1977

Race, Relief and Politics: The Civilian Conservation Corps in Virginia, 1933-1942

Joseph Carvalho

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RACE, RELIEF AND POLITICS:
THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS IN VIRGINIA,
1933 - 1942

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Joseph Carvalho III
1977
APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Approved, May 1977

Richard B. Sherman

Ludwell H. Johnson, III

Helen C. Walker
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer wishes to express his sincere appreciation to Professor Richard B. Sherman, under whose guidance this study was conducted, for his guidance and criticism throughout the period of research and the writing of the thesis. The author is also indebted to Professor Helen C. Walker and Professor Ludwell H. Johnson for their reading and criticism of the manuscript.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine the economic, social, and political effects of the Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933 to 1942, upon the state of Virginia.

The Corps was generally regarded as a good investment of public funds by even the most fiscally conservative Virginians. State, federal, and private lands were vastly improved by CCC conservation efforts. Virginia received the fifth largest expenditure of CCC money over the nine year period of Civilian Conservation Corps operation.

Large numbers of Virginians were employed in forestry work at CCC work projects. Most of the pay earned by these men went to the support of their dependent families. Blacks were segregated in separate camps and were restricted in the types of administrative positions open to them.

Virginia politicians enthusiastically supported the CCC until the late 1930s. Conservation improvements in their state and frequent opportunities for patronage maintained Virginia politicians' high regard for the CCC. After this period, the Corps' popularity waned as the state's economy improved, and the state Democratic organization fell into line with Senators Byrd and Glass in their opposition to the New Deal.
RACE, RELIEF AND POLITICS:
THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS IN VIRGINIA
1933 - 1942
INTRODUCTION

Out of all the agencies of the New Deal, the Civilian Conservation Corps has been considered the most popular. The CCC has been praised for the conservation of both human and natural resources during the trying times of the Great Depression. Virginia warmly accepted large numbers of CCC camps into her forest lands. Huge amounts of federal funds were poured into this massive unemployment relief and conservation project. However, accepting federal monies meant accepting a measure of federal control. The Roosevelt Administration constructed an administrative framework for the CCC in which the close cooperation of state officials was essential.

The purpose of this thesis is to determine the effect of the Civilian Conservation Corps upon Virginia and Virginians. The immediate social and economic benefits of the CCC upon the unemployed are studied. In addition, the long-range benefits of the numerous CCC work projects throughout Virginia are discussed. The effect of this federal agency upon the existing state Democratic organization in Virginia is investigated. Finally, with the inclusion of large numbers of blacks in the CCC program, racial problems are also considered as they effected the Civilian Conservation Corps in Virginia.
1. Establishment

In 1933 as thousands daily joined the ranks of the unemployed, newly elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt took decisive steps to deal with the deepening depression. In his unemployment relief message to Congress on March 21, the President recommended the creation of a "civilian forest army." Eight days later, Congress sent a bill initiating an Emergency Conservation Work program to the White House for Roosevelt's signature.

Through the provisions of the legislation, the President was empowered to establish the organizational framework of this first New Deal agency. April 5, 1933 marked the official "birth" of the Civilian Conservation Corps, as the E.C.W. program was popularly called. Roosevelt issued Executive Order No. 6101 which formally structured the administration of the agency. Robert Fechner, a former Vice-president of the Machinist's Union, was appointed Director with the immediate responsibility of formulating the guidelines for the establishment and operation of the CCC camps. The primary responsibility of the Director
was that of "general supervisory control."¹

Section 2 of the executive order established an Advisory Council containing representatives from cooperating executive departments. The Secretary of Agriculture was represented by Major R. Y. Stuart, Chief of the U. S. Forest Service; the Secretary of the Interior was represented initially by Horace M. Albright and later by Arno B. Cammerer as Director of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations; the Director of the U. S. Employment Service, W. Frank Persons, represented the Secretary of Labor; and General Staff member, Colonel Duncan K. Major, Jr., represented the Secretary of War.

The various CCC work projects in Virginia came under the technical direction of either the U. S. Forest Service, or, the National Park or Soil Erosion Service, and to a lesser extent, the Office of the Chief of Engineers (War Department). The administration of the individual CCC camps was the sole responsibility of the War Department which constituted "the biggest job of the whole Emergency Conservation Work program."² The Department of Labor was


responsible for the selection process. This Department in turn empowered a State Director of Selection to supervise the selection of recruits so that the enrollment quotas for each state could be met. In Virginia, the selection process further devolved upon the State Department of Public Welfare which authorized local relief agencies to screen applicants (See Figure 1).

Both the ends and the means of the Emergency Conservation Work program seemed to be tailored to the state's needs. Prior to this federal legislation, Virginia allocated limited funds with which the state feebly attempted to deal with the problem of rising unemployment, and the continued misuse and destruction of natural resources. Funded by "unobligated funds" which had been appropriated for public works, FDR's conservation plan offered Virginia the opportunity to provide unemployment relief while receiving the benefits of much needed conservation work.

Virginia responded immediately to the April 5th announcement. Senator Harry Byrd hurried to meet with Secretary of War George H. Dern to discuss the prospects of obtaining emergency conservation camps to work at the

---

3Fechner, First Report of the Director.


Figure 1
CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS
ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION

PRESIDENT

DIRECTOR of
Emergency Conservation Work

ADVISORY COUNCIL:
Representatives from
each Department

Camp Inspectors
and Special
Investigators

3rd Corps Area

District 4
(Virginia)

Sub-Districts

CCC
Camp
Companies

Department of Agriculture

Dept. of the Interior

Dept. of Labor

War Dept.

U. S.
Labor Dept.
Official
in
Virginia

Virginia
Public
Welfare
Department

County
and
City
Welfare
Agencies

Project Supervisors
+ technical advisors

(selection process)

(selection of L.E.M.s)
Fredericksburg Battlefield Park. Governor John Garland Pollard conferred with Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace on April 6th in an effort to speed the inauguration of the planned reforestation program in Virginia. At this conference in Washington, the Governor was accompanied by William E. Carson, Chairman of the Virginia State Conservation and Development Commission; Carl Nolting, Chairman of the Virginia State Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries; and F. C. Pederson, Virginia State Forester. The Virginia delegation met with the entire Advisory Council a week later. On April 13th, Arthur W. James, Virginia State Commissioner of Public Welfare and Chairman of the Governor's Emergency Unemployment Relief Committee, met with federal and state forestry service officials to determine what proportion of the state's quota would be composed of local experienced woodsmen.

County relief agencies throughout Virginia quickly filled their respective quotas and the enrollees were then transported to the closest conditioning center, i.e. Fort Monroe, Fort Humphreys, Fort Storey, or Langley Field. After a brief period of conditioning, the men were loaded

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7 Richmond Times-Dispatch, 6 April 1933, p. 3 col. 8.

8 Ibid., 9 April 1933, p. 2 col. 3; 14 April 1933, p. 3 col. 7.
in Army vehicles and distributed to the numerous conservation camps within the state.

Upon entering the assigned conditioning camp, enrollees were fed, showered, clothed, and inoculated against communicable diseases. They were then organized into groups of eight with leaders chosen from their own ranks. These groups were subsequently combined into larger units. In the remaining period of time, enrollees were taught how to use forestry tools, methods of camp sanitation, and elementary first aid. For public appearance, they were also trained to walk on the street "in groups rather than as a mob." 9

Amidst great fanfare, the George Washington National Forest was chosen for the site of the nation's first Civilian Conservation Corps camp. The Richmond Times-Dispatch applauded the efforts of the forestry recruits at "Camp Roosevelt." Captions proclaimed: "Stamina of Forestry Recruits Amazes Regular Army Men," and, "Rookies at Camp Roosevelt Eat Like Troopers and Work Overtime in Enthusiastic Response to Stimulant of Jobs and Food." The Times-Dispatch observed that, "these modern frontiersmen have imbibed from the mountain freshness a pioneer spirit of their ancestors." Camp Commander Leo Donovan was reported

to have said: "I never saw so much work accomplished in so short a time. . . . These boys never want to stop working." One editorial assured Virginians that the money received by the workers would be "in no sense a dole." Assuredly, Virginians must also have been relieved to hear that Communism or radicalism was not tolerated in the ranks of the Corps. After their first day at Camp Roosevelt, the recruits had chased a reported "agitator" from their midst. The Times-Dispatch reported that "not a 'red' voice has been heard since he departed," and that the camp was "100 per cent American."

Other camps were quickly established throughout the state. Less than a week after CCC Company #334 arrived at the Camp Roosevelt site, Lieutenant Joseph W. Koch led his contingent of two hundred men up the slopes of the mountainous area of Big Meadows, Virginia. Atop a mountain along the planned Skyline Drive the 350th constructed their living quarters which they chose to name Camp Fechner.

Spending their first few nights without tents, Koch and his men used a 1918 vintage mail truck and horses to transport the supplies up the winding mountain paths to the camp. The Army had provided Camp Fechner with 1989 Spanish-American War hospital tents and Company #350 soon erected

10 Richmond Times-Dispatch, 3 May 1933, p. 10 col. 4-6: 5 May 1933, p. 3 col. 2.

11 Ibid., 10 April 1933, p. 6 col. 2.

12 Ibid., 5 May 1933, p. 3 col. 3.
wooden flooring to complete their temporary quarters. The first permanent facility to be built was the camp's mess hall.13

While the lieutenant had his hands full trying to clothe, house, and feed the enrollees, he soon found that his camp was less than welcome in that area. Apparently, the "mountaineers" in the surrounding hills had previously been employed by the Virginia Park Service to fight forest fires for fifty cent per hour. However, once the CCC arrived in the Shenandoah timberstand, the enrollees assumed the responsibility of fire fighting. "Mountaineers" began setting fires around Camp Fechner. Koch declared that "one nearly burned us up." Enrollees were instructed never to venture out alone. In the beginning, the camp was occasionally shot at by musket-wielding mountaineers. The camp commander's tent actually had several holes shot through it. Fortunately, hostility soon turned to friendship as the CCC began accepting "local experienced men" into the camp. Many of the "mountaineers" became useful and respected members of the 350th and eventually proved to be "indispensable" in training the younger members for forestry work.

When CCC Company #1388 arrived at their camp site in Bastian, Virginia, the townspeople turned out to greet them. Despite the late arrival of the train carrying the enrollees from Fort Monroe, the spectators patiently waited at the

---

13 Interview with Colonel Joseph W. Koch (USAF-ret.), 8 July 1976, Richmond, Virginia.
station giving the boys a warm welcome as the train finally pulled in. This scene was to be repeated throughout the state. By the end of the Corps' first year of operation, CCC camps had become a familiar sight to Virginians.

In late May 1933 as 3,000 "Bonus Marchers" again converged on Washington, President Roosevelt attempted to placate the frustrated veterans by extending enrollment in the CCC to World War veterans. The marchers had been housed at Fort Hunt, Virginia to avoid another Anacostia episode which had plagued Hoover the year before. On the 21st of May, the veterans were given until the following day either to accept the President's offer or to return home. The following day saw 2,000 "Bonus Marchers" sign up for the CCC.

Touring through the Shenandoah Valley in August of 1933, President Roosevelt visited five Virginia CCC camps with an entourage which included Louis Howe, Harold Ickes, Robert Fechner, Henry Wallace, Rexford Tugwell, Harry Byrd, and Third Corps Area Commander, General Paul B. Malone.


15 Alexandria Gazette, 22 May 1933, p. 1 col. 6.

16 New York Times, 21 May 1933, p. 4 col. 1; 22 May 1933, p. 3 col. 4.
Visiting both veteran and junior CCC camps, FDR was greeted enthusiastically by all. Upon returning from his 180 mile trip, Roosevelt commented to a reporter, "all you have to do is look at the boys to see that the camps are a success." Everyone seemed to agree.  

2. The Selection Process

As the CCC was a federal organization, some historians have assumed that the agency did not require state administration. Actually, individual state agencies and officials played an important part of the Corps' administration from the outset. Arthur W. James, as administrator of the Virginia State Emergency Relief Committee, and later William A. Smith supervised the statewide selection of applicants. Chairman William E. Carson of the Virginia Conservation and Development Commission, Richard E. Burson as State Park Director, and State Forester F. C. Pederson were responsible for the planning of conservation work projects in Virginia's state parks.

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17 Ibid., 13 August 1933, p. 3 cols. 1-4.


19 Virginia General Instructions to Local Selection Agents, Box 33, State Selection Procedure, CCC Selection Division, Records of the CCC, Record Group 35, National Archives.
Robert Fechner, As Director of the Emergency Conservation Work, established state quotas based upon the population and relief needs of each state and upon the number of eligible applicants within each state as reported by the numerous state selecting agencies. The Virginia State Director of Selection allocated local quotas to counties and independent cities. The Department of Labor placed "full responsibility" upon the state director for such allocations.

Although enrollee enlistment periods were for six months, the Labor Department created three-month "replacement periods." At each period of replacement, the Department of Labor furnished estimates of the number of new enrollees necessary to restore Virginia's basic quota to full strength. The reason given for this three-month interval was to compensate for the number of enrollees who had either deserted, been discharged, or obtained employment prior to the expiration of their original enlistment period.\(^{20}\)

Under federal guidelines, applicants deemed eligible for enrollment were required to be unmarried males, United States citizens, between the age of 18 and 23, unemployed, not under conviction for crime or on probation or parole,

willing to make an allotment out of their monthly pay of $30 to their dependents, physically able to work on forestry projects, and with no history of mental illness.

Each county and independent city relief agency conducted investigations into the eligibility of each applicant. Once accepted, the enrollees were sent to the nearest military base for a "conditioning period" of ten days to two weeks before being sent to forestry camps. Local experienced men, "Lems", who were unemployed and lived in the vicinity of a CCC camp were also accepted. Marion and Luray, Virginia, with their large concentration of CCC camps particularly benefitted from this provision. "Lems" were not restricted by age or marital status and were allowed to return to their homes on weekends. With their experience in forestry work, these men facilitated the training of the younger enrollees.

In June of 1933, the processing of applicants lagged behind despite the backlog of Virginians eligible for relief and the numbers already on local relief rolls.


22 Arthur W. James, "State Emergency Relief Committee Information Sheet" (April 1933), General Instructions to Local Selecting Agents folder, S. S. P. file, Box 33, Records of the CCC.
As a consequence of federal and state executive orders as well as Acts of Congress, the Virginia Department of Public Welfare was ultimately given the sole responsibility of enrollee selection. A Bureau of Civilian Conservation Corps Selection was established by the Commissioner of Public Welfare, Arthur W. James. Roger W. Grant was appointed as supervisor of the Bureau in 1937, serving under James and later Commissioner William H. Stauffer. Earle R. McKesson succeeded Grant in 1940.

The Department of Public Welfare announced in 1937 that "CCC selection is and will continue to be a very real part of each county and city welfare program, not only from the standpoint of monetary benefits but also as a training service to youths of Virginia." The Emergency Conservation Work Program depended upon the effective cooperation between the Departments of Labor, Agriculture, Interior, and War. The efficient selection of enrollees and the local acceptance of CCC camps primarily depended upon the cooperation of state and local agencies and officials. It was the CCC Director's task to move these varied elements in a common direction. In this type of arrangement, policies were arrived at by trial and error.


27 Ibid., Vol. 15 No. 9 (September 1937), p. 1.
CHAPTER II
THE CCC WAY OF LIFE

1. Administration

The War Department shouldered the greatest burden in this cooperative venture between the agencies and Departments administrating the functions of the E. C. W. program. The United States military, especially the Army, was responsible for the conditioning of enrollees, their transportation to work locations, and the construction of forestry camps. This was in addition to the command, administration, discipline, supply, sanitation, medical care, and hospitalization of the men enrolled in the CCC.¹

The Civilian Conservation Corps Areas were based upon the existing divisions of the Army. Virginia was District 4 of the Third Corps Area with Headquarters in Richmond. Each state within the Corps Area was partitioned into sub-districts based upon the number of camps in a specific geographical area. The number of sub-districts fluctuated in proportion to the number of camps in operation reaching a total of 25 sub-districts at the peak of CCC activity in April of 1936. Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between each administrative level.

The basic unit of the Civilian Conservation Corps was the CCC camp occupied by a CCC company of approximately two hundred enrollees. The careful administration of camp companies was of paramount concern. The camp commander of either Captain or First Lieutenant rank coordinated camp activities with the aid of a 2nd ranking officer. The two or three non-commissioned officers assigned to each camp would oversee enrollees performing specialized camp functions. An educational advisor and a medical officer or contract surgeon were also attached to the camp.\(^2\)

Joseph W. Koch described his duties as a CCC camp commander succinctly. "Our job was to feed, clothe, and house the men. ... we would turn the men over to the Park Service in the morning, feed 'em at noontime on the job, and when they came back in then it was my baby once more."\(^3\) The medical officer assisted by two enrollees with first-aid training were kept busy at the camp infirmary treating anything from blisters to broken arms. Men with illnesses or wounds which needed specialized medical attention were driven to the nearest hospital. Serious cases requiring specialized surgical attention were brought to the Walter Reed Hospital by the ambulance which was assigned to each sub-district.

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\(^2\)Ibid., Section II, pp. 5-6.

\(^3\)Koch Interview.
Figure 2

Administrative Levels of CCC Camp Functions
By April 1934, sixty-six per cent of the physicians rendering medical services to CCC recruits in Virginia were civilians because of a shortage of available Regular and Reserve Army medical officers. These physicians were referred to as contract surgeons and were required to visit their assigned CCC camp(s) once a week. Where camps had to rely upon civilian physicians on contract, the enrollees who were trained in first-aid and assigned to the infirmary were indispensable to the care of the men.

Communicable diseases were of special concern to the physicians connected with the various camps. Epidemics were the ultimate fear. In early 1935, two cases of typhoid fever were reported at camp UNF-6 near Sugar Grove, Virginia. Two other cases occurred in the town itself. The local enrollees from Sugar Grove who reported to work each day from their homes were ordered not to return to camp until a full investigation was conducted by the Surgeon General's Office. Two weeks later the CCC Director ordered the "immediate removal" of the CCC company from the area to prevent the incidence of typhoid cases from reaching

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4 Compiled from CCC camp reports in Boxes 1158/221-1163/226, CCC Camp Reports, Records of the CCC.

5 Assistant Director of the CCC, J. J. McEntee to Surgeon General, Washington, D.C., 28 January 1935, ms. in UNF-6 Sugar Grove file, Box 1158/221, CCC Camp Reports, Records of the CCC.
epidemic proportions. That same year at the Yorktown National Monument, three members of CCC Co. #352 contracted cerebrospinal meningitis. Once the illness had been diagnosed the order was given by District Headquarters for the camp to be quarantined. The work at the Yorktown site was slowed, but the quarantine prevented the spread of the disease to the local population. No other cases were reported at the camp. Aside from these two instances, Virginia camps seemed to have avoided any serious outbreaks of disease. However, the infirmary was kept quite busy each winter by the season's colds.

The educational adviser was the only civilian member of the camp administration. His responsibility was to conduct classes at night for those who were interested. The effectiveness of an educational advisor depended upon his rapport with the enrollees and his ability to secure supplementary educational facilities from local educational institutions. Hampton Institute, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and the College of William and Mary were noted

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6 J. J. McEntee to Adjutant General, Major General James F. McKinley, Washington, D. C., 20 February 1935, ms. in UNF-6 Sugar Grove file, Box 1158/221 CCC Camp Reports, Records of the CCC; see also Smyth County News, 21 February 1935, p. 1 col. 2.

for their assistance with local camp education programs, providing both lecturers and facilities. The W. P. A. also provided an additional forty elementary school teachers for CCC enrollees who were completely illiterate.

CCC camp organization was well structured. Work units were organized so as to allow for a maximum amount of supervision. Enrollees assumed leadership positions at each level, i.e. platoon (96 men), section (32 men), sub-section (16 men), and squad (8 men). The specific numbers of men in each organizational unit differed with the size of the CCC company. A number of enrollees performed specialized functions, e.g. mechanic, clerk-typist, assistant educational adviser, first-aid assistants. These men remained in camp unless their services were needed at the work project. (See Figure 3)

Major General Paul B. Malone, Commander of the Third Corps Area (Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and the District of Columbia), was relieved that his young officers involved in organizing and administering forestry camps "ably measured up to expectations." These junior officers were "thrown largely upon their own initiative and resourcefulness" in meeting the daily problems of supply, sanitation,

---

CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS
CAMP ORGANIZATION
Figure 3

(32-man sections) (32-man sections) (8-man squads)

2d Platoon

1st Platoon

Camp Commander

2d Rankng Officer

Assistant Advisor (camp stafe)

Sergeant

Policeman

Store Keeper

2 Watchmen

1 Clerk

2 Truck Drivers

1 Mechanic

4 Cooks

1 Baker

6 men on guard duty

(purposes going in camp gather wood and keep during winter, 6 men)
and discipline. Major General Malone felt that the CCC experience would be "of inestimable value" to the Army.  

2. Camp Life

Living conditions for the first few months in each camp were hectic as enrollees pitched tents and built wooden flooring for their temporary quarters. During these first days, camps were transformed into permanent facilities. Gravel walks connected the 120' x 20' barracks buildings. Each camp administration office was flanked on both sides by a project superintendent's office, officers' quarters, an educational facility, mess hall, and kitchen. A red cross flag ruffled lazily over the infirmary.

Sounds of saws and hammers were soon heard from newly erected work shops. In each camp, enrollees transformed garages into service facilities rather than simple shelters for their precious motorized vehicles. Mess halls usually doubled as recreation halls. However, a number of Virginia camps designated a separate building for recreational purposes.

As permanent structures were constructed, a stable routine developed throughout the camps. Below is a common schedule of activities that was posted on company bulletin boards.

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An unscheduled bed check was conducted each evening to determine whether all enrollees were in camp. Enrollees worked forty hours per week and not more than eight hours per day. However, extra work duty could be imposed for infractions of camp regulations.

Rules regulating the daily life of enrollees were not rigid, i.e. "no more so than those found in any organized group." Most infractions of the rules concerned absence without leave from the camp or work project, disregard of safety regulations, refusal to work, desertion, becoming disabled due to one's own misconduct, failure to perform duties, and theft. Disciplinary action was taken by the company commander. Minor infractions were punishable by reprimand, suspension of privileges, or assignment of extra duty in camp. Serious offenses were punishable by forfeiture of pay not to exceed $3.00 in any one month,


11 Ibid., p. 34.
administrative discharge, or dishonorable discharge. The most severe action which the company commander could take against an offender was to discharge an enrollee dishonorably from the Corps. Enrollees were turned over to civil authorities if a misdemeanor or a felony was committed. In cases of serious offences, formal hearings were conducted, at which the accused enrollee had the opportunity to make a statement on his own behalf, question witnesses, and present his own witnesses. The enrollee could also appeal the company commander's decision to the Sub-district level.

The kitchen police duty was conducted on a rotating basis and name of those assigned K.P. were posted each day. K.P. was not considered undesirable by many enrollees who preferred kitchen duty over the strenuous work on forestry projects. Nevertheless, these men along with the mess steward and cooks were under considerable peer pressure, especially when a meal met with disfavor among the famished forest workers. The members of Company 1386 at Clifton Forge complained that the potato soup served at their camp was "99.9% water, .005 rust, and .005 potato." Sometimes meals were met with strikes; other times a cook would awake to find that displeased diners had surreptitiously sewn his

\[12\] The Voice of '86, Co. 1386, Clifton Forge, Va. (September 1934), p. 4.
nightclothes to the canvas of his cot.\textsuperscript{13}

Army chaplains or local ministers conducted weekly religious services. Communities and distance permitting, enrollees were allowed to attend local services. Attendance was not compulsory. Chaplains of the Third Corps Area met semi-annually to discuss camp morale and their responsibilities toward the enrollees. In many cases, chaplains, as well as camp officers and educational advisers had to act as camp psychologists aiding the men with their personal problems. The local minister was a key ingredient to the community's acceptance of the CCC enrollee.\textsuperscript{14}

Education programs were tailored to the needs and desires of the enrollees in each camp. Attendance was voluntary and educational advisers found it extremely difficult to entice enrollees to pursue their studies after an exhausting eight hours of forestry work. One observer cited this as the educational program's "greatest weakness."\textsuperscript{15} Nevertheless, educational advisers presented

\textsuperscript{13}Richmond Times-Dispatch, 2 March 1936, p. 6 cols. 1-6.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., 11 October 1935, p. 4.col. 5.

classes in public speaking, psychology, foreign languages, trigonometry, and Bible studies. These were the most common academic subjects offered in Virginia camps. Vocational courses always attracted the majority of those wishing to further their education while at CCC camps. In many camps, typewriting had the highest enrollment figures; however, in as many cases auto mechanics classes were the most frequently attended. Carpentry, masonry, radio repair, and barbering were also found among the list of vocational courses offered by Virginia camps.

During the warmer months, attendance was minimal because of the variety of outdoor activity; but each year as winter approached, enrollees began spending their spare time in night classes. In some camps, attendance rates rose dramatically. At one point, Co. #1249 and Co. #1252 located in Smyth County recorded that on the average each man attended four night classes per week.

Initially, most camps had only the Army regulation traveling libraries. However, the more permanent camps

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17 First aid courses were well attended in many Virginia camps.

eventually accumulated their own reading material. By 1935, an inexpensive encyclopedia had been placed in each camp by the educational division of the CCC. Hampton Institute donated over 300 books to Yorktown camp libraries. The Newport News school system donated over 1,200 textbooks to local camps. In its last years of operation, the Corps encouraged the use of reading material related to vocational studies. A number of pamphlets on advanced forestry were printed by the CCC for enrollees who were interested in forestry careers.

Thomas Gordon Bennett, Third Corps Area Educational Adviser, obtained the aid of a number of Virginia's educational institutions. Virginia Polytechnic Institute held conferences on agricultural education for Corps officials. College of William and Mary students who majored in education assisted CCC officers and forestry supervisors with local camp education programs. Hampton Institute proved invaluable to the educational programs of the many all-black CCC camps on the Virginia Peninsula. Local high schools often were used by CCC enrollees from nearby camps. The Virginia Supervisor of Secondary

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19 Norfolk Journal and Guide, 30 December 1933, p. 2 cols. 5-6.

20 Thomas G. Bennett, comp., Reports of Instructional Projects with Related Instruction (Marion, Virginia: CCC Third Area Corps, 1938), passim.

21 Virginia Gazette, 8 December 1933, p. 7 col. 2.
Education established the policy of allowing enrollees to complete their high school education at camp. Examinations were administered at the end of each course for those wishing to receive credit.\textsuperscript{22}

Camp newspapers were common to Virginia CCC companies. Run "by and for enrollees," camp newspapers were financed through advertisements solicited by enrollees and educational advisers from local business establishments. Staffs were composed of enrollees who had successfully passed journalism courses offered in camp.\textsuperscript{23} These newspapers ranged from mimeograph sheets to professionally printed publications.\textsuperscript{24}

Special attention was given to the illiterate recruits who wished to participate in the educational program. However, most educational advisers faced with the task of teaching the rudiments of reading and writing were simply not trained to conduct elementary level classes.\textsuperscript{25}


\textsuperscript{24}Excellent examples are found in the issues of The Tall Pine, Co. #376 Waverly, Va.; and Ye Olde York Times, Co. #2305, Yorktown, Va.

Gradually, camp education programs were supplemented with elementary level teachers employed by the W. P. A. By 1940, forty out of the fifty-six camps in Virginia were aided by W. P. A. elementary level teachers. The remaining sixteen camps were aided by the Virginia State Adult Fund which provided teachers three nights each week for these camps.  

After August 1937, camp commanders were required to make available at least 2600 square feet of floor space for educational purposes. With the added space and the increased desire of enrollees to further their education, the number of men attending camp education and training programs continued to rise. In 1938, eighty-seven per cent of the enrollees stationed at Virginia CCC camps attended these programs.

Civilian Conservation Corps camps composed of black enrollees had a much more difficult educational task in that on the average of 53 per cent were only on an elementary school level. In one Williamsburg camp, only


20 per cent had completed their elementary level education.\textsuperscript{29} Having been deprived of adequate education, black enrollees were for the most part very responsive to camp educational programs. High attendance rates can also be attributed to the influence among black enrollees of the camp educational adviser. In black CCC camps, the position of educational adviser was the highest leadership post within the CCC camp organization generally open to blacks. Hampton Institute was extremely helpful with CCC education programs. Enrollees at Yorktown camps were driven to Hampton Institute twice weekly by National Park Service personnel so that they could attend special night courses. The Institute frequently sent speakers, instructors, and entertainers into these camps in their continuing efforts to supplement the existing educational programs.\textsuperscript{30}

In early 1940, the CCC Director's office reported that over 90 per cent of the black enrollees in the Corps attended classes.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Virginia Gazette}, 8 December 1933, p. 7 col. 2.

\textsuperscript{30} Isaac Fisher, "Hampton Institute's Aid to the Nation During the Present Economic Crisis," \textit{Southern Workman}, Vol. LXIV No. 4 (April 1935), pp. 118-123.

The recreation programs in each camp competed with the education program and usually emerged the victor. In warmer months, enrollees preferred the challenge of the baseball field to the challenge of the classroom. The most popular sports were baseball, boxing, horseshoes, football, volleyball, and wrestling. Other activities ranged from debating teams to glee clubs and "hillbilly bands." Occasionally, enrollees were invited to perform for radio audiences. The glee club of Co. #376 in Waverly were frequent guests on the Petersburg radio station, WPHR. Enrollees from Co. #351 in Lyndhurst who played country music were invited on several occasions to perform over station WCHV. The Lincoln Theatre in Marion was frequently the talent showcase of the men working on Hungry Mother State Park in Smyth County. In addition to being a constructive and encouraging experience for the enrollees, these activities also promoted good community relations.

CCC company funds were established in order to provide for special purchases such as sports equipment. Some camps operated camp stores selling ice cream, candy, tobacco, and razor blades, which deposited the profits into

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32 The Tall Pine, 31 May 1936, p. 1 col. 1.
33 The Sand Spring Owl, 10 March 1936, p. 7.
the company fund. In most camps the procurement of equipment depended upon the ingenuity of the commanding officer. Commanders were sometimes able to obtain athletic equipment, books, magazines, old tools, and some used musical instruments through the munificence of the local community.  

According to one camp newspaper, "next to pay day the biggest event in camp is the monthly dance." One of the few opportunities to meet women were at these occasional dances which were held by the camp or a nearby town. It was not surprising that, "on the night of the dance it was almost impossible to get into the shower house."  

Special investigators conducted quarterly inspections in order to check up on the development, management, and community relations of each camp. They gave special attention to such things as the condition and appearance of the camp, the deportment of camp officials, and the diet, health, and morale of the recruits. Enrollees felt unusually free to complain about camp conditions either to the CCC Director. One letter was addressed to "Mrs. Roosevelt" asking her to intervene on the enrollee's behalf. During CCC operations in Virginia, special investigators quickly responded to each complaint.  

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35 For examples of the enterprising nature of some camp commanders, see transcript of interview with Col. Joseph W. Koch, Commanding Officer of Co. #350 Big Meadows, Virginia.  

36 The Wise-Cracker, Co. #2348 Big Island, Virginia (March 16, 1934), p. 3.  

37 To Mrs. Roosevelt," ms. in F-6 folder, Box 1158/221. Camp Reports Records of the CCC.
Although many individual grievances were simply related to the rigors of forestry work, there were a number of petitions signed by groups of enrollees who complained of the diet, work schedules, and their camp commander. Investigators responded to these petitions with prompt visits to the specific camp. The removal of inept or harsh military officers, or the reprimand and/or discharge of the dissenters were often the prescribed remedies.

Each year on the anniversary of the establishment of the Civilian Conservation Corps, camps throughout Virginia and the nation held "open house" in order that the local citizenry might observe the progress of Corps projects. Public officials converged on the camps in order to be identified with the work of the Corps. At other times foreign dignitaries visited Virginia camps. The Civilian Conservation Corps camp stationed at Fort Hunt served as host to Anthony Eden, the Swedish Minister of Commerce, and in a much publicized visit, the King and Queen of England.\(^{38}\)

In this massive effort of employment and conservation, as most visitors noted, the military provided the sole example which the CCC could follow. However, the CCC Director constantly played down the military aspects of

\(^{38}\)New York Times, 14 December 1938, p. 1 col. 6; F. Wennerberg to Robert Fechner, Washington, D. C., 6 July 1939, ms. in Fort Hunt folder, Box 387, General Correspondence, Records of the CCC; and Alexandria Gazette, 9 June 1939, p. 1 col. 8.
the Corps. Fechner especially wanted to avoid any comparison with contemporary youth camps in Nazi Germany. At every level, the Corps generally took careful steps to promote good public relations.
1. Accomplishments

In his Inaugural Address delivered before the Virginia General Assembly in 1930, Governor John Garland Pollard expressed the desire to develop a state park at Jamestown and to have national parks established at Yorktown and in the Shenandoah region. The Governor also stressed the "magnitude and importance of the problem of reforestation."¹ A State commission was created to study the condition of farm and forest lands. The commission reported that there were approximately 1,200,000 acres of "waste land" and 900,000 acres described as "idle" or "fallow" crop land in Virginia. At the same time, the final figures of the damage wrought by the 1930 forest fires had been compiled. It was estimated that the fires had cleared 924,000 acres of forest, causing a $1,852,915 loss to landowners while $166,892.80 had been spent for fire control efforts.²


Forests embraced sixty per cent of Virginia's land area. As in other parts of the South, Virginia forest resources were severely taxed by the rate of lumber being produced. The lack of long range conservation efforts left the southern states, perhaps more than any other part of the nation, in need of immediate conservation work. In Virginia, there was no concerted reforestation policy. Plans for reconditioning marginal land areas for forest production fell on deaf ears. However, fire protection was of major concern in the state. Virginia's recent experience with dry spell forest fires convinced state officials of the need for fire prevention. In 1931, the Virginia Forest Service was authorized to employ over 1,500 "forest wardens" to watch over the fifty-eight counties which were organized for forest protection.

One historian explained that Virginia was less affected by the Great Depression than other states "because of her rural character and relatively balanced economy."

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Yet, the ranks of Virginia's unemployed swelled to over 125,000. The depression, coupled with the fiscal philosophy of financial solvency constantly stressed by the ever present Harry F. Byrd, prevented the state from committing sufficient funds to deal with the problems of reforestation and unemployment. President Roosevelt's emergency conservation plan signed into law on 31 March 1933 took up the slack in the state program. Federal funding and organization of the Civilian Conservation Corps enabled the fulfillment of planned state conservation projects.

Much of the work done in respect to national lands followed existing plans which had been waiting for the money and the means. Most of the work accomplished in State Park areas had been planned in advance by State Forester F. C. Pederson. Pederson produced remarkable results in the years of his supervision of forestry interests in Virginia. From June of 1933 until the reduction of the state's camps, he directed from twenty-four to forty CCC camps which worked on state and private lands constructing forest fire control improvements. Numerous historic preservation projects


throughout Virginia were simply waiting for federal moneys. The Emergency Conservation Work program filled the vacuum between existing plans and Virginia's depression economy.

The jurisdiction of military officers was confined to the control of the CCC company when conservation work had stopped for the day. This responsibility did not extend to the work projects except for providing meals. The enrollees were handed over to the Project Superintendent who assumed the responsibility of supervision for forty hours each week. The Project Superintendent was assisted by eight to ten technical men or specialists from the Department of Agriculture of the Department of the Interior. Enrollees were appointed as "leaders" and "assistant leaders." They received additional stipends of $11 to $20 per month by the company commander upon recommendation of the project superintendent.

Every major forest and most smaller parks were substantially improved by reforestation, fire control, wildlife shelters, shelters for park visitors, and greater accessibility to the public through bridge, trail, and road construction. Numerous small conservation reservoirs were built entirely by Civilian Conservation Corps labor throughout national and state forests and parks.\(^9\) Man-made lakes

such as Lakes Goodwin and Prince Edward were built and stocked with fish. CCC enrollees patrolled George Washington National Forest and aided state and federal game wardens in game management. Companies stationed in or around military installations developed hundreds of acres of military lands.

Roads and trails were constructed to facilitate fire control through increased accessibility of park lands. Enrollees improved and built hundreds of miles of truck trails. Westmoreland State Park, Jefferson National Forest, Washington National Forest, Fairy Stone State Park, and the general Shenandoah Valley region were some of the major park areas where such work was accomplished. Numerous parks were established as a direct results of the Emergency Conservation Work program, e.g. Pocahontas State Park, Back Bay Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, Swift Creek Recreational Park, Chopwamsic Recreational Demonstration Project. In the nine years of operation in Virginia, the Civilian

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Conservation Corps created six state parks, worth approximately $5,000,000 which later became property of the state at a cost of only $100,000.\textsuperscript{12}

CCC companies spent years improving various historic sites and battlefield parks throughout the state, such as Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Parks, and the Colonial National Historical Park at Yorktown. The men of the CCC reconstructed fortifications, portions of trench lines, gun emplacements, and historic buildings. Under the direction of National Park Service supervisors, enrollees also performed archeological work. Battlefield parks throughout Virginia were landscaped. Historic preservation in Virginia made substantial gains. The area of the Yorktown Colonial National Historical Park more than trebled during the 1930s.\textsuperscript{13}

Some camps were established with the sole purpose of helping local farmers recondition land areas devastated by soil erosion.\textsuperscript{14} In Virginia, soil and water conservation projects increased substantially following the passage of the Soil Conservation Act in 1935. An agronomist and a


\textsuperscript{13}Newport News Daily Press, 29 March 1938, p. 4 col. 2.

\textsuperscript{14}Richmond Times-Dispatch, 3 July 1940, p. 2 col. 5.
"soils technician" were attached to camps involved with this work.\textsuperscript{15} Enrollees produced admirable results at beachfront erosion control projects along the Virginia coastline.

Civilian Conservation Corps companies were also made available for emergency situations. Early in the program, the men of the CCC demonstrated their adaptability to emergencies. On August 23, 1933, the Virginia Peninsula withstood the "worst storm in over 100 years."

\textsuperscript{17} Wind, tides, and rain destroyed much of the waterfront area along the York River. CCC camps along the entire peninsula concentrated their efforts on clearing debris and stopping further damage by salvaging waterfront structures. Enrollees also aided fishermen by retrieving boats which had been left as far as a mile distant from the water by the devastating storm.\textsuperscript{18} The Superintendent of the Colonia National Monument at Yorktown praised the CCC companies for bringing


\textsuperscript{16}War Department, Adjutant General's Office, CCC Division, Station and Strength Reports, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

\textsuperscript{17}Virginia Gazette, 25 August 1933, p. 1 cols. 4-5.

\textsuperscript{18}Virginia Pilot and Norfolk Landmark, 26 August 1933, p. 1 col. 6; 27 August 1933, p. 2 col. 1.
Figure 4

Number of CCC Camps
Operating in Virginia, 1933 - 1942
"order out of chaos."⁴⁴

When Virginia was hit by sudden floods along the Smith River Valley in 1937, enrollees assisted in draining wells and other disease prevention work. Many small bridges were subsequently rebuilt along the flooded areas by CCC labor.⁴⁰ Richmond's mayor expressed, "Richmond's deep appreciation and everlasting gratitude to Colonel William E. Persons (4th District Commander) and the officers and men of the CCC who met an actual emergency and saved the city a loss impossible to compute."⁴¹ Richmond was truly grateful for the work done by the CCC to stem the raging waters of the James River during another storm. In still another instance of the CCC adaptability to emergency situations, one hundred and fifty enrollees combed the eastern part of Lee County in search of a missing school teachers from nearby Pennington Gap.⁴²

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⁴⁰Richmond Times-Dispatch, 23 October 1937, p. 4 col. 3; 24 October 1937, p. 4 cols. 1-2.


Fire fighting was one of the Corps' most important responsibilities in timberline areas. State and national forests were dotted with observation towers, and connected by telephone through CCC efforts. Roads and trails were built to enable fire-fighters to reach the conflagration once it had been detected. The CCC provided the Virginia Division of Forestry the opportunity to develop effective fire control in a number of counties. The importance of the fire control work of the CCC in Virginia cannot be overstated. Towards the end of the 1930's, forest industries were paying total annual wages of $19,000,000 to Virginia workers. At that time, Virginia produced more tonnage of paper and pulp than any other Southern state, representing 500,000 cords of pulpwood yearly. Thus, the state's paper industry was placed in danger each Spring as Virginia's "fire season" annually recurred.

The "fire seasons," March through May, of 1935 and 1936 were especially severe. It was not unusual for half

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of a CCC company to return from battling a forest fire only to find that the rest of the men had since been sent out to another blaze. During the 1936 fire season, Southwest Virginia CCC companies concentrated practically all of their efforts on fire protection. At one point, thirty men from Co. #358 and one hundred men from Co. #2389 were needed to control a forest fire near Speedwell, Virginia, while an additional one hundred men from Co. #357 were called in to handle a particularly fierce forest fire near Big Stone Cap. Meanwhile, twenty-six men from Co. #358 and forty from Co. #357 were extinguishing a fire in the vicinity of High Knob. Frantic schedules were similarly repeated throughout Virginia. Some CCC fire-fighting crews traveled as far as 70 miles to put out a fire.

Even in 1937, a year of substantially less severe forest fires, enrollees in Virginia spent a total of 18,421 man-days fighting fires. In March on 1940 despite the

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26 The Backbone Star, Co. #357 Damascus, Virginia, 25 April 1936; and Hootowl Holler, Co. #358 Speedwell, Va., Vol. II No. 8, 10 May 1936.

27 The Sand Spring Owl, Co. #351 Lyndhurst, Va., Vol. III No. 9, 15 May 1936.

28 Press Release in "Federal CCC" file, Box 1, Executive Correspondence, Executive Papers of James H. Price, Archives Division, Virginia State Library.
reduction of camps in the state, CCC companies proved extremely valuable in restricting possible fire damage.\textsuperscript{29}

The technical agency directing the CCC work project trained, equipped, and directed forest fire control. The camp commander was responsible for providing food and clothing to enrollees engaged in fire-fighting. CCC companies maintained a fully equipped field medical service under the direction of the camp medical officer assisted by his first-aid assistants.\textsuperscript{30}

Upon hearing of plans to remove local camps, the Buckingham County Board of Supervisors petitioned Governor Price and Director Pechner to allow one camp to remain. Eighty-seven per cent of the county was timber stand. The Board of Supervisors stated that the removal of forest fire protection that these three camps had provided would be a "most serious loss." They further asserted that, "the CCC camps can get to a fire and put it out before a fire warden can get his crew together."\textsuperscript{31} This was a typical response from counties faced with CCC camp reduction.

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Lynchburg News}, 28 March 1940, p. 5 cols. 5-6; and \textit{Roanoke Times}, 28 March 1940, p. 4 col. 3.


\textsuperscript{31} Signed copy of minutes of meeting 7 March 1938, Board of Supervisors of Buckingham County, "Federal CCC" file, Box 1, Executive Correspondence, Executive papers of James H. Price.
During its stay in Virginia, the Civilian Conservation Corps performed valuable service to the state. The federal government assumed the financial and logistical burden of conservation work throughout Virginia on state, private, and national lands. For nine years, the corps also provided the state with an effective and readily available firefighting force, as well as a ready reserve of manpower in cases of emergency.


In rural Virginia, camp officials found that the sale of illicit liquor to enrollees made camp discipline extremely difficult. The liquor, or "moonshine" being produced and those distributing it were beyond the authority of camp officials. In the Shenandoah region, moonshine was quite common. One commander reported that "mountaineers" would appear along the road near camp "with a tin cup and a keg on their shoulder and you could buy a cup of moonshine for a quarter."\(^{32}\)

The commander of camp F-13 (Federal Project-13) near Natural Bridge Station appealed to the Internal Revenue Service Alcohol Tax Unit in Richmond for a solution to his

\(^{32}\)Interview with Joseph Koch.
problem. The I. R. S. responded by locating and destroying moonshine stills in the area. The I. R. S. and CCC investigator Charles H. Kenlan also investigated illicit liquor sales near the towns of Bedford and Marion.

The most serious incident the Corps faced in its first few years of operation in Virginia involved members of SP-11 located near the town of Marion. On 17 December 1933, two regular army non-commissioned officers assigned to SP-11, a sergeant and a corporal, became involved in "a drinking brawl" which eventually developed into a "riot." The disturbance took place at a local gasoline service station where liquor was being illegally sold. During the fracas, the corporal was stabbed several times. The sergeant returned to camp and organized a group of CCC recruits. The entire body of men then returned to the service station and proceeded to engage in "a general fight" in the process partially destroying the station. The incident became known as the "Second Battle of Marion."

Within the next several days, Special Investigator Charles H. Kenlan, Director of Virginia State Parks R. E. Burson, Governor George C. Peery, Commonwealth Attorney

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34 Capt. John H. Wickham to Governor Peery, Natural Bridge Station, 18 October 1934; and J. J. McEntee to Peery, Washington, D. C., 18 August 1934 ms. in "Federal CCC" file, Box 17, Executive Correspondence, Executive Papers of G. C. Peery.

Crockett Gwinn, and Sub-district CCC Commander (Captain) William D. Hohenthal combined efforts to investigate the disturbance, and settle damage claims. The investigation revealed the widespread abuse of "bootleg" liquor throughout ten CCC camps in the vicinity. Marion's Chief of Police was removed from office because of his alleged connection with the "bootleg ring." 36

Assistant CCC Director J. J. McEntee wrote to Governor George C. Peery explaining that the town of Marion would have to be declared off-limits to CCC personnel unless something was done about the illicit liquor being sold by local bootleggers to enrollees. McEntee reflected that area merchants would be deprived of a considerable market should this be necessary. He urged that the town's merchants "enter heartily" into any project aimed at eliminating the sale of bootleg liquor. 37

After two months of strict camp discipline Hohenthal reported that drunkenness had become a rarity and that the camps were "now well adjusted to the local community in spite of sectional and even racial differences." 38

36 Report on Marion "riot" in SP-11 (State Park-11) file, Box 1163/226, Camp Reports, Records of the CCC.

37 J. J. McEntee to Governor Peery, Wash., D. C., 9 January 1934; and J. P. Buchanan to Governor Peery, Marion, 1 February 1934; mss. in "Federal CCC" file, Box 17, Exec. Corres., Exec. Papers of Gov. Peery.

38 William D. Hohenthal to Charles H. Kenlan, Sugar Grove, 28 February 1934, ms. in SP-11 file, Box 1163/226, Camp Reports, Records of the CCC.
community relations were rapidly restored. The area CCC companies alternated giving "vaudeville" shows at the Lincoln Theatre in Marion which were well attended by the townspeople. This policy set by local camp commanders was continued for as long as there were camps in the area. In February of 1934, an editorial in the Marion Democrat proclaimed: "The Town of Marion, its Council, Mayor, and people have welcomed these boys to this county. . . . They are indeed glad to have them here."39

Director Fechner was especially concerned with excessive "elopements," (desertions), and dishonorable discharges from CCC camps. In that many of the desertions and/or dishonorable discharges involved groups of individuals, each situation was considered as potentially volatile. On one occasion, nineteen of the initial contingent of twenty-one recruits at SP-10 disappeared from camp by the next morning.40 Adverse publicing resulting from desertions undoubtedly damaged the Corp's image although the specific incidents usually went unreported by the press. Civilian Conservation Corps desertion rates eventually became a matter of public record. Fechner became alarmed at the

39 The Marion Democrat, 6 February 1934, p. 4 cols. 1-2.

40 SP-10 Camp Inspection Report 12/30/33, ms. in SP-10 file, Box 1163/226 Camp Reports, Records of the CCC.
increasing rate of desertion which had become "the worst spot on the whole record" of the Corps.\footnote{Advisory Council, Minutes 10 February 1939, Records of the CCC.}

Throughout the fall of 1937, Virginia camps were particularly plagued by elopements. In early November, Assistant Director McEntee visited a number of camps located in the Shenandoah region of Virginia. He reported that camp NP-12 (National Park-12) alone recorded thirty-eight desertions. Lieutenant Colonel Thompson Lawrence of the Third Corps Army Area in Baltimore began an investigation of the 77 desertions and discharges from four Virginia camps over the preceding six weeks.\footnote{Ibid., 22 November 1937.} After a comprehensive investigation, Lt. Colonel Lawrence concluded that many of the desertions, especially those at NP-12, were a result of the hazing of new enrollees. Sectional differences had contributed to the tension between the enrollees. The recent arrivals from Pennsylvania were harassed by enrollees from Southwestern Virginia causing thirty-eight Pennsylvanians to leave camp within a few hours of their arrival. Following these incidents, camp

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\footnote{Advisory Council, Minutes 10 February 1939, Records of the CCC.}

\footnote{Ibid., 22 November 1937.}
commanders were instructed to make new arrivals in camp feel welcome and to prohibit hazing by other enrollees.43 Despite precautions, desertions remained a problem in CCC camps throughout the nation.

CHAPTER IV
BLACKS AND THE CCC

As the Depression rapidly erased even the structure of what were traditionally considered "Negro" jobs, deprivation in the black community increased. New Deal relief programs were essentially all the blacks could turn to. Many black leaders hopefully looked to the Civilian Conservation Corps as a constructive program for the nation's unemployed black youth.¹

As the Emergency Conservation Act sped through Congress, the sole black in the House of Representatives, Oscar DePriest, succeeded in attaching an amendment vital to blacks hoping to benefit from this federal relief program. In its final form, the amendment incorporated into the Act of 31 March 1933 giving the CCC legal existence stated: "That in employing citizens for the purposes of this Act, no discrimination shall be made on account of race, color, or creed."² It was to this clause that black


²Vote of 179 to 71 in favor of the amendment. See Congressional Record, 73rd Congress, 1st session, Vol. 77 pt. 1, p. 983; See also Statutes at Large, Vol. XLVIII pt. 1, pp. 22-23.

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leaders pointed when CCC policy-makers fell short of their responsibility to blacks.

From the outset, blacks in Virginia encountered difficulties. Out of the original contingent of fifty-seven enrollees from Newport News in 1933 there was only one black. In Henrico County, only six of fifty black applicants were enrolled. Other cities and counties reported similar figures. With the exceptions of Norfolk and Richmond, enrollment of blacks elsewhere in the state was negligible.

Local relief agencies had declared many more white than black applicants eligible for enrollment. As a result of this selection bias, less than one-fifth of the CCC companies in Virginia were composed of blacks. Furthermore, these "all-Negro" companies were largely drawn from out-of-state recruits primarily from New York City, Washington, D. C., Baltimore, and various cities in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

The Norfolk Journal and Guide and black editor J. Thomas Newsome criticized the state for the lag in black

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4Will Alexander to W. Frank Persons, Wash., D. C., 12 June 1933, ms. in "Negro, general" file, Selection Division Records of the CCC.

5CCC Camp Reports 1933-34, Records of the CCC.
enrollment. State Commissioner of Public Welfare, Arthur James replied that he had instructed local relief committees that blacks were eligible for enrollment. James added that the selection of enrollees was based on "the need of the family and the benefit to the community." He concluded by stating that "the selection, therefore, becomes a matter of social work judgement and conscience, over which no one except the communities has any real control." It was clear that Commissioner James was not about to tackle the discriminatory attitude of the local communities.

The Journal and Guide constantly prodded government officials. Newsome noted in July, 1933, that, "from the angle of need, the negro was not given anything like his share of the work" in the government's reforestation program. Yet, Newsome was quick to admit that "this doesn't hide the fact that a large number of negro youth was employed at wages equal to those of other groups, and with the same facilities for camp life." He considered this to be "a big stride in the right direction."

From a camp on the Virginia Peninsula, one black enrollee observed that CCC life "reflected, to some extent, all the practices and prejudices of the U. S. Army."

6 Newport News Daily Press, 28 April 1933, p. 2 col. 5.

7 Ibid., 16 July 1933, p. 11 cols. 1-4.
Nevertheless, he went on to say that he was "gratified rather than disappointed with the CCC."  

Because of the existing policy of racial segregation in Virginia, black CCC recruits were organized into "all-Negro" camps. Camp SP-9 in Williamsburg was one exception. Initially, 147 blacks and 23 whites were integrated into one company. However, this arrangement was only temporary.  

The only other integrated camp was composed of 180 blacks and 20 whites located in Amherst County. Mrs. Thomas Whitehead, Executive Secretary of the Amherst County Emergency Relief Committee, was shocked by the camp commander's refusal to separate the two races. The Captain had reportedly told her that, "the Federal Government thinks as much of a negro as it does of a white man."  

Governor Pollard instructed Commissioner James to take up the matter of integration with CCC officials in Washington. James wrote to W. Frank Persons complaining

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9Supplementary Report on SP-9 submitted to Fechner by C. H. Kenlan, CCC special investigator, ms. in SP-9 Williamsburg file, Box 1163/226 Camp Reports, Records of the CCC.

10Mrs. Thomas Whitehead to Arthur W. James, Amherst, 12 June 1933, signed c.c. in "Federal CCC" file, Box 12, Executive Correspondence, Executive Papers of John G. Pollard, Archives Div., Va. State Library.

that, "people not experienced with our system of segregation in anything like social or living conditions had made a serious error in judgement." Persons refused to have the whites transferred from the camp. However, the Third Corps Area Commander, General Paul B. Malone reassigned these men to placate state officials.

Pressure by Virginia politicians was a primary cause of the racial segregation in Virginia's Civilian Conservation Corps Camps. The attitude of state officials was buttressed by CCC officials who acquiesced in Virginia's segregationist policy. CCC Director Robert Fechner made strict segregation an official policy in September of 1934. Civilian Conservation Corps officials never considered the creation of a nationwide system of integrated camps as the agency's responsibility. Given the prevailing social customs in Virginia such an attempt would have invited trouble, especially from Senators Carter Glass and Harry Byrd.

White communities throughout Virginia were quick to

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12 James to W. Frank Persons, Richmond, 23 June 1933, ms. in "Negro, Va." file, Selection Div. Policy, Records of the CCC.


protest the introduction of black camps in their area. Finding it increasingly difficult to place "all-Negro" camps in the state, General Malone under the direction of Fechner retained large numbers of black enrollees within the confines of military installations scattered throughout tidewater Virginia. These men worked on projects in the vicinity of the military compound primarily on military lands.

The city of Williamsburg was more concerned with the development of the Lake Matoaka area of the city than with the enrollees working on the project. Fechner took this opportunity to assign Co. #247, an "all-Negro" company, to the Matoaka site. A committee representing the communities surrounding the Manassas Battlefield area informed Governor George C. Peery that although they "would prefer to have a white CCC camp in their area they would rather have a black camp to no camp at all." One contemporary author, seems to have captured the attitude of a number of white communities toward black enrollees. Describing the work of

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15 K. J. Hoke to Fechner, Williamsburg, 25 July 1933, signed c.c. in folder 68, J. A. C. Chandler Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, Archives.

a black camp in Virginia, she wrote:

Throughout the Park are groups of CCC boys from the coloured camp nearby, clearing and pruning and transplanting; building fences and culverts; placing signs and tidying picnic grounds. The grandparents of the white foremen fought in this very place; those of the coloured boys were faithful attendents of their soldier masters. 17

The situation was compatible with the accepted social standards of the day with blacks remaining in an inferior position to their white supervisors.

Most communities were apprehensive about the large number of blacks concentrated in local CCC camps. The City of Williamsburg eventually hired two additional policemen to patrol the streets from 6 P.M. to 6 A.M. 18 Yorktown nearly exploded into a race riot in early January of 1934 following an alleged beating of a young white boy by a black. Local authorities searched each of the four black camps in the area with bloodhounds. Although the police found no evidence that an enrollee had been involved, car loads of whites sped back and forth through the camps for two days harassing the enrollees. This incident was coupled with the arrest of five black enrollees for allegedly


18 Virginia Gazette, 29 December 1933, p. 6. col. 2.
stealing a boat. Incensed by the bloodhounds and other forms of harassment, approximately eight hundred black enrollees from the four local camps formed one body of men and proceeded to the site of their comrades' incarceration. One newspaper reported claimed that, "only the quick release of the quintet averted sure violence."\(^1\)\(^9\) Despite these incidents, Co. #323, one of those involved, was selected by CCC officials as the outstanding company in Virginia.\(^2\)\(^0\)

One black enrollee from New York who served in one of the "all-Negro" companies on the Virginia Peninsula wrote that although there were black farmers on all sides of the camp, "socially the place was 'beat'." He found local blacks to be "not very friendly toward CCC boys in general, and toward the northerners in particular."\(^2\)\(^1\) White communities faced with no choice but to accept a black CCC company expressed their preference for "southern negroes." On behalf of his community, one mayor wrote to the Governor expressing this preference: "We do not care to have a camp full of Northern Negroes in this section


\(^2\)\(^0\)Newport News Daily Press, 12 February 1934, p. 7 col. 5.

\(^2\)\(^1\)Luther C. Wandall, "A Negro in the CCC," pp. 253-4.
of the country, their influence on our home negroes is anything but good."22

Fechner recognized that the acceptance and success of black CCC companies in the nation as well as in Virginia was conditional upon their acceptance by local communities. In September of 1934, the Director attempted to relieve local tensions by ordering that black enrollees were not to be transported beyond their own state and further, that "all-Negro" camp sites would be selected by the governor of the state.23 This policy severely restricted the numbers of black which could be accepted into the Civilian Conservation Corps. Camp sites could not be found in areas acceptable to local communities. Governors were extremely hesitant in placing black camps. The influence of local communities upon CCC policy cannot be overstated. Assistant Director J. J. McEntee once wrote to Governor James H. Price assuring him that, "it has been a standard practice since the beginning of this work that no colored company will be put in any locality where the local inhabitants do not favor it.24

Despite the existence of separate camps, both


23 Fechner to T. Polk, Wash., D. C., 20 October 1934, ms. in Corres. of the Director, Records of the CCC; See J. A. Salmond, "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro," pp. 80-82.

24 J. J. McEntee to Gov. Price, Wash., D. C., 1 June 1938, telegram in "Colored Camp" file, Box 638, Records of the CCC.
white and black companies were provided comparable facilities as prescribed by federal regulation. Surveying the numerous camp reports, it is difficult to detect any obvious differences between the operation of the separate camps. Beyond the question of segregation, the most obvious discrimination took place prior to the staffing and occupation of the camps. It had been decided that blacks would not be given leadership positions on administrative staffs or in supervisory positions on conservation project staffs. This led to immediate and sustained criticism from the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*. Dr. N. F. McNorton and Hughes A. Robinson of Yorktown were the two black men most responsible for the change in policy that allowed blacks to serve as CCC educational advisers. However, blacks were only employed at "all-Negro" camps.

While making this concession, Fechner announced that the position of educational adviser would be the only position in camp administration open to blacks. The Director justified his decision by claiming that gaining acceptance for black CCC companies was based upon "the assurance that white supervisors would be in charge."  

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26 Fechner to Thomas C. Hennings, Wash., D. C., 3 September 1935, ms. in Box 6, Official File 268, Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, FDR Library, Hyde Park, New York.
Continued pressure from the black community caused President Roosevelt to overrule both Secretary of War George H. Dern and Fechner in August of 1935. By direction of the President, blacks serving in the Officer Reserve Corps as doctors and chaplains were to be appointed to equivalent CCC administrative positions. Additional educational adviser positions were also made available to blacks. In reality this order opened very few positions to blacks.

The President's decision to have black physicians and chaplains appointed to CCC positions created a stir in Virginia. Many feared that Civilian Conservation Corps policy would be extended to provide for black work project superintendents and foremen. In October, the Virginia congressional delegation protested against any plans providing for the substitution of blacks for white superintendents and foremen at CCC work projects. Congressman Schuyler Otis Bland attempted to arrange a personal conference with the President on this matter. Senator Carter Glass complained to Fechner about such substitutions and enclosed a letter from the Chairman of the Warwick

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County Democratic Executive Committee which read: "The population in the vicinity of these "all-Negro" camps is about seventy-five per cent colored and it is hard enough to keep things under control with the limited police force without having these 800 negroes loose in the community without white supervision. Such action constitutes a serious menace to the lives and property of every citizen of the lower peninsula." 

In short order, the administration backed away from proposals to appoint black superintendents and foremen. On October 31, 1935, Fechner wrote to Senator Harry Byrd informing him that "when the President returned to Washington last week, he immediately called my attention to the telegram which you had addressed to him on October 23 in reference to colored CCC camps. . . . I am sure the result will meet with your approval." 

During the election year of 1936, Roosevelt reversed his previous decision and let it be known that black officers and supervisory personnel would be employed in Civilian Conservation Corps camps "wherever possible." 

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31 Stephen Early to Fechner, Wash., D. C., 13 November 1936, ms. in Box 18, O. P. 268, FDR Papers.
This was a limited victory for blacks in that the statement was vague enough to allow individual interpretation. In Virginia, it was not until 1938 that a number of white supervisors at black camps were replaced by blacks.  

Virginia's black population during the decade of the 1930s decreased from 26.8 per cent to 24.7 per cent. Only in the very last years of the Civilian Conservation Corps were blacks in Virginia enrolled in any great numbers. Prior to 1941, blacks were seldom enrolled even in proportion to the state's population, i.e. approximately 25 per cent. In that unemployment rate for blacks was much higher than the rate for whites, this meant that proportional aid was decidedly inequitable. This point was true for the entire New Deal program.  

As the nation's economy slowly improved, Fechner ordered that white and black camps be cut in strict proportion. Executive Secretary of the NAACP, Walter White,  

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35 Fechner to Persons, Wash., D.C., 23 March 1938, ms. in Director's Correspondence, Records of the CCC.
objected to this inequitable arrangement, but without result. White had complained that new jobs were being provided "almost exclusively to white youths," and that, "negroes needed the Civilian Conservation Corps as much as ever." Fechner's limited selection policy remained in effect until 1941 when his successor, J. J. McEntee, ordered increased black quotas in order to boost enrollments which decreased with the defense boom.

During the preceding years, local communities had dictated their terms concerning the location and numbers of black camps to federal and state officials who either lacked the desire or authority to support black CCC companies. Fechner readily empathized with these local communities. With a change in directors and a change in situations, the CCC administration provided some measure of equality for blacks not as a moral commitment but out of consideration of expediency and survival.


Hailed as one of the most active and "progressive" of Virginia chief executives, Harry Flood Byrd gained national attention through his unprecedented departures from traditionally conservative Virginia politics. To the surprise of liberal reformers during his tenure as governor (1927-1931), Byrd sponsored anti-lynching legislation, promoted rural electrification, instituted tax reforms, and began a state-wide effort to promote conservation. In the mindset of the progressive era and the cult of efficiency professed by America's most prominent businessmen, Harry Byrd's complete reorganization of Virginia's state government received the most attention. The Governor converted the state's deficit into a surplus under his "Program of Progress." Through governmental reorganization, approximately one hundred independent bureaus, boards, and

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departments were consolidated into fourteen departments under direct gubernatorial control. Although this process eliminated the waste of duplicated governmental effort, reorganization consequently extended the tentacles of the Byrd Organization into every facet of the executive branch. 

Prior to his gubernatorial years, Byrd exhibited a deep commitment to fiscal solvency. He gained state-wide plaudits for his "pay-as-you-go" approach to highway construction which he championed as Virginia state senator in 1923. Harry Byrd prided himself in his uncompromising stance towards maintaining a balanced budget as a governmental imperative. Indeed, the state political machine credited this policy of fiscal solvency with lessening the effect of the Great Depression in Virginia. The body politic had been effectively inculcated with this fiscal philosophy prior to the massive monetary infusions of the New Deal era.

To be sure most economists at that time extolled the virtues of the balanced budget. However, in state and national politics, Virginians would cite chapter and verse on the subject. Evidently, Byrd and the Organization valued balanced budgets and minimal expenditures

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above all considerations. As the Depression finally began to be felt in Virginia, the state relief program proved, at best, meager.⁴ Aid to Virginia citizens who became victims of the Depression would only come with the implementation of the F. D. R. administration's emergency relief programs. If Harry Byrd was to be considered "progressive," it was indeed "a rather cold, austere progressivism."⁵

In 1933, a senatorial vacancy was created by the appointment of Virginia Senator Claude A. Swanson to the Cabinet post of Secretary of the Navy. Appointed by the Governor to fill this vacancy, Harry Byrd gained the opportunity to impart his politico-economic wisdom to the entire nation. Upon reaching the Senate, he "quickly left the Roosevelt bandwagon." James T. Patterson in his study of the conservative coalition in the 1930s lists Byrd as the fifth conservative Senate Democrat to take an openly anti-New Deal position. According to Patterson, "there was no more determined exponent of fiscal orthodoxy."⁶


⁵ Patterson, The New Deal and the States, p. 20.

In the process of determining Senator Byrd's sincerity, or rather, his consistency on the issues of federal spending and relief policies, his relationship with the Civilian Conservation Corps - a federally funded relief agency - should be considered.

In general, Virginia politicians welcomed the Civilian Conservation Corps. Roosevelt's emergency conservation program offered at least partial solutions to unemployment, public relief, and existing plans for state conservation projects. The necessity of obtaining the cooperation of state governments led the CCC administration to develop a working relationship with the Virginia Democratic machine.

Politically, the Corps developed into a "new type of pork barrel legislation." Although the final word on camp location, procedure, tenure, and selection policies rested with the federal government, the state was necessarily given the task of actually selecting the individual enrollees, local experienced woodsmen, and other civilian laborers employed at the camps. A contemporary commentator noted the possibility of abuse: "The selection of the civilian

employees as well as the enrollees might become a 'spoils' system in the hands of local patronage dispensers.\(^8\) The responsibility of selection further devolved upon the various local relief agencies within the state (See Figure 1). Each county in Virginia contained a relief agency and at least one relief agent who performed the function of selection agent. The yearly quotas for Virginia varied from 5,000 to 7,400 men, 700 to 900 of whom were to occupy the positions of local experienced woodsmen (Lems) with the primary purpose of alleviating unemployment in the immediate vicinity of the CCC camps.\(^9\) The opportunity for abuse by "local patronage dispensers" did exist. It is not difficult to see that such a system would tend to benefit machine politics within a state rather than upset the status quo.

A resolution prepared by members of the Virginia State American Legion in 1933 condemned the Civilian Conservation Corps charging that the state quota from Virginia was filled by men "chosen for purely political reasons." The veterans felt that they and others who were actually in need were not allowed to enroll in the CCC. They concluded

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\(^9\) Arthur W. James, Commissioner of Public Welfare, and Chairman of the Virginia State Emergency Relief Committee, Information Sheet (April 1933), mimeograph in Official Selection Policy file, General Instructions to Local Selecting Agents, Box 33, Records of the CCC.
the resolution by stating that "in Virginia the sole intent in filling the quota was to choose the sons and relatives of political wardhealers."\textsuperscript{10} Apparently, Senator Byrd felt that no rebuttal was necessary.

In a radio address in January of 1934, Senator Byrd revealed his initial enthusiasm for the emergency conservation work conducted by the CCC. He declared that "not only will there be direct benefit to the wildlife of our nation, but in the process of restoration there will be built up a strong and sturdy race of young people engaged in the work." Byrd assured listeners that having been taken "off the streets" and out of the city the enrollees were developing within themselves a strength of character and a physical fitness which would repay the Government in years to come many times over the small present-day cost."\textsuperscript{11} Evidently, the Senator was even more pleased by the positive response to his requests to CCC Director Robert Fechner. Byrd sent recommendations for appointments to almost every level of CCC operations, i.e. camp superintendent, foreman, contract surgeon, and educational adviser.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10} New\textit{port News Daily Press}, 22 August 1933, p. 1 col. 5.

\textsuperscript{11} Radio address, "Wildlife Conservation," delivered by Senator Harry F. Byrd over WMAL on 19 January 1934, typescript in Box 359, Harry Flood Byrd Papers, Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

\textsuperscript{12} Byrd files, 100 General and Subsidiary Correspondence, Records of the CCC.
In early September 1933, U. S. Representative A. Willis Robertson and Senator Byrd conferred in Washington with Fechner on the location of camps which were to be organized in October, Byrd corresponded with the Director's office almost daily from September 15 to October 28 in regard to appointments to various CCC positions soon to become available. In all the Senator sent a minimum of thirty-two letters of recommendation during this period. This was by no means unusual for the Senator, who in the following months of March and April submitted no less than thirty-three recommendations.¹³ Obviously satisfied with his influence in the selection process, Byrd spoke of the CCC Director in the "highest terms."¹⁴

These requests were not peculiar to Senator Byrd. The entire Virginia congressional delegation including Senator Glass actively sought appointments for various Virginians. However, none was quite as demanding and successful as Harry Byrd. Of the various Virginia congressmen, Clifton Woodrum, Schuyler Otis Bland, and A. Willis Robertson achieved the most success with appointments to

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴A. Willis Robertson to Fechner, Lexington, 27 September 1933, ms. in Reduction of Camps file, General Correspondence, Box 62, Records of the CCC.
CCC positions, e.g. foremen, mechanics, contract physicians, forestry supervisors. 15

Senator Byrd frequently sent specific requests for the establishment of new CCC camps in his state. Even as his attitude toward the New Deal relief expenditures began to sour, he continued a steady stream of requests to the Director's office. These were generally acted upon by the agency. Evidently, the urge to extend patronage to Virginia supporters overcame his anti-New Deal, anti-relief expenditures position in the case of the Civilian Conservation Corps. The letters listed in Table 1 sometimes carried the names of four or five men who were to be appointed to various positions. Although Byrd precipitously broke with Roosevelt early in the first session of the 73rd Congress, he continued to enjoy favorable access to the political resources of the federally funded Civilian Conservation Corps. James T. Patterson correctly observed that, "Byrd managed to get his share of jobs without noticeably promoting reform." 16

Governor George C. Peery (1934-1938) joined Senators Byrd and Glass in "vehement" opposition to the Roosevelt


Table 1
Requests for the Establishment of Particular
C.C.C. Camps and Recommendations for
Supervisory C.C.C. Positions from
Senator Harry F. Byrd

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates of Correspondence</th>
<th>No. of Letters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22 April - 15 December, 1933</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 February - 20 December, 1934</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 January - 26 December, 1935</td>
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<td>2 January - 29 December, 1936</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>28 January - 13 December, 1937</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 January - 7 July, 1938</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 February, 8 Nov. - Dec., 1939</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 January - 19 July, 1940</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

administration's New Deal policies. Strictly following the state machine's fiscal conservatism, Peery would not

17 Compiled from Byrd files, 100 Gen. and Sub. Corres., Records of the CCC.
countenance deficit spending in Richmond while he held the office of Governor. Like Byrd and Glass, Peery demanded that Virginia receive "her share" of the federal monies being spent throughout the nation. The Governor did not hesitate to take up the matter of continued CCC camp operations with the President. Peery was an early proponent of maintaining the Corps on a permanent basis in the state, as long as the needed conservation work was accomplished with federal funds and did not constitute a drain on the state treasury.

The reaction of Virginia politicians to the construction or reduction of CCC camps in their state would seem to be a fair indication of the Civilian Conservation Corps' political value. In early September of 1933, Congressman Robertson and Senator Byrd met with Director Fechner on the location of camps which were to be organized in Virginia. The construction of eighteen additional camps

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in Virginia by mid-October resulted from this meeting.\(^{21}\) Congressman Patrick Henry Drewry of Virginia's 4th District, an advocate of the CCC program, was proficient at retaining local camps while the rest of the nation suffered reductions.\(^{22}\) Third District Congressman Andrew Jackson Montague, not part of the state Democratic Organization, found common ground with Harry Byrd when it came to additional camps for their state.\(^{23}\) Congressman Norman R. Hamilton, who had temporarily unseated the Organization man from Virginia's 2nd District, appealed directly to Roosevelt in a successful effort to have CCC camps located in his district. Roosevelt wrote to Fechner asking him to locate a camp in Hamilton's district stating that he was "sure that useful work can be found."\(^{24}\)

\(^{21}\) Robertson To Fechner, Lexington, 27 September 1933, ms. in Reduction of Camps file, General Correspondence, Box 62, Records of the CCC.

\(^{22}\) John M. Gibbs to Drewry, Wash., D. C., 24 December 1935, signed c.c. in "Appomattox, Va." file, Box 335; and Drewry to Fechner, Wash., D. C., 17 June 1937, ms. in "Amelia County, Va." file, Box 332, 300 General Correspondence, Records of the CCC.

\(^{23}\) Montague to Fechner, Wash., D. C., 20 July 1934; and Byrd to Fechner, Wash., D. C., 27 July 1934, mss. in Hanover Co., Va." file, Box 405, 300 General Correspondence, Records of the CCC; See also Political Correspondence in Box 3, Andrew Jackson Montague Papers, Archives Division, Virginia State Library.

\(^{24}\) Hamilton to Roosevelt, Portsmouth, 10 August 1937, ms. in "CCC August 1937" file, Box 8, O. F. 268, Papers of FDR.
Director Robert Fechner often received urgent request for the continued operation of various camps. One such request in 1935 came from Virginia's Governor George C. Peery, who asked Fechner to continue the two soil erosion CCC camps in his state. The Director assured Peery that if the reduction of camps were necessary, the loss of two camps would not seriously effect the soil erosion control program in Virginia. In his post scripts, Fechner reminded Governor Peery that there were actually thirteen soil erosion control CCC camps in Virginia at the time.25

Certain Virginia congressmen soon found themselves politically addicted to the Civilian Conservation Corps camps in their respective districts. By January of 1936, four Virginia camps were scheduled to be closed as part of a nationwide reduction. Upon the disclosure of the exact location of the camps ear-marked for termination, Congressman Clifton A. Woodrum immediately requested a meeting with the CCC Director. The congressman explained that he understood that Virginia would have to bear "an equal burden" of the nation-wide reduction but complained: "I cannot understand why three of them should come from my District."26

25Gov. Peery to Fechner, Richmond, 21 December 1935, telegram; and Fechner to Peery, Wash., D. C., 27 December 1935, c.c. in Reduction of Camps file, Box 62, 300 General Correspondence, Records of the CCC.

26Woodrum to Fechner, Roanoke, 23 October 1935, telegram in Ibid.
In February, Woodrum began organizing the Virginia delegation in support of appropriations for maintaining CCC camps earmarked for termination.  

Senator Byrd assured the Richmond Chamber of Commerce that everything possible was being done to retain Virginia camps. Throughout the "crisis," the Virginia delegation acted as a unit to preserve Virginia's camp quota. As part of a "House revolt" that "threatened the entire work relief set-up," their effort forced Roosevelt to rescind his previous order for camp reduction in preparation for a less costly program. Byrd and his economy-minded colleagues were decidedly against this type of federal economy.

Congressman Woodrum continued his support of CCC appropriation as Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. He introduced in 1938 the resolution that saved 300 camps from liquidation by providing $50 million for the

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27 Bland to Glass, Wash., D. C., 17 February 1936; and Bland to Glass, Wash., D. C., 2 March 1936, mss. in Political Corres. file, Box 343/2913, Carter Glass Papers, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.

28 Roanoke Times, 18 March 1936, p. 3 col. 6; See also CCC Advisory Council Minutes, 23 March 1936, Records of the CCC.

maintenance of the entire contingent of 1,500 camps. The final bill passed the House by the overwhelming majority of 326 to 6 and was approved by the Senate on April 19, 1938.30

In 1939, A. Willis Robertson characterized the Civilian Conservation Corps as "the emergency agency closest to my heart and the one, I believe, that holds the warmest place in the affection of all." He took pride in the fact that the first CCC camp in the United States was located in his District. "There is not a section of the United States," the Congressman proclaimed, "that has not felt the influence of that conservation activity."31 Arthur W. James of the Virginia Department of Public Welfare viewed the program in statistical terms as "a good investment of public funds."32 With popular approval and enthusiastic support from state officials, the continued success of the CCC seemed to be assured.

30*New York Times*, 24 March and 11, 15, 20 April 1938; See also Bland to Fechner, Wash., D. C., 1 April 1938; Fechner to Bland, Wash., D. C. 4 April 1938 (c.c.); Bland to Fechner, Wash., D. C., 5 April 1938; mss. on Reduction of Camps file, Box 638, 300 Gen. Corres., Records of the CCC.


Despite the valuable conservation work conducted by the CCC within his state, Byrd was opposed to the Civilian Conservation Corps becoming a permanent agency of the federal government. The Senator nevertheless voted with Woodrum in 1938 for the extension of CCC operations for an additional two years. In 1939, Congress once again extended the agency for a two-year period. During this last period, Byrd much to his chagrin, found the Director's office increasingly unresponsive to his recommendations. As seen in Table 1, he persisted in his requests during most of 1940. An investigation of camp rosters has shown that his recommendations were almost totally disregarded in these last years. This can be partially blamed on camp reduction, but it is most likely that the change in personnel caused by Robert Fechner's death on December 31, 1939 was the primary reason. J. J. McEntee, Assistant Director since the Corps' inception, was not promoted to Director. McEntee's

33 The Senate vote was 67 for extension, 2 against, with 27 abstentions; See Cong. Rec., 75th Cong., 1st sess., 20 May 1937, pp. 4841-2.

34 War Dept., Adjutant General's Office, Maj.-General James F. McKinley, "Location and Strength Reports of CCC Camps and Work Companies, and Summaries of Data Pertaining to Enrolled Man and Administrative Personnel," Third Corps Area, 1939-1941, Records of the CCC.
"truculent" personality created friction with even the CCC's most ardent supporters. In Senator Byrd's opinion, the new director's attitude was intolerable.

The last years of the Civilian Conservation Corps were marked by dramatic camp reductions. White enrollees were increasingly absorbed into various war industries while out of the necessity to fill camp companies, the CCC enlarged quotas for black enrollees. Conservative opposition to Roosevelt's New Deal programs intensified. Congressmen began taking a second look at the Civilian Conservation Corps. Congressman Woodrum, once an enthusiastic supporter, now questioned the necessity of continuing the agency and led the House "economy bloc" against further CCC appropriations. "Ah, very much more important my fellow Americans, than keeping that CCC camp in my district and yours," exclaimed Woodrum, "is to try to protect the economic foundations of this country and today they are in danger."

An editorial in the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, echoing the opposition of the Virginia congressional delegation to

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36 Richmond Times Dispatch, 28 March 1940, p. 1 col. 4.

further CCC appropriations, observed that "where this money is to come from the House spenders do not appear to give one happy damn."\textsuperscript{38} Congressman Robertson suggested to Roosevelt that costs could be cut by reducing the allotment to enrollees from $30 to $5 with no contribution to the family. The President did not feel that this was the most practical method of cost reduction.\textsuperscript{39}

Robertson later created a stir at the dedication ceremony of Powell's Fort Organization camp in Strasburg, Virginia. He departed from his prepared speech to remind the CCC enrollees of their indebtedness to their government and declared that they "may soon be called upon to pay their debt." The Congressman warned that, "their government may in the very near future ask them to take up arms in defense of this country against a possible German invasion."\textsuperscript{40}

Under pressure from the press, Robertson soon issued a partial retraction.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{38}Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, 29 March 1940, pt. I, p. 6 col. 3.

\textsuperscript{39}Robertson to Roosevelt, Lexington, 21 December 1939, ms.; and FDR to Robertson, Wash., D. C., 9 January 1940, c.c. in P. P. F. 7565, FDR Papers.

\textsuperscript{40}Richmond Times-Dispatch, 13 July 1940, p. 5 col. 5.

\textsuperscript{41}Washington Evening Star, 29 April 1941, p. 13 cols. 1-8 (NBC radio address.)
As a leader of Senate "economy" proponents, Harry Byrd looked for the means to halt what he considered to be unnecessary expenditures of the Roosevelt administration. Section 601 of the Revenue Act of 1941 provided the Senator with a weapon which he could wield in his crusade against the various New Deal agencies in Washington. The Joint Committee on Reduction of Nonessential Federal Expenditures set out as its first priority the proposed abolition of the Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Youth Administration. Even in a cursory glance at the list of Committee members, one is immediately impressed by the delicate situation in which CCC Director J. R. McEntee found himself. The Director enjoyed the full support of F. D. R. However, proponents of the CCC were confronted with an impressive array of extremely vocal, and steadfastly anti-New Deal congressmen, i.e. Chairman Harry Byrd; his Virginia colleague, Carter Glass; arch-conservative senior Senator Kenneth McKeller of Tennessee; Congressman John Taber of New York who had opposed the CCC since it was first introduced in Congress nine years earlier; and Georgia Senator Walter F. George whom Roosevelt had attempted to purge in 1938. In addition, U. S. Representative Clifton Woodrum of Virginia was expected ultimately to follow

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42Washington Evening Star, 29 April 1941, p. 13 cols. 1-8 (NBC radio address.)
Senator Byrd's lead; and isolationist Republican Gerald P. Nye would not support the CCC in its recently assumed role as part of the national defense effort.

At the Joint Committee hearings on 4 December 1941, McEntee was subjected to two hours of rapid-fire questioning by Senator McKeller and Representative Taber. McEntee was frequently interrupted mid-sentence. It further exasperated the CCC to find that Robert La Follette was not present. Senator La Follette later complained that he had not been informed as to the time of that day's committee hearings. McEntee was alone, and he did not fare well. The New Republic later described the Joint Committee as having a "burning hatred of the New Deal." In the face of Chairman Byrd's skepticism and the "badgering and contempt" exhibited by McKeller and Taber, McEntee could not effectively justify to the Committee membership the continued operation of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor three days later cemented the case against the CCC's continuation.

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Sentiment for national defense was at a fever pitch. So much so that the House initially cut every cent from the CCC appropriation neglecting to furnish funds for the dismantling and liquidation of the existing camps.\textsuperscript{45} Aside from his professed concern for national defense, Harry Byrd apparently felt a vindictive pleasure in destroying the agency which had so recently spurned him. In their preliminary reports, the Committee announced that, "there is no room for nonessentials in a government stripped for action, all nonessential spending must yield to the needs of our defense program.\textsuperscript{46}

The Civilian Conservation Corps was tailor-made for a state like Virginia. State politicians could not find enough words to praise the agency. Each congressman naturally took pride and claimed credit for the conservation work accomplished within his District. Corps officials acted upon recommendations from Senators, Governors, and Congressmen providing the State Democratic Machine with additional patronage opportunities.

In later years as distinct political battle lines were drawn, Virginia politicians slowly fell into line with

\textsuperscript{45} Cong. Rec., 77th Cong., 2nd sess., p. 5605.

\textsuperscript{46} Joint Committee on Reduction of Nonessential Federal Expenditures, Preliminary Report..., Senate Document No. 152, 77th Cong., 1st sess., p. 2.
Senator's Byrd and Glass in opposition to the New Deal. The CCC's popularity in Virginia waned as the political climate changed, the state's economy improved, and the increase of black camps seemed imminent.
As the first New Deal agency established by the Roosevelt administration, the Civilian Conservation was also the most popular. Despite initial complaints that the Corps would become an instrument of militarism, "the CCC quickly became too popular for criticism."\(^1\) One historian explained the Corps' popularity by stating that the CCC provided practical benefits while it appealed to the public's nostalgic regard for the frontier.\(^2\) The Corps provided employment, vocational training, and educational opportunities for jobless youths and enabled enrollees to give financial aid to their dependent families while in the process of advancing nationwide conservation programs on park, forest, and farm lands.

A historian recently observed that, "probably no state in the union received the New Deal with less hospitality than the Old Dominion," and that, "the New Deal had little to offer that would meet Virginia's social and


economic needs." However true this statement may be with respect to other New Deal programs, it is decidedly incorrect in the case of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Virginia officials constantly referred to the program as a "social success." The Virginia Department of Public Welfare considered the CCC to be "one of the most successful enterprises of the New Deal." Director of the Bureau of Virginia County and City Organization, James W. Phillips, cited the CCC as "one of the largest factors in holding together and strengthening the moral fibre of the nation." Reflecting upon the value of this oft praised agency, A. Willis Robertson wrote, "you could not put a dollar value on the boys that we took off the streets. . . and the money that was furnished to the needy families."  

Virginia communities received both short and long-term benefits from the Civilian Conservation Corps: unemployment relief, aid to needy families, advancement of local

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conservation and recreational projects, disaster relief, and a stimulant to local business. Communities soon discovered that the neighboring CCC camp was the "bright spot on their business map." One third of the camps' operating budget was spent locally. An editorial in the *Virginia Gazette* acknowledge that this expenditure was "most beneficial." As the program began to be phased out, the removal of local CCC camps became a matter of "non-partisan and vital" concern "both economically and recreationally" to Virginia communities.

From the 1880s to 1933, fifty-three years of wasteful timber harvests did more to injure the Southern economy than "Grant, Sherman, and all the carpetbaggers put together." During the Depression, the Civilian Conservation Corps exhibited the possibility and value of reforestation. Given the example of the CCC program, Virginia lumberman and paper companies began to follow State Forester F. C. Pederson's advice concerning the desirability of reforestation and erosion control which provided long-term, i.e. planned lumbering, continued high yield, soil erosion control, revitalization of "fallow" land, and the

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preservation of wildlife habitat. Ultimately, lumbering assumed the position of a stable and permanent industry.

By 1933, numerous plans for forest conservation, erosion control, and historic preservation were simply waiting for the allocation of funds. Chairman Wilbur C. Hall of the Virginia Conservation Commission acknowledged Virginia's debt to the CCC in an address before the 1937 National Conference on State Parks:

Like many states, Virginia has depended upon the federal government for man power and for funds for the development of her state parks. We are grateful to the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Emergency Conservation Work Program, and the National Park Service for their valuable contribution to our program.  

Through the efforts of the state's politicians, Virginia was made the site of large numbers of Civilian Conservation Corps camps. The result was that Virginia received "as much and in many cases more benefit from the conservation of natural resources feature of the CCC than any other state."  

Racial issues remained the primary problem of the CCC administration throughout the nation as well as in


Virginia. In Virginia, blacks were among the very last to be enrolled. Their numbers never reached their percentage of those unemployed. Director Fechner was in a position to provide greater opportunities for blacks. However, he feared, and with good reason, that any crusade for wider black involvement would have brought a howl of protest from legislators who controlled his budget and from local communities whose cooperation was essential. Chattanooga-born, Georgia-schooled, Fechner was apparently "unprepared to meet that kind of challenge."\textsuperscript{12}

The attitude of Virginians did not encourage CCC officials in their early attempts at integrated camps. Protests soon led to the creation of "all-Negro" camps. Some Virginia communities welcomed the CCC whether composed of blacks or whites. Yet, even in these few cases, the communities had to be reassured by the existence of white supervision.

In Virginia, problems with locating black camps had necessitated positioning "all-Negro" camps on military lands. However, by 1 July 1938, all CCC camps on military reservations were to be relocated. Fechner found it


\textsuperscript{13} CCC Advisory Council Minutes, 22 June 1938, Records of the CCC.
especially difficult to place black camps at Virginia sites. The Director received the impression that Virginians had "the idea that we were threatening them," by relocating black camps in their locality. Fechner then requested Governor James H. Price to advise the 4th District (Va.) Corps Commander as to possible sites for the relocation of two black camps which were previously located at Fort Monroe and Fort Belvoir. Evidently, the Governor found considerable difficulty in determining "suitable locations" for black CCC companies in Virginia. "I am sure you readily understand the difficulties that have arisen since the beginning of CCC work in finding satisfactory locations for negro CCC companies," wrote Fechner. The Director further asked the Virginia governor to understand his position, explaining that "the legislation enacted by Congress setting up this CCC activity makes it mandatory for us to find a place to put these companies." In the social context of the times, Fechner appears to have put forth a genuine effort to place black camps despite the lack of cooperation of state and local officials.

13 CCC Advisory Council Minutes, 22 June 1938, Records of the CCC.

14 Fechner to Gov. Price, Wash., D. C., 23 June 1938, signed c.c. in Virginia Negro Companies file, 300 Gen. Corres., Box 638, Records of the CCC.
In response to the widespread resistance to any increase in black camps, Fechner curtailed black enrollment. His successor, J. J. McEntee increased black enrollment only as white enrollment dropped dramatically with the surge in war production and military enlistment. Local communities throughout the nation as well as in Virginia which would not accept "all-Negro" camps must assume much of the responsibility for making the black man "the forgotten man of the CCC." The existing social conditions led "economy" minded Virginians into using the CCC labor for the duplicated effort and expenditure of constructing dual recreational facilities, e.g. man-made Goodwin Lake for whites, and Prince Edward Lake for blacks in Prince Edward County, Virginia.

The Civilian Conservation Corps provided employment for Virginians and funds and manpower for state conservation projects while leaving the state's existing social codes relatively undisturbed. On these "merits" alone, such an agency naturally tended to be politically popular. The ability of Virginia politicians to use the CCC as a vehicle for political patronage earned the agency widespread support at each level of government. Furthermore, Virginia's basic conservative stance in regard to federal control did not

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16 Bradshaw, History of Prince Edward County, p. 612.
prevent Virginia politicians from ravenously reaching for as many camps as they could possibly fit within their state.

One of the purposes of this thesis has been to question the traditional view of Harry Flood Byrd's, as well as the Virginia Democratic Organization's, commitment to fiscal solvency and governmental efficiency. Historians have consistently explained Byrd's opposition to the New Deal in terms of an overriding concern for sound monetary policy and efficient government. In the minds of Virginia leaders, the Depression experience merely confirmed the necessity of maintaining conservative fiscal policies. Governor George C. Peery actually was able to reduce Virginia's bonded indebtedness by over $11 million during his administration in the crucial years 1934-1938. However, Virginia's strict fiscal policy "sacrificed human priorities on the altar of fiscal orthodoxy." Federal programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps rescued the state's needy from the privations of the Depression.

The state organization with its spokesmen, Senators Harry Byrd and Carter Glass, gained substantial political advantages from the CCC, and the agency under Robert Fechner was extremely careful not to disturb them. As the state

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economy improved, Virginia congressmen began to join the ranks of those opposed to additional expenditures for emergency relief programs. Congressmen Clifton Woodrum, A. Willis Robertson, Patrick Henry Drewry, and Schuyler Otis Bland, who once numbered among the Corps most enthusiastic supporters, soon agreed with Byrd that the CCC was no longer needed. Despite conservative pressure, the Civilian Conservation Corps under its new Director McEntee, remained an integral part of the federal budget. Only increased war production and the U. S. entry into World War II could dislodge this agency. Ironic but not surprising was the fact that it was Harry F. Byrd as Chairman of the Joint Committee on Reduction of Nonessential Federal Expenditures who led the movement to liquidate the agency which had established its first conservation project in Virginia.

It must be admitted that as employment opportunities expanded and the armed forces were enlarged, the Corps lost its primary function. Corps officials and especially McEntee were slow to realize this. Director McEntee was characterized by the New York Times as a "Little bureaucrat" who frantically attempted to preserve his position by devising a "defense angle" for the CCC.\(^\text{18}\). Testifying before

the Senate Committee on Education and Labor, Harry Byrd argued that 79 per cent of the CCC enrollees came from farms and as a result "farm labor is getting desperately low." "So the boys in the CCC," Byrd continued, "should either be in the Army or working on the farms, or working in some other industry that is vital to national defense."\(^{19}\)

The Newport News Daily Press echoed Byrd.\(^{20}\)

Since October of 1941, the desertion rate for enrollees in Virginia camps continued to rise.\(^{21}\) War mobilization drained away the Corps' manpower. Enrollees did not wait for discharge papers before obtaining employment or enlisting. By 1942, the continuation of the Civilian Conservation Corps became "impracticable and unnecessary."\(^{22}\) The national emergency of war left its imprint upon the CCC as it had upon every phase of American life.

As the final figures revealed in purely material


\(^{22}\)Richmond Department of Public Welfare, Annual Report... January 31, 1943 (Richmond: Clyde W. Saunders & Sons, 1943), p. 22.
terms, Virginia had gained tremendous benefits from the CCC. During the nine years of its existence, the Civilian Conservation Corps spent an estimated $109 million in Virginia, amounting to the fifth highest amount of CCC money. Fire hazards were reduced in over 152,000 acres, and 15.2 million trees were planted by the enrollees.\textsuperscript{23}

In December of 1941, \textit{The Richmond Times-Dispatch} tried to reason with "economy" exponents:

Abolition of the CCC may be justified although reduction, rather than abolition, would seem wiser. We can't wreck agencies which are capable of doing extremely important work during the war, and strengthening us for the ordeals of peace, without inviting the accusation that we are indulging in false economy.\textsuperscript{24}

The men of the CCC who had marched into the Virginia countryside in their spruce uniforms in 1933 quietly left with in 1942,\textsuperscript{4} both enrollee and the state much the better for the experience.

\textsuperscript{23} Final CCC Reports, Records of the CCC.

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Richmond Times-Dispatch}, 26 December 1941, p. 8 col. 1.
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