

November 9, 1940

[National Advisory Comm. - National Youth Administration]

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STATEMENTS FILE

November 9, 1940

STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH ADMINISTRATION
TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

The Advisory Committee of the National Youth Administration is glad to show you some of the productive work which American youth is doing in the interest of national defense.

Happy as we are to make this demonstration, the Committee would like to present the defense work in its proper place as part of a larger view.

The only reason for having a defense program at all is to protect youth and its right to grow up, grow strong, and make its contribution to the country in its own way. In one sense, the national defense is primarily the defense not of this generation, but of the next generation.

Properly conceived, a program for youth in national defense must do more than merely make use of young men and women for protection against external danger. It must also assist in developing a youth equipped to use, develop and improve the national heritage which is being preserved for them by this defense.

A youth so equipped is entitled of right to be provided with three great assets.

The first is good health. In the largest sense of that term: health which builds body, and mind which gives to young people not only freedom from disease, but reasonable opportunity for recreation, for physical development, and for making the human contacts which, by and through, lead to sound relationships with the community.

The second great asset is education, again in the largest sense. Education must mean not only the training of the mind and familiarity with school books; but also the training of skills and of habits and the discipline and self-restraint which makes each young man and woman able to make the most of his capacities for himself, for those around him, and for the country.

The third great asset which must be provided is a ready path by which youth, as it comes to maturity, can find prompt access to a place in the economic and community life of the country. It is neither right nor safe to ask young men and young women, as they grow up, to wander aimlessly for months or years before they can find employment, sound opportunity, and a chance to take up the tasks for which they are fitted. Unplaced youth is the gravest threat to national, and to individual, life.

It is the belief of the Committee that the training of youth in connection with the national defense must fit into this conception. There is no "youth problem" apart from the problems of the country; for children are consistently being born, constantly growing older, constantly coming to maturity, constantly becoming mature citizens. It is impossible to have sound citizenship either for defense or for peace, if the work of equipping youth in health, in education, and in economics is not begun early and carried forward continuously.

It is the belief of the Committee that we have already in existence a wealth of mechanism which can be adapted to these ends. The health program nationally and locally can be guided

so that it safeguards children, strengthens adolescents, and gives youth full equipment.

The schools and the colleges have unrivaled facilities for handling the problem of education and general training.

These can be integrated with the employment agencies, with the personnel offices of industry, and with other similar offices, so that young people may more readily find employment, and may be more readily placed in positions in which they will succeed.

Finally, the registration of men for national service will provide a wealth of material and knowledge enabling us to work more effectively on all of these problems.

In conceiving the national defense program for youth thus broadly, the National Advisory Committee emphasizes once more that the problem of youth is in very great measure the individual responsibility of older people: parents, teachers, employers, friends. No generation lives to itself, or dies to itself. It is always in the presence of a generation which has gone before and of a generation which is still to come. The greatest defense for civilization must therefore be not the isolation of youth, as has occurred in other parts of the world, but the relating of youth to the society which we hold dear and are resolved to protect.

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TRANSCRIPT OF REMARKS AT MEETING
OF THE PRESIDENT WITH THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH ADMINISTRATION
Executive Offices of the White House
November 9, 1940

(On a small table, to the President's right, there was an exhibit of some twenty machine tools made by American youth under the supervision of the National Youth Administration.)

THE PRESIDENT: We are going to get photographed in a few minutes with what I called, in the Navy, gadgets.

MR. AUBREY WILLIAMS: Did you take a look at them?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I did take a look at them.

MR. WILLIAMS: What do you think?

THE PRESIDENT: I could not do better work myself.

MR. WILLIAMS: I didn't know that you did.

THE PRESIDENT: Didn't you know about that?

MR. WILLIAMS: This is a surprise.

THE PRESIDENT: I just make those in my spare time. (Laughter)

Go ahead, Charles.

MR. CHARLES TAUSSIG: Mr. President, the National Advisory Committee is supposed to do business with you, to report to you, and, before we go ahead and read a formal statement, there are just a few things we decided to introduce through this conference.

First, the National Advisory Committee is going to open an office in Washington and we are going through with this in order to improve the service to the state and local advisory committees. We are hoping to improve the local committees, both in number and effectiveness and, also, in affording young people an opportunity to participate in the work.

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was made. Underlining indicates words extemporaneously added to the prepared reading copy text. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

THE PRESIDENT: We are going to get together in the afternoon.

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Good, Charles.

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work.

Also, we feel that you ought to be given the privilege of re-organizing the National Advisory Committee.

THE PRESIDENT: Don't give me any more headaches than I have just now. Keep on going the way you are.

MR. TAUSSIG: Thank you.

We feel that we have no really adequate representation of un-organized youth -- as a matter of fact, we have no adequate representation of all youth -- and we are going to ask you to name three young people to the Committee for a period of a year.

Then, also, in addition, we are going to ask you to appoint two businessmen -- we have not any adequate representation of business -- and in due course we will make our recommendations.

I am going to read a prepared statement, if I may: (Reading)

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THE PRESIDENT: That is an awfully fine statement and, of course, those are the principles under which we have to work.

There are going to be some practical things which will hit us between the eyes by next spring. I was talking with the Advisory Council (on Defense) yesterday and it was the first time that they admitted that there is probably going to be a personnel shortage in the spring. That means, of course, that we will have to increase our program of training between now and then.

I was interested, just to give you an example -- in going around some of the airplane factories I found in one of them a large number of women and, in the others, no women. I found that in this particular location -- it was the Pratt and Whitney plant at Hartford, that they have a shortage of labor, and that they are training young women, especially to be inspectors. In other words, they are training them to do the actual inspection of these various things before they are passed out to the assembly line. They had something like sixty or seventy women.

That is just an illustration of one of the things you see when going around the country. Undoubtedly there will be as great an employment in the other plants. They say they are not ready yet but they will be by the spring. That is a new job for women essentially, and I think it is a very important thing for us to be talking about.

In the same way, there are going to be a great many people taken into the Army. Most of them are people with existing jobs of one kind or another, and they will have to be replaced in all kinds of industry.

And then, finally, just to give you an idea of what we are working on in the way of new things, you have heard me say at various times that

the nation is soft. I am having a conference down here with what might be called the physical education experts of the country in a couple of weeks, just to get their ideas, both men and women. That would not be run by the National, the Federal Government. It would be completely decentralized into the localities. And, of course, that work has got to be coordinated with the work of the N.R.A., very definitely. It is work for men and women.

At the same time I am having down fifteen or twenty women who are heads of various women's organizations, to ask them what their judgment is as to what we can give in the way of something for patriotic women of the country to do at home. They all want to do something. The thing would be done primarily through state and local councils for defense. Again, it would not be run from Washington, but it would have to be and ought to be coordinated and kept track of through the N.Y.A. or the Welfare Department of the Government.

This winter I hope we will get a local interest in national defense, which we have not had up to the present time. I think it is there, but we haven't given them anything to do. Now that the election is over, all these local people are just rarin' to go. They want something to do. I do not care if they were active politically on one side or the other, but I do believe in using -- what shall I say? -- their potential energy. In other words, I believe in using the water to make the turbine run, rather than letting it go over the dam. I think Mr. (Owen D.) Young can understand that. Sell electricity off the bus bar -- that sounds familiar. Well, I think we have people rarin' to go all over the place and we ought to give them something to do.

That is why I want this particular organization of yours to keep

in very, very close touch. The mechanics at the top are not very difficult, as long as we work them out beforehand and then stick to them. Of course decentralization is important but so long as we know at the top what to do, the whole thing will work out.

In Cabinet, the Secretary of War raised the question and there is no doubt but what we need education in patriotism. There are a great many sections of the country that need it for one reason or another. Of course that means everybody of school age and also the school teachers. That is very important; there is a certain amount of work to be done among the school teachers, and then there are people who have graduated from school, who are of middle age and even of old age, who also require that sort of education. There is a special committee of the Cabinet which is now working on education in patriotism and you will be kept advised as to that. That does seem to be essential in certain places in our country.

You are doing a grand job; I am glad you are keeping on without any changes except for a few additions.

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