

Oregon War Dads Speech

August 5 1943

The job of the State Post War "readjustment and "development Commission --the I5 man commission--is to provide as far as possible for the approximately I50,000 service men from Oregon on their demobilization. They are your boys and mine.

They are serving our country, making sacrifices in the far places of the earth--in the South Pacific, in Sicily, in North Africa, at the many island air bases, in the Aleutians, where my boy is and has been for some I8 months.

I use the estimate of I50,000 Oregon boys as a guess. The actual number is a military secret, but already 22 percent of the man power in Oregon I4 years and over is in the service. The percentage will increase by the end of this year and early next spring. There will be no facts available on Oregon's military strength until after the war.

If percentages anticipated work out, there will be I5,000 casualties among the Oregon boys, for this is a war of blood and tears. Three things will reduce the losses of our boys: the quick termination of the war; blood plasma and the sulfa drug.

The Number One problem of the committee of I5 is to see that the boys who return are provided with suitable jobs. Possibly 5000 will return to school to pick up their interrupted college education. More than 3000 alone who left Oregon State College at Corvallis declared they intended going back to the campus.

It is foolish to think that a returned veteran can be picked up and placed on a farm, dairy ranch or irrigated land if the veteran has no knowledge of farming. This would leave him stranded. Farming is a technical business and must be learned the hard way. Such veterans as have farming experience will, presumably, gladly return to agricultural pursuits and ~~she~~ should have that opportunity.

The selective service act, when adopted by congress, contained the provision that every man taken should have his job back when he returns.

It is presumed that the boys who held positions in offices, private, state or federal government, will find their old place to hang their hat, but I know of butbone business in this state where there have been no places filled for the boss is keeping open the jobs for his employeers now in uniform.

Thousands of veterans must be trained or retrained for industry and particularly the physically handicapped. Whether this readjustment of the crippled should be handled by the states or the federal government is a controversial subject. After the first world war a newspaper friend of mine was trained for 18 months in the delicate art of operating an elevator. Today he is an important federal official but running an elevator did not bring him to his present position.

Not just any job will do. There must be a fitness of things.

The agenda of the Committee of 15 starts with a program of public works. A program which can be put in motion in a matter of months; in some cases in weeks.

This is not a fancy program, but one of physical labor. It will require a strong back. Experience in driving trucks, bulldozers and pick and shovel work.

Such is the program of the state highway commission, which can provide direct employment for 5000 for three years and the same amount of man-hours indirectly. The highway commission has its surveys, studies and blueprints ready and can initiate the projects in a couple of weeks. Not all the veterans, however, can do this pick and shovel labor and not all will wish to, but it will be a job until something better shows up.

Practically all of the emergency employment program parallels the highway projects. There is in sight a reforestation program, under State Forester Nels Rogers and the national forest service and this will furnish work for ~~the~~ unskilled labor, which is always the first to suffer. This war has taken a terrific toll on the forests of Oregon. ~~Billions~~ Billions of feet of lumber have gone into war work. Other billions will

be logged out of the woods in the reconstruction period. The lumber business is ear-marked for a boom for years to come.

To fill the gaps in the depleted forests there is a program for tree planting to raise another crop of timber to be used in some future war--for no one believes that the present war is the last; men will seek to kill one another until the millenium. That is human nature and throughout the ages human nature has not improved from the days when the one with the longest and ~~hardest~~^{hairiest} arm reached for the most cocoanuts and bared his fangs at his competitors.

A post war project in which all of us should be interested is the expansion of the existing veterans' hospitals. Present facilities at Portland and Roseburg can scarcely take care of the veterans of the first war and this war number two will produce new millions of veterans who, in time, must be hospitalized. The American Legion is sponsoring this project. The Legion, co-operating with Governor Snell, the congressional delegation and the Commission of I5, will seek to have 2000 additional beds for Portland and 400 more for Roseburg. These figures are minimum. The cost is estimated at about \$1500 a bed. Here is something that you can get behind. Write ~~x~~ to your congressman or senator. Unless these beds are available, some day your son or mine may be in desperate straights with no place to go to receive medical attention.

Mr. Roosevelt in his recent fireless fireside chat, promised many things to the men in uniform. It sounded like a social security program. He promised pay until they found a job and unemployment insurance. It also sounded like a fourth term campaign speech for the war will not be over before the next election, but after the election; It was a promise not alone to the boys but to their Dads and Mothers. Three years ago Mr. Roosevelt gave us all another promise. He pledged that no boy of ours would fight on foreign soil. Had he kept that promise, we would not be here tonight trying to formulate a plan for the boys who are fighting on alien soil.

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When the war ends it will disrupt our economy in Oregon and shake us to the foundation. There are 117,000 shipyard workers in the Portland area. Every man and woman will be discharged instantly. There are about 40,000 in satellite war plants. Every war contract has a cancellation clause and this will be invoked promptly. In addition to the six shipyards there are shops manufacturing engines, boilers, lifeboats and the thousand and one items in a cargo carrier or a warship. All these will stop dead in their tracks.

Into Oregon have swarmed, attracted by high war wages, 147,500 men and women with social security numbers and all are engaged in industry now in this state. They have arrived here from every state in the union, from Alaska and Hawaii and from the District of Columbia. There are others not enumerated, such as the hill billies from the south imported and ~~trained~~ trained for work on dairy farms.

What will these thousands do? No one knows. Thousands will take their savings and return to their respective homes; others will decide to settle in Oregon and take advantage of the opportunities of this glorious state and still others will remain because they have wasted their pay checks and cannot leave. These latter will become charges on the public; they will be the professional reliefers you will have to support with your tax money and they will create slum conditions.

It is a simple matter to learn how many ^{people} and from what states ^{they} have come ~~here~~ and are in war industries, thanks to the State Unemployment ~~Commission~~ Compensation commission, but there is no way of ascertaining what number will leave Oregon, whom will remain or what jobs they expect to find when the demobilization whistle blows.

San Diego has tried a questionnaire. It has used industrialists to distribute a simple questionnaire which will give an idea of what the workers propose to do. This is the San Diego way of trying to discover what their non-resident workers have in mind. It might be a good idea to follow here.

Such a scheme will only give an indication and cannot be relied upon definitely. Possibly the Portland Chamber of Commerce might undertake this survey of the workers. The cost would be the printing of 300,000 cards. The distribution through the war plants would cost nothing.

Aside from the highway program and the reforestation the emergency work program contemplates farm roads, sewage disposal plants in ~~municipalities~~ municipalities which would also have the effect of stream purification, extension of water systems, the construction of new municipal buildings ---Portland could afford a new city hall--high schools, grade schools, a new structure at the University of Oregon, a modernized state hospital, a modern state penitentiary, recreational areas and general attention to maintenance pushed aside during the war, such as wholesale repair of dwellings and office buildings and a wide-spread painting campaign.

Many things have been permitted to slide during the war because of shortage of materials or lack of priorities, such as overhauling of the fire department equipment. These are fields of endeavor when peace comes.

From the federal government can be expected at least two reclamation projects and supplemental land and water to existing projects. Resumption of work on the Willamette Valley project. The army engineers have this on their list to be taken up at the earliest moment and they would like to add two additional reservoirs or dams to the project. Primarily for flood control and navigation, the completed program will open the way to the settlement of 25,000 new farms in the most productive section of Oregon. There is already a complete ~~plan~~ ^{program} for \$10,000,000 of grazing ~~plans~~ ^{plans} in eastern and central Oregon, blueprinted and ready to put into action when and if congress appropriates the money. Rivers and harbors must be improved.

In the long range program, that of the development of the state, is the possibility of establishing a light metals industry, extracting aluminum from clay, two particularly rich deposits being near Cottage Grove and Molalla.

Certain interests are attempting to block the location of a plant to handle this clay by the assertion that there is a labor shortage in the northwest and such a plant would interfere with existing industries, such as the shipyards. The senatorial delegation and Governor Snell and Dr. Raver, of Bonneville, are challenging this contention and are notifying Washington, D.C., that the proposed plant will not require any men for at least a year and that there are many areas outside of Portland where the plant could be placed.

If the information I have obtained is reliable, the alumina-from-clay plant will be somewhere in Oregon--possibly at Canby--but not in the city of Portland.

Three different propositions have been laid before the commission of IS for the utilization of the waste in the woods and in the sawmills. These concern the production of woodmsugar, the distillation of alcohol and the use of the alcohol in the manufacture of plastics or of synthetic rubber. Utilization of wood waste is beyond the experimental stage and the processes used are well known in the industry. Oregon has an unlimited amount of raw material.

The sulphite liquor waste of the pulp mills, now dumped into the rivers, will be made useful. One plant on Columbia river is ready for operation after the war.

Momentarily there will be a pause in shipbuilding and after the general discharge of workers one yard will resume on a program of Victory ships. It is the hope of the Federal Maritime Commission that Portland enjoy a permanent shipbuilding industry. These ships will be built only at Portland and none at all on Puget Sound. They are designed for the water-borne commerce following the war, to carry large cargoes of building material--lumber from Oregon--and others with limited passenger accommodations.

It is advisable to call your attention to one fact that is becoming clearer every day. The shipyards will fold up long before the war is over and Oregon will find upon its hands the army of workers who will expect to be taken care of. At best this condition will come with peace, but the signs indicate that the bust-up will arrive next year.

No great number of workers will be necessary in building the Victory ships. There will be no need of a day shift, a swing shift ~~and~~ and a graveyard shift. One shift will be ample and the yard having the Victory ship contract can get along with 8000 or less workers. The rest of the workers in the industry, possibly 110,000, will have to live upon their unemployment compensation benefits.

Because of the shipyard status it is highly advisable that every community contemplating a program of public works speed up its preparations and whip into shape the necessary blueprints and not be caught napping.

Already the government is cancelling contracts for tanks, is stopping the building of distilleries which play a part in the manufacture of synthetic rubber and has curtailed the production of blankets and uniforms. This week a contract for tanks was cancelled out, a job which involved more money than the building of the Bonneville Dam twice over. The contract for wagon beds which four or five concerns in Oregon were constructing, have been cancelled. No more contracts have been let for escort vessels in this area.

The peak of production for most war articles has been attained and is already tapering off. There is no more expansion of plants and plants which have cost millions of dollars are now closed.

This does not mean that the war has been won, but America has exceeded all expectations in its productive capacity.

And this means that our unemployment problem is just around the corner.