

## Are We Prepared?—Politics Linked to Mobilization

7th of 10 Articles  
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NATIONAL mobilization will go only as far and only as fast as the Department of Defense asks for men and equipment for the armed forces—and these requests up to now have been strangely laggard in the face of weaknesses uncovered by recent events.  
The significant decision has been made that mobilization planning is not to outstrip military planning. The timetable of one is to be the timetable of the other.  
The modesty of the Defense Department's requests since the Korean war started could be partly the result of honest bafflement over the seriousness of the present emergency. But it also has some appearance of a political coloration.

PROFESSIONAL military leaders take a grave view of the Nation's military weakness as the peril of full-scale war mounts higher. Their civilian chiefs in the Defense Department acknowledge that the Korean one-alarm fire—their own phrase—might turn into a four-alarm fire; but on the other hand, it might not.  
Meanwhile Congressmen who are running for re-election at the inconveniently impending campaign season impudently the President not to be hasty in taking any four-alarm mobilization action—not yet, anyway.  
As a result, the mobilization effort is off to a slow start. The timing remains in a state of indecision. The Nation, as in the last war, goes into mobilization not by plan but by piecemeal improvisation. If the man in the street or the leader in industry wonders where mobilization is leading today, so do the mobilization planners.

BY THE yardstick of the Defense Department's own top planners the timorous requests to date would not make the country strong, nor save off disaster in a global war, nor perhaps be sufficient to win the war in Korea.  
The department's current requests would only bring the 10 Army divi-

sions we had before the Korean war up to their full strength, and furnish one more, along with elements of four National Guard divisions; give the Navy two more Essex class carriers and bring out of mothballs the necessary cruisers, destroyers and submarines to screen them, and activate enough naval air reserve to service them; bring the two Marine divisions up to full combat strength, and increase the Air Force to 58 groups by a year from now—still 12 groups below the minimum set by the Finletter air policy commission.

In other words, the Defense Department has asked for men and equipment to bring the armed forces' real strength up to their paper strength as it was supposed to be before the Korean war, with a small, extra margin.

THESE are not bold demands in the light of day-to-day developments on the battlefronts of the hot war in Korea and the cold war elsewhere around the world. But they now become the measure of the mobilization effort, and they explain why so little can be effectively planned, let alone accomplished.

The National Security Resources Board, which shapes national policy on mobilization, is embarking on a mobilization with no firm idea as to where the next step leads, or when it can be taken.  
Such haphazard approach already is creating difficulties that will hamper the next steps if mobilization continues on down the path toward full effort. Of all the shortages that afflict the country, manpower is the worst. It is a shortage far more serious than in the Second World War.

Because of the low birth rate during the depression of the thirties, there were 120,000 fewer males who became 18 years old last year than in 1942. But the phenomenal rise in birth rate since the depression has withdrawn several million women from the men's jobs they were doing.  
In a major war, both armed services and the defense industries would be far harder put for manpower than ever in the last war.

THIS is a problem that is giving serious concern to persons who must find defense workers with special skills for key positions. Each day more draftees and members of the reserves and National Guard are being called up with no regard for considerations that might make them far more valuable to defense industry.

The mobilization authorities are worried enough about this to be giving major emphasis right now to the shaping up of a national manpower policy for the President's approval—a policy that would embody a deferment standard for those key workers in a variety of skills.

Such a policy is easier to shape than to enforce under partial mobilization. It is not enough to say which person should be deferred because of a particular skill; it is also necessary to decide which of industry's competing claims for his skilled services shall have priority.

TO DECIDE this, means giving control of the labor force to a centralized authority. Such control would have to be exerted—unless there were a rigorous labor draft—through control of production, that is, through the ordering or withholding of priorities, allocations and requisitions that would close up unessential plants and encourage essential ones. No such central authority exists in the present mobilization setup.

This same lack of urgency in the defense effort has left the Nation's stockpile of strategic and critical materials in a dangerously low state after years of supposed effort to build it up.

Stockpile policy is part of the National Security Resources Board's mobilization responsibility, but its procurement is left to the Munitions Board. There are 71 scarce or hard-to-get items on the list, most of them minerals of vast metallurgical importance, some of them chemicals and pharmaceuticals that would be vitally needed in war.

AS OF Aug. 1, the over-all stockpile stood at 50 percent of its goal. That was the figure for materials "on hand and on order"; the measure that is commonly given in the periodic public reports. Actually a considerable time lag may intervene before an item on order from some distant country becomes an item on hand. The more realistic "on hand" figure stands at only 38.4 percent of the goal.

On two materials, no stockpiling whatever has been done. Seven are at less than 10 percent of their quotas; 15, at from 10 to 70 percent; 16, at from 20 to 40 percent; 9, at from 40 to 60 percent; 2, from 60 to 80 percent; and 3, above 80 percent. The rest are at full quota.

IN THE leisurely, part-time mobilization planning of the Administration today, priorities and allocation powers are to be parceled out to various of the existing Government departments. Labor would have manpower, or some part of it; Agriculture, food; Commerce, plant facilities; and Interior, coal, oil and the like.

These would become the operational agencies for turning plans

into action. Then, as the Administration gropes its way into farther-reaching mobilization, the National Security Resources Board would be designated to sit as a referee over the competing priority claims of the various Government departments. Even this hasn't been decided; it is only in the thinking-out-loud stage of the planning.

If this comes to pass—and if the bureaucratic tiger has not changed his stripes—inter-department rivalries and jealousies will help to yield an abundance of competitive questions to be referred. This is the centralized mobilization authority that is being talked up in the National Security Resources Board today. The planning agency would evolve into an operational agency.

BUT a powerful school of opinion, of which Bernard M. Baruch is the leading exponent, is giving voice to criticism of this concept of national mobilization. This school holds that partial mobilization is not enough, is unworkable, and is downright harmful; there must be full mobilization under centralized operational control at the outset, with all the controls necessary to bring the country's economy under tight rein.

Under partial mobilization, according to their view, control of the national economy falls. It is doomed to failure in advance. For example, over-all farm production will be assured if farmers can get fatter wages by moving to higher paying defense industries. Again, defense production inevitably loses infla-

tionary pressures which unbalance the economy and hike up the cost of total mobilization.  
Lead and zinc are scarce items that are on the stockpile list right now. But Western mine operators are complaining that they can't hold their skilled miners against the competing wages of other industries. The price of military planes has jumped from 20 to 60 percent, depending on the type, since the Defense Department announced its \$4,000,000,000 plane program.

IN THE absence of a central operational authority for all-out mobilization, ask critics of Administration

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tion mobilization policy, who will decide competing priorities for nitrates? Nitrates are essential ingredients of fertilizers, and fertilizers are essential to food production. Nitrates also are ingredients of high explosives, and high explosives are essential to guns. Should nitrates priorities be decided by the Department of Agriculture, or by the Department of Defense?  
Proponents of full mobilization argue that if the economy is brought under tight control and the one-alarm fire does not develop into a bigger conflagration, then that will be the time to relax the tight curbs where they can be relaxed safely, and this relaxing of controls would itself be controlled.  
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