

OREGON PRE-INDUCTION PROGRAM

by Hal Short

Director Public Relations  
Civilian War Services Division  
Oregon State Defense Council

SALEM, OREGON, July 17, 1944. The pre-induction educational plan set in motion in Oregon shortly after the first of the year is still rendering invaluable service to inductees throughout the state.

Up to June 1, it is estimated that more than 6,000 men in 1-A classification had attended these meetings in addition to the thousands of prospective soldiers who "attended" over the various radio programs.

Plans for inductee education were started last January following a meeting between Governor Early Snell and Major Calvin A. Behle, Chief, Pre-Induction Training branch, Ninth Service command, Fort Douglas, Utah. At the Governor's suggestion, Major Behle met with heads of the State Civilian War Services in Portland. Mrs. E. W. St. Pierre, director of the services at that time, called in Hal E Short, and the ball began to roll.

Preliminary ground work was extensive. A plan of action had to be developed to decide on the type of meetings to be held. Research was made for material to insure the correct answer to any question that might come up and a selection had to be made of panel members to represent the various activities that would be useful in answering questions. This eventually resulted in the drafting of civic and military leaders with the most knowledge of induction procedure.

A general plan was worked out for a test meeting to be held in Portland, Oregon and 30 inductees were asked to attend. Various methods of procedure were tried during the course of the evening. Experiments were tried with both written and oral questions ... with summary presentations of phases of information as contrasted to the effectiveness of the straight interrogation method. While considerable headway was made at this meeting, it still did not completely solve the problem, so an open forum critique was called. Complete transcripts were made of this meeting and after they had been gone over and studied carefully, a second critique forum was held and a definite program plan was developed.

Following these "rehearsals" a series of pre-induction meetings were scheduled to be held weekly in the Council Chambers of Portland's city hall. Colonel Quincy Scott (retired) headed a panel of representatives from the state and local defense councils, the armed forces, Red Cross, selective service, the bar association and social agencies.

An average of 300 inductees, along with members of their families attended these early meetings. Minutes were kept by a shorthand reported and on several occasions recording transcriptions were made. Following each meeting, the committee

met to listen to the play-back of the transcriptions and go over the minutes. By doing this they were able to eliminate repetition of questions at subsequent meetings and further coordinate and streamline the project.

When the Portland panel meetings at length were running smoothly and efficiently, Paul Jones, who had taken Mrs. St. Pierre's position of director of Civilian War Services, traveled throughout the state, setting up panels and meetings of similar nature in the more populated communities. These meetings were held either monthly, bi-monthly or on draft calls.

To take care of the more sparsely populated areas, the committee arranged and produced a series of radio transcriptions. These recordings were made with professional actors from scripts prepared from material gathered at actual meetings held in Portland. To further this ingenious radio meeting plan, the committee arranged with each local newspaper to carry a front page box preceding every broadcast notifying prospective inductees and their families of the radio station and time of the broadcast.

Duplicates of these transcriptions can be made and other states wishing them should get in touch with Paul Jones, in care of the State Defense Council at Salem, Oregon.

Today the pre-induction educational plan in Oregon is going stronger than ever. Each week more communities are taking it upon themselves to organize and sustain their own series of meetings. It is predicted that soon every one of Oregon's 36 counties will be holding pre-induction meetings either in open forum or over the radio. As recently as last week, Jones, on a trip through the state, lined up three counties hitherto only lukewarm on the idea.

The painstaking work of the committee has received unstinted praise from the military, and the Oregon men who have gone into the armed services since the inception of the plan are almost as one in citing the aid it has been to them.