

THE SOLDIER'S RECREATION

By RAYMOND B. FORDICK

(Chairman of the Commission on Training Camp Activities)

In the summer of 1916, when our troops were temporarily mobilized on the Mexican Border, I was sent down, as a special agent of the War Department, to study the conditions which were surrounding the troops. I remember standing in the streets of Columbus very shortly after Villa devastated that village, and watching the soldiers as they came across the railroad tracks. Five thousand of our men were in camps there. There was absolutely nothing in town that could in any way amuse them. There were no moving picture shows; no places where they could write letters; no athletic equipment for their use; no library facilities of any kind; no homes to which they could go—absolutely nothing offered to the soldiers in the way of clean entertainment.

Just after war was declared last April, the President and the Secretary of War, having these facts keenly in mind, asked me to assume the chairmanship of the newly appointed Commission on Training Camp Activities. The main job of this Commission is to supply the normal things of life to the hundreds of thousands of men in training camps. Besides the chairman, the members of the Commission are Lee F. Hamner, of the Russell Sage Foundation; Thomas J. Howells, of Pittsburgh; Marc Klaw, the well-known theatrical producer; Joseph Lee, president of the Playground and Recreation Association of America; Malcolm L. McBride, the former Yale football star; Dr. John R. Mott, well known as General Secretary of the War Work Council of the Y. M. C. A.; Charles P. Neill, of Washington; C. Palmer E. Pierce, U. S. A., and Dr. Joseph E. Raycroft, director of physical education of Princeton University.

It was our task, in the first place, to see that the inside of the sixty odd army training camps furnished clean amusement and recreation and social life. In the second place, we were to see to it that the towns and cities near by the camps were organized to provide recreation and social life to the soldiers who would flock there when we leave them short, the Government took this attitude and is holding to it all along: "Over a million men are training hard to fight for the Government; the Government will give them, while they train, ev-

ery possible opportunity for education, amusement and social life." The Commission has not developed any more machinery than was absolutely necessary. So far as possible we wished to work with the existing agencies. The Commission leans heavily on the Y. M. C. A., the Knights of Columbus and the Jewish Board of Welfare. For the general club facilities inside the camps the splendid achievements of these organizations are so well known that they need no explanation here. The American Library Association was asked to assume responsibility when it came to creating library facilities inside the camps. It has raised a fund of over a million dollars, and in every National Army cantonment and National Guard camp there is now, either finished or in process of construction, a library building—in charge of a trained librarian who makes it his sole business to see that the men have ready and easy access to any type of book which they desire.

The needs of a million men in camp, however, cannot be met by club facilities and books alone. The War Department felt that it was absolutely necessary that opportunities for athletics, mass singing, dramatic amusement and education be furnished, not to five per cent or twenty per cent, but to one hundred per cent of the men within each camp. Accordingly, the Commission on Training Camp Activities has established for the Government a comprehensive organization which will furnish such opportunities in each of the training camps. Sports directors, song leaders and theatrical managers on the payroll of the Government are superintending this great work at most of the important army training camps.

For instance, to furnish dramatic entertainment to every man in the sixteen National Army camps the Commission has erected a theatre seating 3,000 people. These theatres were built under a standardized plan and are completely equipped with full sets of stage paraphernalia, lights, drops and a moving picture machine. By building theatres on a standard model we obviated the necessity of transporting scenery from camp to camp and made possible the production of high-grade performances at very low cost, for the expenses are reduced to a minimum.

Mr. Marc Klaw was given the task of organizing four companies to play light comedies and four companies of vaudeville stars. "Turn to the Right," "Cheating Cheaters," "Here Comes the Bride," "Inside the Line" and other popular plays will be presented in turn at the various cantonments. The professional vaudeville companies will also make the rounds and the theatres will be offered to the men for the production of amateur dramatics or special moving pictures. There will be a small charge of from 15 to 25 cents made for the professional entertainments. In addition to these theatres, and at both the National Army and National Guard camps, the Redpath Lyceum furnishes entertainment. The general direction of all paid entertainments at the camps is in the hands of Mr. Harry P. Harrison, the president and general manager of the Redpath Lyceum Bureau.

One of the most interesting activities of the training camps is a brand-new one—mass singing. That is, a systematic and organized development of it is new. Victorious armies have been singing armies for many years, but the United States is probably the first country to go into mass singing on such a big scale. Under the direction of a song leader, singing in nearly every training camp has become an enthusiasm. To meet the demand for songs, the Government for the first time has printed a song book. This was published by the Commission.

To make sure that the man who wanted to study French or English or trigonometry—indeed any such subject—would have an opportunity to do so, a special committee on education attached to the Commission has been charged with the responsibility of applying instruction in any of the great number of men throughout the camps who have seized upon these educational opportunities is inspiring. Naturally, in many of the camps of forty thousand men there are a number of native Americans and a number of foreigners who have taken up with interest their first lessons in English grammar, and in reading and writing. The Committee on Education is utilizing in its work the machinery not only of university extension courses, but particularly the ed-

ucational department of the Y. M. C. A. Athletics in connection with the training of a modern army is, of course, extremely important. The responsibility for the organization and conduct of these recreative athletics in each camp is in the hands of a skilled organizer and coach who is officially recognized as a civilian on the staff of the Commanding Officer. His salary is paid from Government funds. Thirty such sports-directors have been appointed by the Commission and assigned to posts. The supervision of this work in each camp involves the creation of a Division Athletic Council, supplemented by regimental councils, and by such organizations among the companies as may be necessary. The sports-directors in the National Army camps will be assisted by boxing instructors, fifteen of whom have already been appointed. They will also co-operate with the representatives of the Y. M. C. A. and the Knights of Columbus assigned to athletic work in the camps.

The whole object of this comprehensive athletic program is to give to the largest possible number of soldiers the opportunity to play hard as well as work hard—and to play at organized athletics if they want. One of the most popular sports has proved to be boxing.

So much for inside the camps. What about the very important problems of recreation and amusement for soldiers on leave in the towns nearby? To make these communities adjacent to the training camps the best possible places for soldiers in their free time—to organize the social and recreational facilities of the towns to meet every need of the men on leave, the Playground and Recreation Association of America has sent at the request of the Commission, nearly one hundred train workers to such towns. Their object is to impress the various city organizations with their responsibility for showing a sincere hospitality to men in uniform. They are emphasizing the fact that the soldier in uniform is exactly the same man who walked on the streets in civilian clothes a few months since, and the putting on the uniform has not changed the man but has increased the responsibility of the community toward treating him fairly—and, more than that, cordially.

Athletics Prove Big Help to Men In Training Camps

The wisdom of appointing athletic directors in all the training camps and cantonments to co-ordinate athletics with the military drills has been thoroughly established by the results achieved.

The soldiers have been immeasurably assisted in their military work by their participation in games in which the same movements were used as in drills. As a result they have made astonishingly rapid progress.

Much of the credit for the splendid condition of preparedness in which the men in the camps and cantonments are found today belongs to the professional coaches and regimental and Y. M. C. A. athletic directors.

Of particular assistance to the men have been the athletic games in which the participants wore uniforms or heavy marching order equipment. The athletic programs were so arranged as to put the participants through the same movements that would be called upon to execute under actual war conditions.

In a number of the camps the athletic games have approached trench conditions, the men taking part in contests of bomb throwing for distance, bomb throwing for accuracy and bomb throwing for speed and accuracy. These contests have been witnessed by French and British instructors, who marveled at the ability of the American soldiers in mastering the art of bomb throwing in such fashion as to throw for accuracy and bomb throwing for speed and accuracy. These contests have been witnessed by French and British instructors, who marveled at the ability of the American soldiers in mastering the art of bomb throwing in such fashion as to throw for accuracy and bomb throwing for speed and accuracy.

CONSCRIPTION IN CANADA

Conscription has been adopted in Canada by a larger majority than was expected. The majority will be increased by the votes of the Canadian soldiers "Over There" practically all of whom cast their ballots in favor of selective service. The retention of the Union government in power in the Dominion carried with it endorsement of the "win-the-war" policy as against the "quit-the-war" policy of a certain element of the Canadian citizenship.

That Rookie from the 13th Squad.

By P. L. Crosby.



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