

# Can the United States Get 500,000 Volunteers?

## An Affirmative Answer Is Indicated by the Way Recruits Have Responded to the New Idea of Service to the Man as Well as to the Country

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**C**AN we raise an army of half a million volunteers in time of peace?

Secretary Baker says we can. To the Senate Committee on Military Affairs he has stated not only that such an army could be raised by voluntary enlistment in peace time, but that to raise it would be no more difficult than to enlist an army of 100,000 men.

So eminent an authority as Senator Chamberlain of Oregon, on the other hand, holds that since the war is over voluntary enlistments in large numbers are a thing of the past.

Which is right?

In the answer, or, rather, the facts which underlie the answer, is found testimony which, unquestionably, is of great national significance. It is food for thought no less to the advocates of a small army, and a minimum of preparedness, than to the protagonists of universal service; while to those who fear militaristic tendencies or who believe that our peace-time army is merely a parasitical institution, in which officers loaf and look pretty while enlisted unfortunates black their boots and mow their lawns, it may be something of a revelation.

In favor of Senator Chamberlain's contention there is much to be said, admittedly. Before the war, service in the ranks of our standing army was more often frowned upon than applauded. The man who enlisted was generally believed to have been a ne'er-do-well, one who had sought the army as a final refuge. Popular misconception of the peace duties of the army and ignorance of its achievements as a semi-civic institution successfully withheld from the service credit and applause that were its due. Furthermore, the term of enlistment was seven years, and the pay only \$15 monthly, neither of them considerations likely to attract men of character or ambition in any considerable number.

On every hand, too, we hear of the discontent of the discharged soldier—his grievances, real or fancied, and his criticism of the army generally—and this we are more prone to dignify than to minimize. Just or unjust, balanced or absurd, such criticism is eagerly seized upon and passed about.

All this the Senator from Oregon undoubtedly knows, and that it does not make for ready acceptance of Secretary Baker's assertion is not to be denied. What Senator Chamberlain apparently does not or did not know, however, and what obviously makes a tremendous difference in Mr. Baker's favor, are the actual facts and figures of the army recruiting during the last three months.

For despite popular misconception of the peace army of former days, and despite popular indifference to the peace army that is to be; despite, too, the grievances of the discharged soldier, it is a fact that in less than four months the army has enlisted more than 60,000 men, or 20,000 more than General McCain declared the peace-time maximum for any one year.

Furthermore, as this article is written, the rate of enlistment shows a monthly increase really astonishing. Enlistments for May were about 20,000. June enlistments are expected to be closer to 25,000. August enlistments may total 30,000.

In other words, if the present rate of enlistments continue for any appreciable period of time, it is not too much to assume that the army may soon be filling its ranks at the rate of 40,000 a month, or approximately half a million men a year.

Nor is it such extraordinary optimism

which lends color to such a possibility either. Facts no less remarkable than the figures themselves back it up, and it was these facts, in all probability, which convinced the Secretary of War that in the future recruiting for the army in time of peace should be comparatively easy.

The first of these important facts is the general policy that now governs all army enlistments. Compared with that of pre-war years, this policy is of immense significance, even more important than the fact that the pay of the private is now double what it was before the war.

Reduced to simple phraseology, it is a guarantee to all recruits that "square pegs will not be thrust into round holes." During the war thousands of men in service, officers and enlisted men alike, found themselves misplaced—doing the thing for which by training and taste they were the least fitted.

Acting upon the lessons learned from war experience, the army in effect now says to all men to whom the service might appeal: "Choose your branch of the service. If you are ambitious and wish training in any particular trade, choose the branch that teaches that trade. Your future is up to you; but we guarantee you a square deal."

In that one change of policy the army has set up for itself something, the beneficial results of which already are incalculable. The old feeling that the army was a mere machine—detached, mysterious, bloodless—is beginning to change. The old misconception of its functions in peace—the feeling that it did nothing but mark time and wait for another war—that, too, seems destined to die suddenly. The conviction that there are opportunities in the army for bright and ambitious young men was inevitable, once it was discovered that, under the army's new policy, vocational training was practically assured to all who wanted it.

And the belief that the army is destined to change greatly in the near future—to become perhaps the nation's greatest training school, a "university in khaki" in actual fact and, as such, accessible only to men of character and high ambition—that is slowly beginning to form. The proofs of it are incontestable, and on these proofs, doubtless, Mr. Baker bases his convictions about army volunteers now and of the future.

First in importance as proof are the recruiting figures already referred to. To any one cognizant of the facts set forth above, they must speak volumes. Next in importance, though even more significant than the figures, is the attitude of the press, the country over. The press has already shown that it considers the army's newest offer to recruits as news—unusual news. Not merely the sort of news that is "played up" notably one day, to die dimly the next, but as a "running story"—one in which the element of continuity assures it protracted treatment. For nearly four months now, recruiting news has received such treatment in the press, the direct result being columns of editorial opinion, amazing in their unanimity of viewpoint as to the merits of the army's offer and its significance to the nation.

Literally, millions of dollars' worth of free publicity, which has covered every State in the union, has already heralded recognition by the country's press of the constructive value of the army's newest policy; and apparently it is only a beginning.

The type of recruit now entering the army is more proof of Mr. Baker's contention—proof of the highest kind. Character, pre-eminently superior to any enlisted heretofore in this country, is daily becoming more and more an outstanding feature of the army's recruiting campaign. Character even is indicated in the figures of the rejections. Conservative estimates already place rejections during the last three months at from 120 to 150 per cent. more than acceptance figures. Character, above all, stamps the majority of men who thus far have been accepted. Three months ago it was currently accepted as a fact that overseas veterans would not re-enlist, now or ever. On June 14 General March, in his weekly interview, alluded not only to the fact that 52,643 recruits had enlisted up to that date, but that 63 per cent. of that total were re-enlistments.

This fact is unquestionably one of the strangest developments of the campaign, for character unquestionably stamps the great majority of the veterans who have re-enlisted. They are not joining again for more fighting—they've had quite enough of that, they declare—but, failing to find what they think they deserve in the form of opportunity in civil life, they are going in for the very concrete opportunity the army now has to offer.

Incidentally, it may be stated as a fact that the army in offering such men an education and vocational training, along with pay and "keep" for a one or three year course—whichever they choose—is doing more to solve the problem of the discharged soldier practically—in the way the latter would have it solved—than any or all other agencies now operating toward that end.

As to what is actually meant by "character" in its relation to the new army, the following is a fair example. It is a voluntary evidence given by a young man enlisted during the week past. Twenty-two years old, he was earning up to the Saturday night preceding his enlistment the sum of \$24 weekly. Physically fit, provident and ambitious, his aim was to go to a technical school to prepare to become an architect. Unable to do so because of the expense, he was beginning to despair when he read an advertisement about opportunities open to ambitious young men in Uncle Sam's new peace army. In the Construction Division he read that there were chances to learn practical construction work and to gain a knowledge of its many allied trades. Suddenly it dawned upon him that with such a basic training realization of his great ambition would come comparatively easy, so without hesitation he immediately resigned his position as draftsman and within twenty-four hours had enlisted as a private in the Construction Division of the army.

This instance, typical of the hundreds already tabulated by the recruiting service, and indicative of the type of men now enlisting, cannot be accepted as other than a strong light on the whole army problem in its relation to the people. It proves not only that the army, under its new policy, is building for the future in the way the public would have it build, but that in so building it is erecting for itself an edifice of public opinion calculated to meet all tests of time.

Secretary Baker was unquestionably right.

Recruiting for the army on such a basis is certain to prove more and more easy.

Half a million volunteers can be procured in time of peace and with scarcely more effort than would be needed to get 100,000. Nor is half a million volunteers in one year's time the dream it seems to be.



Field Cooking: A Typical Scene Where Men of the U. S. Army Are Encamped.

Air Service Photo.