

FORESTERS, THE ARMY, AND THE C.C.C.

By JOHN D. GUTHRIE

General Inspector, ECW

THE Civilian Conservation Corps offered American foresters the biggest opportunity in the history of the profession. It gave them a chance to advance from 10 to 20 years the cause and practice of forestry in the United States. The idea originated however outside the profession and came to it unsolicited—and the significant thing was that the foresters were hardly ready for it.

The profession throughout its relatively brief existence has had to fight and scheme and lobby each year for its pennies, which in time made foresters thrifty in the spending, even to the point of niggardliness. There was so much to be done with so little money to do it with that many of its members came to the point, in physical things at least, of being content with work that was both cheap and temporary. As a natural corollary, in time foresters were accused, with justification, of having an inferiority complex. They were called "the plodding foresters,"¹ and it was said of them that they had become "dulled by long struggle and professional adversity." It was also said with truth that "hard work alone never wins a proper reward," and of the foresters that "their good work alone will not establish them."

With this pinch-beck background and its consequent state of mind, they were handed within a few short months 250,000 young workers to use in the forests under the Emergency Conservation Works Act of March 31, 1933. This came to be a great experiment in coöperation, for

here were four federal departments—War, Agriculture, Interior, and Labor—which must not only work together, but must work also with state forestry, park, and college (in soil erosion) agencies—all in a common cause. Labor's job was the routine of handling unemployed lists and enrollment, Agriculture and Interior had to plan and oversee and carry out the work, in close coöperation with War, which was solely responsible for the housing, feeding, morale, medical service, discipline, and supply of these youths and their 1,500 camps. Thus the Army bore the brunt of the battle.

This C.C.C. was a totally new idea—the rebuilding mentally, physically, and spiritually, of 250,000 discouraged young men through work in the forests and parks and gullied fields of the United States. They were not to be considered as ordinary laborers, the camps were not just labor or construction camps, from whom so many hours of efficient work could be expected each day. As the President picturesquely expressed it—the idea was to build men as well as trees.

SOME ADMINISTRATIVE DIFFICULTIES

Did the foresters display any great amount of imagination or social vision in undertaking this great human experiment? It must be confessed that they did not, but rather they evidenced, certainly during the first six months, considerable fret and peeve because work results were far below what they would have expected from ordinary labor. During later

¹Milwaukee Journal Editorial.

months of the experiment, the civilians became more reconciled to the quantity and quality of C.C.C. work.

Here was what amounted to free labor—in numbers beyond their wildest dreams, and after the first month in camp, the foresters apparently expected these boys to be hitting the ball like seasoned laborers—and they weren't. But worst of all, the Army was holding back from 50 to 100 men each day to "doll up" the camps, as the fretting foresters said. The Army held these camps to be the *homes* of these boys for six months at least, and following their well-known practice, proposed to make the camps and their surroundings as sanitary, as comfortable, and as attractive as it was possible with the men and the funds available. And in so doing the boys were learning lessons in cleanliness, orderliness, and attractiveness of home surroundings, which lessons will be with them always. Too few foresters saw this side and most of them were worrying and fretting because they did not have 200 men on the forest or park job six hours a day for five days a week. Their apparent interest in the C.C.C. was largely in the amount of work the boys could turn out, and not in their rehabilitation. And this camp overhead, along with extra work-shifts, side-camps, lunches on the job, use of civilian trucks for "recreation" trips, camp food, and quarters for foremen,—all came in for much discussion, correspondence and conference.

Sometimes the Army officers were arbitrary in their decisions, sometimes the foresters were unreasonable in their requests. Sometimes it appeared that the foresters were bent on trying to reorganize the Army, to "reform" it to the foresters' point of view; this was seldom successful. The game was new to everyone, and naturally the rules had to be made as the play went along,—and there

was some backing and filling.

ORGANIZATION UNUSUAL

Theoretically and on paper, the C.C.C. organization was logical; the Camp Commander was to have charge of everything in the camps and the Camp or Project Superintendent of everything on the work. On the ground there was no such clear-cut line, nor could there be in this dual responsibility set-up. An enrollee might loaf on the job, might refuse to work. All that the Project Superintendent could do about it was to send the man to the Camp Commander, who might merely scold the boy, fine him (not over \$3), give him a "D.D." (dishonorable discharge), or do nothing at all about it. The Superintendent might want to establish a side or spur camp to expedite the work. This meant prior approval by the Camp Commander, for the Army's responsibility to shelter, feed and care for the enrollees extended wherever they might be.

On the other hand the Camp Commander might wish to send the boys into town some night to a movie, or to an intercamp baseball game on some Saturday. The Army having only two trucks per camp, would have to depend on the Project Superintendent to lend some of his 8-10 civilian or work trucks to haul the boys. There is this constant give-and-take, this daily coöperation necessary between the Camp Commander and the Project Superintendent and if these two men had not early established a feeling of mutual respect, consideration, dependence, and official courtesy,—well, it was just too bad. The Liaison Officer at Corps Area Headquarters would be written—and expected to tell the Corps Area Commanding General himself about it, and the C. G. would be expected to write or wire the Camp Commander to do just what the Superintendent wanted. How-

ever, this was seldom the final action taken in such cases.

A DIFFICULT JOB

The foresters too seldom realized that the C.C.C. job was a more different and more difficult job for the Army officers than any they had ever had; they had to run the camps, keep up morale, enforce discipline, not with the Army regulations back of them, but largely through their own personality and force of character; also, that the Army had pretty definite ideas on running camps and more definite ideas on organization. Now whether such ideas were right or wrong (mostly wrong in the opinion of some foresters), the Army as a going organization, as a unit of our Government, has been doing business since before 1776; also that they belonged to a profession, the profession of arms, which goes back pretty far into recorded history. So, for practical purposes, it hardly seemed worth while for the foresters to try to reorganize the Army!

A saner view seemed to be to try to learn a little about the Army's system of organization, its point of view, its way of doing business, its practices, and its customs; with this knowledge and understanding, it was more likely that the foresters' relations with the Army might be smoother. And then besides, it always seemed to me that the foresters might in a way consider the Army as their guests, since most of them were on a national forest, or in a national park, or a state forest, for the first time, and were not supposed to know all about our ways, our rules, and our customs.

Now no one, on either side, will admit that this dual authority in C.C.C. camps was ideal,—far from it; it was not the system either the civilians or the Army would have picked. But it was the system laid down by the Big Boss and it was

the one under which the C.C.C. had to be run. So, the sensible move seemed to be to make the best of it, be a good sport, and carry on.

ALL "FORESTERS"

The civilian work overhead in the C.C.C. camps was called by several names, such as "camp superintendent" (later changed to "project superintendent"), "supervisory personnel," "facilitating personnel," or "technicians." These terms were awkward if not confusing for everyday use, so the Army early in the game lumped all these designations under the generic term "Foresters." And so "foresters" they became, whether a forester Ph.D. from Yale, a M. E. from M. I. T., a cowpuncher, a logging boss, a road foreman, a powder-monkey, or a plain rough-neck; also whether in a state or federal forest camp, or in a national or state park camp, or in an erosion camp in the middle of North Dakota. From the standpoint of the profession of forestry it is indeed unfortunate that this popular nomenclature has come into use; it has not helped the standing of the forestry profession.

ARE FORESTERS NOW UNIFORM-CONSCIOUS?

From over 125 federal and state camps I have seen in 12 different states in 6 different national forest regions, I should say they are fast becoming so. Some have reached a much more advanced stage than others.

Through daily contacts for over a year with Army officers always uniformed, it was but natural that the foresters would eventually begin to think about their clothes, that is if they had any interest whatever in their personal appearance. The uniform-urge, however, seems to have come from the higher-ups, not from the foresters in the C.C.C. camps. I know

of one state where its "foresters" early in the game were instructed by the state forester to buy forestry-green uniforms, black Sam Browne belts, Stetsons, and boots, and for the superintendents to wear two bars on their shoulders, and foremen to wear one bar! This was an acute stage of uniform-consciousness (later the belts and bars were laid aside). In a good many states one will see the superintendents and foremen very neatly and uniformly dressed, with special ECW and state insignia on their coat and shirt collars; in others the foremen, I am frank in saying, wear no pretense of a uniform and dress like rough-necks. In the states seen I am also frank in saying that the foremen at state forest camps are universally much better uniformed than at federal forest camps. Here again I quote from my text,—the Milwaukee Journal editorial:

"Specifically, the Army is not going to be impressed (nor for that matter, the public) by groups of young foresters rigged out in nondescript khakies and proud of their disheveled appearance. It is not going to be impressed by men careless of their personal appearance or by superior officers in a service that will permit it." Argumentative foresters will say right here—"Oh, well, the Army officers have nothing to do but sit around camp and look pretty, while we have to be out on the job doing a lot of dirty work." I admit the justice of a part of the argument, but a shave and an occasional haircut doesn't look bad in the woods, and one *can* dress so as not to be confused with the enrollees. There is still an idea current in some circles that to be a forester a man must dress (and act) like a rough-neck or live like one.

ARE FORESTERS BECOMING CLASS-CONSCIOUS?

It has been many times said that Army

officers are class-conscious. Perhaps they are; if they are, the history, backgrounds, customs, and traditions of the Army give them a right to be. Unquestionably they are proud of their profession, of the Army, and of the Army uniform. Perhaps they are also rank-conscious, among themselves. Foresters living and eating with the Army officers now for almost two years perhaps have acquired a touch of class-consciousness.

The rule laid down by the Army early in the game was that so far as they were concerned the camp superintendent had an Army officer status, and the foremen were to be considered as non-commissioned officers, that is, sergeants and corporals. As a Chief of Staff said to me—"That's our idea about it, we may be wrong, but no one has ever told us differently."

One finds many examples of a dawning class-consciousness among foresters and also engineers in the C.C.C. camps. The expressed (sometimes vehemently) opinion that the foresters were "just as good as the Army officers" would lead one to the above conclusion. This comparison usually arose over questions of quarters or mess where the foremen or "foresters" thought they were entitled to exactly the same type of living quarters which the Army officers had, not realizing or knowing that in many cases where the Army officers had better quarters, the extra comforts and conveniences were paid for by them personally.

I have heard the argument used that because a forester-foreman had a college degree that that fact *per se* made him "just as good" as the Reserve Captain Camp Commander who in private life might have been a garage operator. Obviously, the background or prior civil occupation of neither the C.C. nor the forester-foreman has little to do with their present status in a C.C.C. camp. The

C.C. temporarily holds the rank and wears the uniform of a Captain in the U. S. Army and is moreover Commanding Officer of the Camp, and the forester-foreman holds a foreman's job. Moreover, there are many holders of college degrees among the enrollees themselves. Are they thereby entitled to better quarters and a separate mess room?

Down through the ages the act of eating together has meant a recognition of social equality, and it was but natural it should arise in the C.C.C. camps, just as it came up during the World War in our democratic army, just as it has in all wars. Some misunderstanding and perhaps some heart-burn might have been avoided had the foresters known or recognized an old Army mess custom. It is this—that the officer of highest rank in any camp is the head or president of the mess and with that position goes certain prerogatives, the most important of which is that this ranking officer has the privilege of inviting anyone or no one to mess or eat with him or at his table. In Army practice therefore to be thus invited is a privilege and not a right; just as on ship-board it is a privilege and an honor to be invited to sit at the Captain's table. And here I quote again from the Editor of the Milwaukee Journal:

"They (the foresters) have got to get over their inferiority complex and they have got to do it competently and gracefully. . . . A social status never is gained by demanding it—at least not in words. It is gained first by deserving it and next by demanding it—at least not in words, hooley into our daily attitudes."

ABOUT THE WORK

There has been a failure in many cases to realize that recreation development had a real place in forest work under the C.C.C., or the unprecedented opportunity given to foresters to carry out modern,

broad-gauged recreation plans under ECW; any plans followed were too often those made for an earlier and skimpier regime. Forest recreation is a perfectly legitimate part of forestry and this must be recognized by foresters or else the public will turn the forest properties over to others who will try to meet public needs and demands for outdoor recreation. Unfortunately in many cases the recreation improvements carried out by the foresters have been of rather cheap type, temporary in appearance, and in too many instances superficial in character; this also applies to some of the road or truck trail work. I wonder if when this big C.C.C. show is over whether the public (who pays the bill) will not be much more interested in the quality and permanency of the job we've done than what it cost?

Forest recreation is thoroughly "sold" to the American people; forestry is not. Realizing this fact, foresters who have imagination and vision are now carrying out well-planned, modernized, permanent developments to permit the general public to enjoy more fully the people's forests; and incidentally, these foresters are thereby building up public support for forests and forestry.

The criticism has been made of the foresters that because this was human rehabilitation through conservation work a greater variety of jobs should have been given the C.C.C. boys—more timber work, more tree planting, more cultural work, more stand improvement, more recreation developments, more fish and game, more stream improvement, and less miles of road work with its humdrum picks and shovels. Someone has remarked of the final outcome of the C.C.C. "that it will have turned out the finest bunch of pick and shovel experts the United States has ever seen!"

And this leads me to say a word or so

on the C.C.C. educational efforts. Before C.C.C. education was formalized last spring, there had been some splendid educational work done by the foresters in many camps; in others however, nothing whatever had been done. Recent criticisms I have heard are that now it runs too much toward white-collar or class-room education and too little towards the practical or vocational, in other words, that C.C.C. education should be tied in very directly and closely with the boys' daily work, to turn their attention back to the soil its products of tree, shrub, and plant, game, fish, and scenery.

LESSONS FROM THE ARMY

The Army has taken the leading part in the C.C.C. movement from the beginning. My own strong conviction is that absolutely no other government agency could possibly have done the job which the Army has done in the C.C.C., for the good reason that no other federal agency was prepared. I know that this conviction was not shared in by some civilians during the first year, but there has been some change of feeling towards Army administration in recent months.

No one knows now whether the C.C.C. will continue after March 31, 1935, or if so, whether it will be radically reorganized, or whether the Army will continue in it. We know this, that if the President wants the Army to carry on, it will do so, regardless of its own ideas or wishes.

As was said previously, the profession of arms is an ancient one; forestry in America is young. There are some things which the forestry profession could well copy from the profession of arms, or the Army. To mention a few: there is pride in their profession and their service, and pride in their personal appearance; loyalty to their profession and service and its ideals; loyalty to the members of the profession, and a willingness to stand up

for them against all odds as against an outsider (if an outsider makes a charge against an Army officer, the outsider must *prove* his charge or retract it).

Some civilians are still too critical of the Army and hold too narrow or provincial views on the C.C.C. set-up.

There is need for a more realistic attitude that the C.C.C. game must be played under the rules laid down; there is need for more sportsmanship.

There is in some cases still a strong tendency for civilians to assume responsibilities solely the Army's; let's redeem our own responsibilities first.

There are more complaints from foresters about the camp food than any other one thing; it all goes back to the cooks, the biggest problem the Army has—how to get a first-class cook for a maximum of \$45 per month—many civilians maintain it can't be done.

There is need for more coöperation, mutual understanding, and friendship between the civilian agencies and the Army officers.

In many camps the supervisory personnel is neatly uniformed and present at all times a good appearance; in other camps and states there is a marked need for some kind of uniform clothes for a better and neater personal appearance.

HOW THE ARMY HAS BENEFITED

Not being authorized to speak officially for the Army, yet I can say that the C.C.C. has been likewise a great experiment for Army officers. It has been probably the most unusual experience the Army has ever had, in that it called for working closely day by day with several civilian federal departments and some state agency in each of the 48 states, with having the responsibility of caring for some 350,000 men in decentralized camps for the most part isolated, and being deprived of the good old Army regula-

tions to work by and with! In fact, a brand new set of War Department C.C.C. Regulations had to be drawn up, to fit the unusual situations.

I shall not here go into the magnitude of the original enrolling, examination, movement of men, or housing and feeding of what amounted in W. D. terms to some 17 army divisions, or the dispatch with which these jobs were done.

First, the C.C.C. has popularized the Army as an efficient branch of the Government, and has shown that it can prove itself of immense national value in peace as well as in war; the C.C.C. gave the Army invaluable experience in big mobilization. It has also popularized the Army officer, especially in the smaller cities, towns and in rural communities.

As to the individual officer in charge of a C.C.C. camp, whether Regular or Reserve, he has gained invaluable experience in administration, supply, morale, camp construction, discipline, medical service, education, recreation, and besides—experience in having to coöperate closely with representatives of several other departments, both federal and state, and also with the general public. A camp commander was, in brief, the C. O. of a small Army Post, with all the various responsibilities and difficulties of post life. In addition to all his other duties, he was trying to make a *home* for 200 boys. And many an unemployed Reserve officer has been helped tremendously by being called to duty in these C.C.C. camps for 6 to 8 months, or a year.

Undoubtedly the C.C.C. has broadened the point of view of Army officers who have been connected with it, and given them perhaps a better idea of the work, problems, ideals, and personnel of other federal and state departments.

LET'S BE REALISTIC

About our own profession, our pride

in it and loyalty for it, let's be realistic for a moment.

Of over 4000 foresters and others eligible for membership in the Society of American Foresters, there are only some 2100 members. Too many members still feel that about all they get out of the Society is the JOURNAL; and some don't like the JOURNAL!

The American Forestry Association dates back to 1875 as the pioneer fighter for forestry and conservation in the United States. The Association and its officers yearly wage a fight for forestry as well as for every forester in the United States, and yet less than 10 per cent of its members are foresters. The Association has been strongly supporting the C.C.C. from the beginning, and yet its magazine "American Forests" is found in only some 900 of the 1500 C.C.C. camps. The Association last spring published a book of C.C.C. stories but few foresters bought copies; then later it published a volume of forest ranger stories that is even less supported.

A CHALLENGE

These times are a challenge to foresters individually and to the profession. So long have we had our noses to the grindstone, so long have we been forced to skimp, to cut corners, and economize that the keen edge of our vision has become dulled. Perhaps our standards have become cheapened and outworn, perhaps also our ideals have suffered.

Maybe because of all this we *have* acquired an inferiority complex. If during and because of the C.C.C. we do not rid ourselves of this incubus, if we do not recapture the imagination, vision, courage, and driving force American foresters once had, then—there will be no profession of forestry,—we shall be merely workers in the forests!