ Ibid, 440.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 441-442.

Wadsworth Bill) to reestablish the draft, the Air Corps took advantage of the threat of induction. The Army Air Corps encouraged men to control their own fate by enlisting in the Air Corps, rather than wait on the unpredictable outcome of the draft. Many men who were classified by their local draft boards as 1-A, and who met the Air Corps high standards for flight training, were approached by members of pro-military groups, such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion. The potential draftees were encouraged to join the Air Corps rather than risk the possibility of being inducted into the infantry. In certain instances, members of these pro-military organizations actually sat on the draft board, where they had access to the names of men classified as 1-A. In other circumstances, the draft boards supplied the names of men to the Legionaries. The men classified as 1-A usually had one month before they were inducted, and the veterans used that opportunity to attempt to get the draftee to enlist in the Air Corps.¹⁴¹

Competition with the Navy dominated the Air Corps recruitment strategy. The Navy, which needed fewer pilots than the Army, offered better pay and allowances to its recruits. To increase the number of applicants, the Air Corps tried a number of innovative schemes. One of these proposals permitted men to organize themselves into flying cadet units of up to twenty candidates. These units would be assigned to the training center as a group, and would presumably stay together through their training program. The Air Corps hoped that the group scheme would promote competition between schools and even

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 442.

between groups on the same campus to enlist.¹⁴² The scheme proved to be a public relations disaster. The complicated acceptance program delayed many applications, and forced the Air Corps to process applications individually rather than in groups. This often resulted in the Air Corps sending incomplete units to the training centers. Many applicants felt betrayed by the program. An attempt to correct the problem was instituted in October, 1941. All of the applicant's paperwork would be submitted at the same time. With the outbreak of the war, however, the program was abandoned.¹⁴³

Increasing the number of applicants was only one of the problems that faced General Arnold. Expanding the training facilities would be another difficult challenge. In October 1938, General Arnold approached representatives of three of the nation's best civilian flying schools. The representatives included Oliver L. Parks of Parks Air College, Inc. in East St. Louis, Illinois, C.C. Moseley of the Curtis-Wright Technical Institute in Glendale, California, and Theophilis Lee of the Boeing School of Aeronautics in Oakland, California. The three representatives were asked to develop tentative plans for standard practices of primary flight training. Arnold then challenged the three to expand their facilities to provide primary training for military pilots. The expansion would have to be at their expense until Arnold could get the money from Congress in the next appropriation bill. The Air Corps would provide planes, and require the civilian school's instructors to complete a course indoctrinating them in the Air Corps' method of pilot training. Each

¹⁴² Ibid, 443

¹⁴³ Ibid, 444-445.

school would be paid for each applicant that graduated. Using the three schools as models, the Air Corps expanded the program to include another eight schools the following year.¹⁴⁴ The schools were projected to increase the production of pilots to forty-five hundred a year in just two years. Arnold convinced Congress that the cost of the program would be off set by the fact that Army would not have to expand its own training facilities, including the cost of building new airfields.

Non-aviation training was also required to be expanded. Once again, Arnold turned to the civilian education system for assistance. Ground operations required the Air Corps to have officers trained in aeronautical engineering, armament, communications, meteorology, and photography. Peace time budgets severely restricted the number of ground officers assigned to the Air Corps. To obtain the required ground officers, the Air Corps had resorted to cross training its flying officers so that they could fill a ground duty post. The cross training was very superficial. In September, 1940, Arnold conferred with representatives of a number of universities to train sixteen hundred officers. The universities would train 561 engineers, 528 men in communications, 392 men in armament, and 150 men in photography. Later, fifty men would be trained in meteorology. New York University and Purdue University were chosen to train the first classes. Failed flight-training cadets were given first priority for training in these fields. The Air Corps felt that these men were better candidates for military training than civilians, because the cadets had already passed through two review boards, and the Army was satisfied with their

¹⁴⁴ H. H. Arnold, *Global Mission* (New York: Harper & Row, 1949; reprint, Blue Ridge Summit, PA: TAB Books, 1989), 180-181. Craven, *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, 455.

qualifications to become officers.¹⁴⁵ The reserve officer pool also provided a number of candidates for these courses.

The training of ground service personnel had to be increased to meet the expansion of the air crews. The Air Corps required at least seven ground personnel for every man assigned to air combat. Four of these seven ground personnel were technicians. In 1938, fewer than nine hundred men graduated from the basic mechanic school. In comparison, by the end of the war, more than seven hundred thousand men had graduated from training through schools sponsored by the Army, or factory schools developed by the aircraft manufacturers, or through training provided by civilian contractors.¹⁴⁶

Expanding to Meet the Demands of War

General Arnold had foreseen the U.S. involvement in the Second World War. As early as 1938, he began to expand the Army Air Corps' training programs for both flight crews and ground support personnel. Still, the expanded facilities were inadequate to meet the demands for combat crews anticipated to meet the expected war demands. Problems abounded. The Army lacked school space for new cadets; there was a shortage of qualified instructors; and there was apprehension on the part of some Air Corps enthusiasts that the pool of qualified candidates would dry up as competing military services and war-gear industry attempted to recruit the best available men for their own needs.

As previously discussed, the passage of the Selective Service bill in 1940 had

¹⁴⁵ Craven, *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, 446.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 629-631.

permitted the Air Corps to entice qualified men who had been classified as 1-A into joining the Air Corps. In addition to its recruiting efforts, the draft had supplied the Air Corps with more applicants than its limited flight school capacity could handle. The United States' entry into the war overwhelmed many of the services with volunteers. Many of the large number of volunteers for the Air Corps had to be turned away because of the limited facilities. This problem was true for all of the services. There was no room to train these thousands of volunteers. The facilities did not exist to train them, the barracks to house them, nor the material to equip them. General George Marshall wanted to stagger the influx of men to meet the base development schedule established by the Army's prewar planning. This plan would require the military to turn away many qualified volunteers, whose enlistment enthusiasm could wane before they might be called up. The Air Corps did not want to lose these recruits and developed the Air Corps Enlisted Reserve (ACER) program. This program went into effect in April, 1942. Essentially the reserve was a pool or stockpile of men already enlisted in the Air Corps who were not on active duty.¹⁴⁷

The ACER was designed to handle the surplus of recruits and prevent their loss to other branches of the service. Begun in April, 1942, it lasted until December, 1942, when

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, xxviii-xxix, 495. In addition to the Air Corps program, the Navy and the Army had similar programs to select the brightest recruits and send them to college for future use. These programs insured the survival of many smaller colleges. The Navy's V-12 program sent men to college for up to two years, while the Army's ASTP (Army Specialized Training Program) candidates usually went to school for nine months. By 1943, ASTP had 140,000 students on campus, including 20,000 men in medical, dental, and veterinarian school, 73,000 men in pre-science and pre-engineering, and 13,000 men in special foreign language courses. The Navy's V-12 had men distributed in similar courses. By 1944, when the manpower crisis began to affect the military, many of the military students were returned to active duty, with the exception of about 35,000 medical students. See John Morton Blum, *V Was for Victory Politics and American Culture During World War II* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 142-144.

President Roosevelt suspended the military's accepting volunteers. From this point on, the Army Air Corps would be required to obtain its men from those provided by the draft.

While the ACER program existed, the Air Corps continued to accept all volunteers between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six who had passed a battery of physical and mental examinations designed to identify qualified aviation cadets. If an applicant passed the tests, he would be offered one of three choices. The recruit could elect to enlist for active duty in the AAC as a private. When an opening occurred in the flight training program, he would be transferred to a training facility. The second option permitted him to enlist in the ACER and return to his civilian job. He would wait for a call to active duty, at which time he would receive an appointment as an aviation cadet. The third option allowed him to enroll in an accredited college as a member of ACER, and the Army would pay for his education while he completed his degree. The Army would agree to allow him to finish his degree program, unless circumstances required him to be called to active duty.¹⁴⁸

The Army Air Corps canvassed college campuses to encourage students to sign up for the ACER program and thereby continue their education while they were in uniform. At least 150 colleges, often considered the "primary hunting ground" for aviation cadets, were visited twice in April and May 1942, in an intense effort to recruit college students.¹⁴⁹ The first visit was designed to provide information on the program, while the second call was intended to enlist recruits. An estimated eighty-five thousand students attended the

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 496.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 496.

sessions. Twelve thousand students completed applications, and five thousand were accepted into the program.

The colleges helped the Air Corps with this program. The educational facilities established services to advise and counsel students on questions related to military service. The program was very successful. By the fall of 1942, the Army Air Corps had a pool of fifty thousand reservists in its ACER program. The Army justified the program by arguing that it would need at least a six-month pool of candidates to meet its expected expansion schedule. The Air Corps continued to accept at least thirteen thousand new men each month, but it could only send ten thousand to training. The remaining three thousand men were deferred into the ACER program.¹⁵⁰

Similar delays existed for candidates selected for ground support positions. By late 1942, overzealous recruiting had created a backlog of men for these positions. The Army Air Corps had stockpiled these candidates. The backlog of applicants, anywhere from eight to twenty-four months depending on the speciality, forced the Army to terminate voluntary enlistments for these positions. The Air Corps decided to fill future training positions from its own ranks, selecting from qualified cadets who had washed out of flight training, or from the top-ranking graduates of its enlisted schools. The latter group would account for 50 percent of the personnel who served in a ground support capacity.¹⁵¹

In addition to the problems caused by the influx of volunteers, the Army Air Corps

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 497.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 498-499.

faced added difficulties in organizing its training program. As previously mentioned, the greatest difficulty facing the expansion of the program was obtaining qualified instructors and retaining those already on board. Qualified instructors were lost in many ways. Many of the civilian flying instructors volunteered for active duty once the war began. Other instructors were reserve officers who were called to active duty to fill slots in combat units. The Navy recruited another group of instructors as it expanded its own training programs. Unlike the Army Air Corps, the Navy offered its instructors a contract that qualified them as essential war workers and thus exempted them from the draft. The Army attempted a number of ways to prevent the loss of instructors. An agreement was reached with the Selective Service board to recognize the Air Corps' civilian instructors as essential to the war effort, but local draft boards continued to select them despite the agreement. In June, 1942, a gentleman's agreement was reached with the Navy to end the policy of raiding each other's training programs for instructors, but a loop hole in the agreement's language excluded personnel not under contract to the service. Most of the instructors without contracts were working at the civilian schools teaching Army pilots. To prevent personnel raiding from the Navy, the Air Corps suggested to Secretary of War Henry Stimpson that instructors be given a direct commission as Army officers. However, the Secretary refused because direct commissions would violate the Army's policy of requiring all officers to attend and complete officer candidate school.¹⁵²

The loss of flight instructors exacerbated the flight training program's schedule.

¹⁵² Ibid, 510.

Flight training required extensive one-on-one training. Delays occurred in the training schedule because the military was unable to obtain an adequate supply of flight instructors. One attempted solution was the appointment of recently graduated pilots to the role of elementary instructors. This answer proved unsatisfactory. It slowed the deployment of combat units, and delayed the operational training that the new pilots/instructors needed to receive at the unit level before they could be sent overseas. Many of the newly graduated pilots were anxious to get into the war, and resented the stateside assignment.

In addition to the problems experienced with the pilot training program, the Air Corps also experienced problems in the training provided to groups of students. Navigators and bombardiers were trained in these groups. The limited number of prewar air crews caused a shortage of qualified instructors in these areas. The Air Corps attempted to follow its traditional training practice of making trainers from officers currently occupying a navigator or bombardier slot. This proved to be problematic, since many of these instructors were not qualified to teach. Another attempted solution, that of using enlisted men and failed flight cadets as instructors, proved to be almost worthless. The Air Corps enrolled civilian teachers to provide the necessary instructors. The Army combed college campuses for draft age professors, who were offered a deferment in exchange for becoming civilian instructors.¹⁵³ Once again the results were less than satisfactory. The civilian teachers, while having an ability to teach, lacked flying experience. For many students,

¹⁵³ Ibid, 513. The Army recruited educators to teach mathematics, physics, meteorology, radio, navigation, history, maps and charts, photography, cryptography, and automotive, electrical, and mechanical engineering.

“mastering the subject” became their responsibility “regardless of how flawed the instruction was.”¹⁵⁴ It was not until airmen, with some combat experience and teaching ability, were assigned as instructors that the program improved.

Late in 1942, the Air Corps’ recruitment efforts took two severe hits. In November, to meet the military’s manpower needs, Congress lowered the draft age to eighteen. Previously, a young man had to be at least twenty before he was required to report to his draft board. This allowed the A.A.C. to recruit high school graduates and undergraduate college students of ages eighteen and nineteen, and persuade them to join the Air Cadet Enlisted Reserve Program before their twentieth birthday. The lowering of the draft age was followed by the termination of volunteer enlistments as a result of an executive order from President Roosevelt in December of that same year.¹⁵⁵ The President was acting in response to concerns from General Marshall that the Army ground forces were suffering from a lack of good officer candidates. The Air Corps and the Navy were getting the best and most qualified candidates for their programs. The combination of these two legal actions dried up the source of applicants for the ACER program. After December, the

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 508-509.

¹⁵⁵ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D Roosevelt*, 1942 Volume, *Humanity on the Defense*. Compiled with explanatory notes by Samuel I Rosenman (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 209. In Executive Order No. 9279 issued on December 5, 1942, President Roosevelt transferred the Selective Service System to the War Manpower Commission, so that a single agency could supervise the allocation of the limited manpower resources between the military’s needs and the war industry’s needs. In addition, the Executive Order terminated voluntary enlistments.

Army Air Corps would obtain its manpower from the Selective Service.¹⁵⁶ These actions by the President and Congress precipitated the manpower crisis of 1943. The Air Corps and Navy accelerated the stockpiling of many of the more qualified recruits in their reserve programs, where they basically sat on the war's sidelines attending school or assigned to reserve duties awaiting their call to active duty.

Meanwhile, the Army's ground forces struggled to fill their infantry division's needs in anticipation of the major ground campaigns anticipated for 1944. Early in the war, the U.S. military planners had decided that the Army Air Corps would be the branch of the service to begin the offensive against the Axis powers. Therefore the Air Corps was given a larger portion of the men who tested in the higher brackets of the general military aptitude test. The Air Corps had been using testing to determine the qualifications of its applicants for years. The Selective Service now adopted a similar testing system to evaluate the men it was drafting for the military. The Army General Classification Test (AGCT) was designed to measure the inductee's ability to learn. The AGCT was designed to measure natural ability and educational experience. The scores were grouped into five strata. Men in Class I had the highest intelligence scores, while Class V had the lowest. The Army took men from Class I and Class II to fill its officer ranks. Noncommissioned officers were recruited from the Class II group.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Craven, *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, 516.

¹⁵⁷ Palmer, Wiley, and Keast, *The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops*, 6. Geoffrey Perret, *There's A War to Be Won: The United States Army in World War II* (New York: Random House, 1991), 124-125, 450-451.

Each branch of the service was to receive an equal portion of the men from all five classes. However, the Air Corps received a larger distribution of men from the two highest classes. The Air Corps obtained 41.7 percent of the men qualifying for Class I or Class II, while the combat arms received only 29.7 percent. The remainder of the men went into the service units. In 1943, more than 2.5 million men were tested at Army Classification Centers and assigned to various arms and services. More than 900,000 men qualified for Classes I and II, while 800,000 men were in Class III, and a 875,000 men were in Class IV and Class V. The Air Corps received 247,141 men in Classes I and II, 185, 489 in Class III, and 159, 282 in Classes IV and V. In comparison, the infantry received 102,223 men in Classes I and II, 110,561 in Class III, and 125,942 in Classes IV and V. In proportion, the Air Corps received a larger number of higher qualified men, while the infantry obtained more men in the lower classes.¹⁵⁸ In a January 1942 memo, the Army Air Corps informed the War Department that “almost half the men received by the Air Corps in 1941 had lacked the intelligence necessary for technical training.” The Air Corps requested that at least 75 percent of the white inductees in Classes I, II and III be sent to the Air Corps reception centers. The War Department authorized the transfer in February of the same year.¹⁵⁹

The Army Ground Forces were required to fill its officer corps from the smaller share of men who scored high on the AGCT. In addition, the ground combat branches of the Army found it difficult to train the men it received because of their low mental scores.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 18.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 21.

The skill level was so low for some of the replacement troops that elite units such as the airborne divisions received special permission to transfer the Class IV and V men in excess of the Army average.¹⁶⁰ The effects of this preferential treatment for placement of highly skilled recruits to the Army Air Corps, and the loss of many competent men to other services, combined with the misuse of manpower in the war industries, created a shortage of single, draft age men to fill the personnel needs of the ground forces combat arms.

Manpower shortages also created problems for the Navy. The number of ships under construction would require crews to man them and additional men to service them. The Navy became one of the number of constituencies competing for a diminishing supply of men. The Navy was required to justify the fleet's size to justify its manpower needs.¹⁶¹

Naval planning on the size of the fleet was based on the premise that the U.S. Navy had to have enough combatant forces to face a combined force of the German, Italian, and Japanese fleets. While Wedemeyer's Victory Plan envisioned the Army's needs to win World War II, he assigned four million men to the Navy based on that service's estimated needs. Wedemeyer received some input from the Navy on their needs, but the Navy was planning a Victory Program of their own.¹⁶²

The Navy preferred to submit their own plan and its needs to the President. The

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 20.

¹⁶¹ Joel R. Davidson, *The Unsinkable Fleet: The Politics of US Navy Expansion in World War II* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1996), 3-4.

¹⁶² Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present*, 118.

lack of coordinated planning was obvious in the resources committed to building merchant shipping. The Army recognized the importance of building enough merchant shipping to transport its ground forces overseas and to supply those troops once engaged. The Navy had lower estimates on the number of merchant shipping since their construction would draw resources and shipbuilders away from the construction of naval combat vessels.¹⁶³

This issue of the number of merchant ships constructed formed the core of the manpower dispute between the Army and Navy during most of 1943. Marshall told the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the Army's growth was geared to the shipping capacity to transport them. Each combat division required at least one year of training, and the Army wanted sufficient shipping capabilities to be able to ship them overseas as they completed their training. The Army's manpower requests for 1943 would provide 111 combat divisions for deployment in 1944 and 1945. President Roosevelt was being deluged with reports of production delays because of labor shortages in critical war industries, and was reluctant to agree to the Army's request. The President told the Joint Chief of Staffs to come back with a realistic figure.¹⁶⁴

The Navy was reluctant to cooperate with the Army in planning realistic manpower needs. Fleet Admiral Ernest King was determined to build and man the two-ocean navy. If the Army's manpower needs threatened King's goal, the Navy was not above challenging the Army's growth. King began by noting that the large loss of merchant shipping to Axis

¹⁶³ Davidson, *The Unsinkable Fleet*, 29.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 46.

submarines would impact the Army's deployment since less shipping would be available. Therefore the Army should re-evaluate its manpower estimates and reduce the number of proposed combat divisions since they all could not be transported overseas. Secondly, King believed that the United States should concentrate its limited production resources where they would do the most good in 1943. Building ships would have a more immediate impact on the enemy than building armored units that would not be deployed until 1944, if at all.¹⁶⁵

The Army disagreed with the Navy's use of total merchant ship capacity as the criteria for determining the ultimate size of the Army. The long-range projection of the number of merchant ships that would be available in 1944 was too unreliable to use as means of determining the Army's size. The Army could not raise troops at the last minute to fill unused merchant ships.¹⁶⁶ Both the Army and Navy planned to stockpile men. The Army wanted a total of 8.5 million men for 160 divisions, almost half of whom would still be stateside by 1944. The Navy wanted 2.5 million men. Nearly nine hundred thousand would still be stateside by 1944.¹⁶⁷

When studies for the Joint Chief of Staffs revealed that the projected numbers were

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 47. King was determined to build the ships and forced the President's hands to provide the men to crew them. When the President balked at providing men for ships yet to be built, the Bureau of Naval Personnel began requesting crew levels of 115 per cent to obtain the extra manpower. The President saw through the scheme and refused to provide more men than the Navy needed for the next year. Thomas B. Buell, *Master of Sea Power: A Biography of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980), 297.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 48.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 49.

unrealistic, representatives for the Army proposed an equal reduction for the Air Corps, Navy, and the Army. The proposed solution was not acceptable to either the Navy or the Air Corps. Unable to resolve their differences and come up with realistic projected manpower needs, the Joint Chiefs turned to the War Manpower Commission to obtain an estimate of the maximum personnel available for military duty. The WMC informed the military that nine to ten million would be available for military service at the end of 1943. These figures were far below what military planners had been using, and were inadequate to meet the planned expansion goals. The lower estimate of the country's available manpower resources increased the inter-service conflicts over the priorities for growth and the ultimate size of each service.¹⁶⁸

The Navy took the initiative and challenged the allocation of resources that would threaten construction of naval combat vessels. The Navy was concerned that there were insufficient specialized valves, fittings and other critical ship's parts to supply both naval vessel construction and merchant marine vessel construction needs. Naval officials charged that the increased production of merchant ships to replace the large number lost to Axis submarines would delay the Navy's building program. By slowing down the number of merchant ships built, the Navy strengthened their position on the ultimate size of the Army. Naval planners had superior public relations position challenging the Army's demands for more men when there was insufficient merchant shipping to transport the men currently under arms. By controlling or influencing the number of merchant ships built, the Navy

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 49-53.

forced the Army into a credibility gap. The Navy could exploit the Army's request for the bulk of the nation's military manpower despite insufficient shipping to transport it. The Navy timed its criticism to coincide with Congressional hearings of the proposed cutbacks in the size of the Army to save manpower.¹⁶⁹

The Congressional hearings confirmed that the military's projected needs would outstrip the national pool of military age men. The Army had the more difficult task of defending its manpower requests in light of the limits on merchant shipping. Estimates showed that if the Army's manpower requests were met, at least 3.5 million men would still be in the United States as late as the end of 1944. The Navy's projected personnel increases would be quickly deployed on combat ships.¹⁷⁰

As a result of the Congressional hearings, the Army agreed to freeze its strength levels at the 8.2 million ceiling which the Army was expected to attain at the end of 1943. The Navy's strength would continue to expand as newer ships were commissioned. The Selective Service challenged the proposed ceiling levels, stating that a maximum of 10.5 million men could be taken out of the economy for military service. Obviously additional cuts must be made by either the Army or the Navy.¹⁷¹

In May, 1943, General Marshall reluctantly reduced the projected Army strength to

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 79, 89.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 90.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 104-107.

7.7 million men, but warned of the consequences of not meeting the Army's manpower needs. He claimed that civilian leaders with less military intelligence of the war situation were willing to risk the war effort by projecting that the United States could defeat the Axis nations with fewer men than the military experts felt were necessary. Marshall was also concerned that American troops would have to be committed to combat with insufficient training, that training cadres would be reduced to fill under-strength units, and that units would have to be cannibalized to provide replacements for casualties.¹⁷²

Marshall now turned the tables on the Navy, directing a committee to investigate naval manpower requirements. The committee reported that the Navy, while continuing to request additional men, had a stockpile of men, including "196,000 men allotted to unspecified projects, 203,000 set aside to man new construction, and more than 350,000 recruits and students."¹⁷³ Marshall failed to use the information against the Navy, but he hoped to get a concession from Fleet Admiral King to leave the dwindling manpower reserves untouched in case the Army would need to tap these resources at a later date to replace depleted units. Instead, King attempted to claim the men the Army returned to the national manpower pool. When Marshall failed to object to the Navy's opportunistic maneuver, Army planners abandoned any further concessions to the Navy on the maximum size of the army. By October, 1943, military planners realized that they had probably

¹⁷² Marshall, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, 547, 562. Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Organizer of Victory, 1943-1945* (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), 12-14.

¹⁷³ Davidson, *The Unsinkable Fleet*, 123.

reached the limit of the country's manpower reserves. Settling the troop levels for 1944, they expected that additional men could only come from inducting eighteen and nineteen-year-olds, and from closing down or reducing the training bases and stateside installations.¹⁷⁴

The Navy continued to experience problems in meeting its expansion goals. Naval strategic planning was based on equipment, and not on manpower. By late 1943, the Navy realized that they could not man all of the ships currently under construction and already with the fleet even if they closed their shore facilities. The Navy expected to have a shortfall of 400,000 men. To obtain additional men, the Navy began to reduce crew complements for both combat and service ships.¹⁷⁵ The personnel shortage would continue to worsen throughout 1944, forcing the Navy to study staffing of their shore installations in hopes of producing substantial manpower savings. By the end of 1944, despite its best efforts, the Navy anticipated a shortage of 340,000 men, and by the middle of 1945, a worsening shortfall of at least a half million men. To obtain some of these men, the Bureau of Naval Personnel asked the President to not count the women in uniform against the Navy's personnel ceilings. This would have permitted the Navy to increase its strength by an additional 109,000 men. Short of raising the Navy's personnel ceiling, the Navy warned the President that it would have to decommission older ships to man the newly constructed

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 123-125.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 128-130.

ships.¹⁷⁶

After both strategies failed to move the President, the Navy then asked for an additional 390,000 men to provide crews and support personnel for its amphibious shipping program intended to provide the shipping capacity to transport twenty ground divisions simultaneously. This was a program dear to the President and Army planners. The proposal forced the Army's hand to support the request for additional naval personnel. With the Army's support, the increase in the Navy's manpower ceiling was granted. Admiral King then use the majority of the additional men to man combat ships.¹⁷⁷

The Army experienced its own difficulties with the manpower ceiling. Taking a cue from the Navy, Marshall now deducted from the Army's active duty rolls all men receiving treatment for wounds that would eventually discharge them. Also removed were students, enlisted reserve candidates, and others who were not actively engaged in the war effort. Marshall then went to the Selective Service for the additional men to bring him up to his ceiling levels. In addition, the Army began discharging men over the age of thirty-eight. Marshall was concerned that the average G.I. was twenty-six years of age, the top age range of a preferred infantry man.¹⁷⁸ The Army was too old and needed younger men. To obtain

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 131-134.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 135-138.

¹⁷⁸ William L. O'Neill, *A Democracy at War*, 321. The average age for sailors was 23 and for the marines was 22. The Kilday Act forced the Army to draft single men in their thirties and forties, while married men half their age were spared.

them and remain within the prescribed ceiling levels, Marshall began to discharge service men and return them to civilian life, preferably to a job that supported the war effort.¹⁷⁹

In the end, the Navy was unable to raise sufficient manpower to fully crew all the ships built during World War II. The war's quick end left numerous ships still under construction and the Navy without a solution as to how they would be crewed. However, the Navy planners were often able to obtain additional men when needed. The problem for naval planners was the criteria they used to project their strategic goals. The prewar planning was designed on the number of combat naval vessels needed to defeat the combined Axis navies. The men needed to crew these vessels was never considered. Naval planning after the U.S. entry into the war remained concerned with the size of the fleet.

The Army used Wedemeyer's Victory Plan as a blueprint to determine the size of the Army's ground forces to defeat the Germans, the primary objective. However, in obtaining the men necessary to supply the Army's projected needs, Army planners were impeded by Marshall's sense of fair play in dealing with the Navy on manpower issues. Their naval counterparts were not hindered by the same restrictions. In the end, the Army did raise sufficient troops to help defeat the Germans, but as we will see, the manpower crisis of 1943 worsened in 1944, and impacted combat in Western Europe.

¹⁷⁹ Marshall, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, 555. In a memorandum from February 19, 1943 to his Assistant Chief of Staff for G-1, Marshall complained about the delay in discharging soldiers who were too old and not being utilized properly. One example included in the memo was a 44 year old banker who was driving a truck for the Quartermaster Corps. Initially the G.I. was required to return to a civilian job that would support the war effort, but with imposed ceiling placed on the Army, more non-essential older men were released to permit the recruiting of younger men.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

A spot shortage of labor occurred in late 1942 and early 1943. However, by late 1943, the manpower crisis affected almost all U.S. industry and the military. Production schedules had to be reduced and the proposed expansion of the military curtailed, despite warnings from General George Marshall that short term manpower gains would be offset by the failure of long- range goals.

Certainly a contributing factor was the lack of an efficient control system that permitted labor to be wasted on nonessential jobs. Part of this blame can be attributed to the personal leadership style of President Roosevelt, who preferred to have agencies working at cross purposes on the same or similar problems, so that when they were unable to reach a solution, he would be asked to intervene and settle the dispute. The war production effort demonstrated this quite clearly. Responsibility for mobilizing and allocating essential raw materials was assigned to the Office of Production Management, an agency that asked industry to volunteer to produce needed military items. Replaced by the War Production Board, this first of the super agencies initially lacked control over labor issues and Army procurement. Not until Roosevelt appointed James Byrnes to head

the Office of War Mobilization with powers to control the entire war economy could the bottlenecks of American production be uniformly addressed.¹⁸⁰

A second reason for the labor shortage was the practice of awarding contracts by the War Department to the larger manufacturers with whom the military had an established relationship. Two-thirds of all military contracts went to just one hundred firms, and thirty-three of these were the largest in the country.¹⁸¹ The practice of concentrating work with a select number of contractors depleted labor reserves in areas where the manufacturing was taking place. Once local labor resources were exhausted, employers were forced to recruit workers from other areas, and at times pirate labor from their competition. The migration of workers from one area to another created a shortage in areas that lost the labor. When the government later tried to move contracts away from these areas, they had to find locations that had not suffered a depletion of manpower to both the demands of the military and war industries.

Contracting out was not a viable solution. It disrupted the relationship between the major manufacturing companies and their parts' suppliers. The solution that the government and companies finally pursued was to build government-owned, contractor-operated plants. The government funded the construction of such plants in areas with

¹⁸⁰ Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear*, 629-630. Industrial mobilization was directed by the following agencies: The War Resources Board (August to November 1939), followed by the National Defense Advisory Commission (May 1940 to January 1941), Office of Production Management (January 1941 to January 1942), Supply Priorities and Allocation Board (August 1941 to January 1942), and finally the War Production Board. War Production Board, n.d., xiii.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 621.

sufficient labor resources, and the companies ran the plant with their personnel. This practice brought the work to the people, and satisfied the War Department's anxiety about contracting with proven employers.

During 1942, spot shortages continued to occur in specific industries. The problem persisted into mid-1943. To solve this problem, the United States utilized its manpower reserves. Nevertheless, by the middle of 1943, labor problems became universal. To resolve the problems, new sources of labor had to be obtained. The labor pool was supplemented by the use of migrant labor from Mexico and the Caribbean, prisoners of war, teenagers, and in certain instances, released or furloughed service men. The manpower crisis presented an unexpected opportunity for women and minorities to break hiring barriers in American industry. Women and minority workers made major contributions to supplying additional labor to industry. When the surplus manpower was largely exhausted, the government attempted other measures to maintain production. These measures included expanding the work week, wage stabilization, and the formation of labor-management committees to improve worker morale, worker safety, and production. Most of these procedures were successful in increasing production levels.

Another non-traditional solution tried by the government was the establishment of local stabilization plans. Employers voluntarily agreed to eliminate the practice of poaching workers, employ minorities, and reduce worker turnover. Later, the stabilization plans were formalized as policy. Employers were classified by their importance to the war effort. Those that were more essential were provided access to surplus labor in an attempt to maximize the use of limited manpower resources.

Still, despite the influx of new workers, the labor reserve was constantly drained as the military continued to withdraw men for the armed forces. Eventually, the officials governing manpower resources placed limits on the size of the military to conserve men for American industry. Forcing the military to set a ceiling ignited a service rivalry between the Army and Navy, and to some extent between the Army and the Army Air Corps. In the competition, the Army, particularly the Army's ground forces, were the losers.

General Marshall had warned the civilians who had set the limits on the size of the Army that their actions would result in long-term consequences. After the U.S. Army was committed to battle in Western Europe, Marshall's predictions came true. During the last six months of 1944, the U.S. Army suffered between twelve and eighteen thousand men killed each month, and an additional forty to sixty thousand wounded. Many rifle companies were reduced to 50 per cent of normal strength. Infantrymen suffered 264 casualties per 1,000 men per year, and armor crews suffered losses of 228.¹⁸²

Because of the reduction in the Army in 1943, a shortage of replacements occurred during the Battle of the Bulge. The Army was forced to temporarily vacate a long-standing prohibition against integrating combat units. Black soldiers were recruited from service units to fill the gaps in the depleted white infantry divisions. Marshall blamed the shortage on the disruption in the delivery of inductees that occurred in 1943 when the

¹⁸² O'Neill, *A Democracy at War*, 322.

Army was obliged to reduce its strength requests.¹⁸³

Although Marshall blamed the Army's 1944 manpower problems on the decision to reduce the draft calls in 1943, there was truth in the criticism that the Army did not effectively use the men already in uniform. At least one-fourth of the sixteen million men and women in uniform during the war never left the states. About four million servicemen were stationed stateside in training units, coastal defense, running service and repair facilities, and handling the administrative organizations of the military. In addition, at least 50 per cent of the men overseas never entered a combat zone.¹⁸⁴ The military persisted in maintaining its logistical supply network. The military was sensitive to charges of stockpiling men, and by the end of 1944, all of the student programs were closed down with the exception of medical students in the final years of their studies.

The military was not blameless for the manpower problems. The practice of stockpiling men on college campuses certainly complicated the manpower situation. When President Roosevelt ended voluntary enlistments, the Navy began recruiting seventeen-year-olds as sending them to college. The Army Air Corps stockpiled 200,000 men in special training programs. Local draft boards were criticized for drafting middle-aged fathers while local colleges were filled with "able-bodied students in uniform."¹⁸⁵ All

¹⁸³ Pogue, *Organizer of Victory*, 490.

¹⁸⁴ Adams, *The Best War Ever*, 70.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 635.

special programs eventually were sacrificed to replace the excessive infantry losses.

The manpower shortage illustrated that privilege still influenced decisions in Washington. The shortage of agricultural workers occupied Congressional attention very early. To satisfy the agricultural industry, Congress passed legislation not only to exempt agricultural workers from the draft but also to force the workers to remain at their jobs. Congress also gave special exemptions to pre-Pearl Harbor fathers. Marshall's request for additional men in early 1943 placed the exemptions for married fathers at risk. During much of 1943, Congress debated the issue of drafting fathers and the consequences to the family. Finally, near the end of the war, Congress passed the Kilday Bill, which required the selective service to draft all single men regardless of their deferment before drafting fathers in the same deferment category. However, by late 1944 and throughout 1945, the Selective Service began drafting fathers. By the war's end, "nearly one of every five fathers between the ages of eighteen and thirty-seven was on active duty."¹⁸⁶

In the end, the manpower shortages had little real impact on the U.S. war effort. The military, with the help of its allies, defeated the Axis nations.¹⁸⁷ U. S. production levels had to be reduced, but the amount of material produced was more than adequate to supply the U.S. Army and that of its allies. The country was fortunate that the war ended in 1945. The collapse of Germany in late spring gave the military a breathing space and

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 634-635.

¹⁸⁷ Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear*, 637. The American ground forces was slightly larger than the Japanese Army, smaller than German Army, and less than one-half of the Russian Army.

allowed the infantry divisions to integrate the men reassigned from the training organizations and deactivated service units. If the U.S. Army had to assume a larger burden of defeating the German ground forces, or if the war had continued for much longer in Europe, the manpower decisions made in 1943 would have had serious consequences. The replacement reserve was depleted, and the Army was not impressed with the caliber of men the draft was now inducting.

What the country needed to fulfill Wedemeyer's Victory Plan was a comprehensive plan to use its manpower resources. War industry should have been staffed with men not eligible for military service. Marshall was correct in his approach to develop a military in stages, so that the army would receive new men in impulses. When the War Manpower Commission slowed the flow of men, the replacements did not equal the combat losses. By the time the Roosevelt administration addressed the confusion in war production, the damage had been done. Expanding the draft to include married fathers in late 1944 did not affect the crisis developing in Europe. These men would not be available for duty until the end of 1945 and early 1946. The end of the war in Europe rescued the Army from this problem. The Army was able to shift military units not needed to garrison Europe to provide additional manpower for the proposed invasion of Japan. The sudden end to the war in the Pacific relieved the military from having to contemplate how to replace the expected million casualties following an invasion of Japan from the strained manpower resources.

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