

Office of Civil Defense

1941

Box 161



*File
Blomd office BF
Civilian Service*
CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

25 Apr. 1941

Dear Pa: -

Here it is -

I hope the President
will have time
to read + think
about it.

The important



thing is that -
a job must be
done. -

No matter who
does it - give him
the tools.

Sumner
Wellso

Apr 27/41 LaGuardia



CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

April 25, 1941. g

Honorable Franklin D. Roosevelt
President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

Since our talk the other day I have conferred with eight or nine of my colleagues from the various cities. We had quite a group at Ottawa and had plenty of time to discuss it there and on the way home. I find that the general agreement among the Mayors is that there is a great need for a strong Federal Department to coordinate activities, and not only coordinate but to initiate and to get things going. They tell me that in many of the cities they are still waiting instructions and orders and help. Where anything has been started it has caused confusion, conflict of jurisdiction and resulting bitterness.

Now, Mr. President, as I see it, what is needed is something more than just another Board, Bureau, Commission, Committee or Volunteer Firemen's Association. God knows, you have enough of them now. Please bear in mind that up to this war, and never in our history, has the civilian population been exposed to attack. The new technique of war has created the necessity for developing a new technique of civilian defense. It is not just community singing, sweater knitting and basket weaving that is needed. True, these are all good. We must be realistic. What is needed is to create a home defense among the civilian population, to be trained to meet any possibility of an air or naval attack in any of our cities.

I recall your pointing out that if they got as far as New York, surely they would try to get to Schenectady. It is not an easy matter to educate, train and prepare cities to meet a situation where bombs explode in their midst, destroying buildings, with hundreds killed and thousands injured. That is the job ahead of us. What does it require?

BF Office of Civilian
Defense Folder
Drawer 2-41

It requires:

1. A Central Authority
2. Decentralization of organizations
3. Proper training for
 - a - Air Wardens
 - b - Auxiliary Fire Force
 - c - Debris Crews
 - d - Emergency Repair Crews for utilities such as gas, water, electrical, conduits, mains
 - e - Trained first-aid personnel who have been disciplined to get out and give aid to the wounded
4. Proper coordination of hospitals, the establishment of first aid stations, the removal of the dead, the care of the children, and the maintenance before and after of the public health.

When a city is exposed to attack, it impairs every one of its utilities, creates the necessity of burying the dead, and causes shortage of food. At such a time nothing is more important than the public health. There can be no question of a fraction of a second lost as to just the place of every individual, as to what and when and how to act.

To be specific, I have come to the conclusion that all of this cannot be accomplished by another board. It must be a department, and may I say in all frankness, the department must be created by statute with a secretary at its head, having the statutory rank of a cabinet post. It should have authority to exercise the proper control necessary for the operation and administration of an executive department. Work on the preparation of a bill should commence at once.

It should provide for the following:

1. The creation of a Department, and at its head a Secretary, together with such assistant secretaries as may be necessary, and a regional director for each Army Corps Area, to be appointed by the Secretary with the approval of the President. If you still deem it necessary, provision should be made that if the Secretary or any of the officials are elected or appointed officials of a state or a subdivision thereof, and receive

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a salary for such services, they shall be qualified to hold the office but draw no salary from the federal government.

and
2: Appointment of necessary personnel, the transfer of needed personnel and equipment from other agencies of government.

3: A direction to the Selective Service Administrator for the submission to the Department of such men as are otherwise qualified for military service but who are exempt by reason of dependents or minor physical defects. Authority must be provided to draft these men into local home defense service. The Department should have the power to administer the oath of service and to provide, during any time of an emergency, for their training at home at such hours and on such days as not to interfere with their occupations or working time duties. These men should receive either a dollar a month or a dollar a year, the latter being preferable. I need not point out the necessity of this in such a vast undertaking as the home defense of cities, as well as the need of it for the morale and self respect of the men themselves. Authority to prescribe arm-bands, caps, even uniforms should be contained in the law.

4: Power to recruit, form, train and service women auxiliaries, such as first aid, air wardens, emergency kitchens, community supplies, care of children, clerical and technical help, and the many, many activities that women are exceptionally fitted to carry out and which to date have been entirely overlooked. Authority to prescribe uniform insignia, ranks for such auxiliaries should also be provided. This is important.

5: The creation of a Home Defense Board created by this Department, consisting of a senior general officer from the Army and one from the Navy, to be designated by the President, with the Secretary as Chairman. The functions of such a board are self-evident.

In this connection, I want to call your attention to Paragraph 5 of the proposed order, to what I believe must be a stenographic error, where the head of the Department is made Secretary of an Advisory Board. This civilian board should be purely advisory, with the Secretary as its chairman.

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6: Transfer to this new Department of powers not only to coordinate public health agencies of the Federal government but also to coordinate all public health agencies of the states and municipalities. For the sake of public health, the protection and control during an emergency of everything outside of army reservations, cantonments or naval bases is most important.

To be perfectly clear, because of its importance, this would mean the transfer to this new Department, under your present powers of reorganization or otherwise, of all federal civilian health agencies and the coordination of all other health agencies for the purpose herein indicated. I do not see how in the event of an emergency, and I mean by that, where lives are exposed, with the terrible aftermath, the health agencies can be separated from this Department.

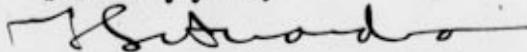
7: An immediate survey by the Secretary of necessary fire fighting equipment, shelter requirements and other equipment and material necessary for home defense. An estimate should be submitted immediately to Congress for the acquisition of such equipment and material.

8: Authority by the new Department to prepare and to distribute books, pamphlets, and posters, and to give lectures, as well as to hold meetings and conduct other means of education for the people at large. Ample provision should be made for this purpose. As you stress, in addition to the physical protection of the home defense work, there is a great job to be done for the morale of the people of the country. This can be accomplished by the Department through the medium of education.

These suggestions come after a great deal of thought long before you sent for me. It also comes after consultation with mayors throughout the country, with public officials, with men of the uniformed service. It does not come from anyone who is seeking anything but from one who wants to be helpful. If you approve the plan generally I shall be very glad to cooperate and help in drawing up the bill.

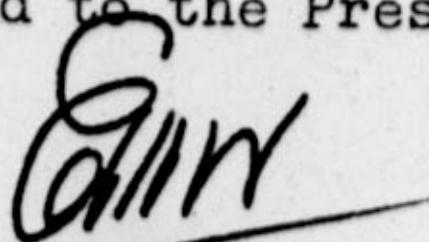
With kind personal regards, and always at your command, I am

Faithfully yours,



Mayor.

Respectfully forwarded to the President:


E.M.W.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

PSF
O.C.D.

May 19, 1941

MEMORANDUM FOR

MAYOR LaGUARDIA

To speak to me about at
your convenience.

F. D. R.

Enclosures

Confidential memorandum from Brig. Gen'l. Frank T. Hines, Administrator of Veterans' Affairs, 5/5/41, with attached memorandum giving a brief outline of an organizational set-up of Central Advisory Council of Home Defense. Copies of these papers have been retained for our files.

PSF Office of Civilian
Defense
Wash DC-411

May 5, 1941

CONFIDENTIAL MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT

I had an opportunity of addressing the National Executive Committee of the American Legion at Indianapolis, Indiana, on May 1, 1941, and also ample opportunity to confer at length with the National Commander of the Legion, Milo Warner.

I find that the National Commander is prepared to fully cooperate with you in any way that you may desire in connection with the Home Defense set-up. He will name, if agreeable to you, an outstanding Legionnaire to be in Washington as a liaison officer in the capacity such as suggested by you to me.

There are certain details, of course, which he would like to clear up and will no doubt contact you directly or through this office. He had hoped that he might have an opportunity of seeing you in Staunton yesterday.

After giving this matter the most careful consideration, and knowing how anxious the American Legion, together with the Legion Auxiliary numbering more than a million and a half members are to be of assistance, it would appear to me that there is no other organization in a position to give more definite leadership in the organization of what is necessary throughout the country.

Then we realize that more than one-half of the Governors of the States and many of the Mayors of our cities are Legionnaires, you can readily appreciate how easy it would be for this organization to work through the several Governors and bring together not only the service organizations, but many of the civic organizations in a united effort along any line.

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I am taking the liberty of attaching hereto a brief outline of an organisational set-up which I believe will accomplish the purpose. I will be glad to assist in any way that you may desire.

FRANK T. HINES
Administrator.

Att.

CENTRAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HOME DEFENSE

The central organization can be of such size as the President may determine, being made up of those who are to exercise control over the several bodies throughout the nation and to see the President advised on the accomplishments and the procedure being followed at all times. The Chairman of this Council should be one having the full confidence of the President and who has the opportunity to contact him at such times as may be necessary.

The field organization outside of Washington to be as follows:

1. Carefully selected with as few members as possible representative of the outstanding citizens in the State designated as the National Home Defense Council for each State to be presided over as Chairman by the Governors.
2. Units of the National Home Defense Council to be made up of the Mayors of the cities in areas where the defense and action to be taken would necessarily be cooperative, such areas to be designated by the Committee headed by the Governor of each State.
3. The Governors to act as Chairmen of all the National Home Defense Councils and the Mayors to select the Chairmen of their various units.
4. Recommendation from the units within States to go to the State Councils presided over by the Governors.
5. Recommendation from the State Councils to go to the Chairman of the Central Advisory Council to the President.
6. No doubt it will be necessary to designate an Administrator of the Central Council on Defense. The primary objective is to obtain uniformity in methods and procedure and to bring about good team work on the part of all the agencies taking part in the program. The development of the methods, procedure and means of communication between the several bodies is necessarily the first step. The policy regarding this should first be set upon by the Central Advisory Council on Home Defense.

File Personal

PSF Office of Civilian Defense

OFFICE OF CIVILIAN DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C.

June 12, 1941

MEMORANDUM TO

THE PRESIDENT

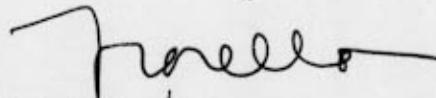
My dear Mr. President:

Every psychologist, psychoanalyst, and psychiatrist ought to be shot five years after they have practiced. If I continue much longer talking to these people, I will be "nuts" too.

What do you think of this plan? After all, the decision must be made by you.

Could you allocate a few minutes when I could present what I believe is the sum total, after having sifted out the good, bad, and indifferent, and crazy plans? In the evening, if convenient. A real program for the morale, information, and if you please, propaganda. A few friends such as Harry, Sherwood, Ann, or anyone else that you may want, and I could present my views, could be kicked around, torn to pieces, and out of it, we ought to be able to clarify the situation and come to a definite final conclusion.

I think this is far better than even calling a few "experts" together because then we have as many different ideas as we have people in the room.



F. H. LaGuardia
U. S. Director of Civilian Defense

P.S.

*The Mayor is leaving Washington;
7:00 pm tonight
Returning to Washington;
Tuesday morning*