

Making Vice Unattractive in Soldiers' Camps

Federal Commission Just Appointed to Solve Vital Problem of Healthful Recreation for Young Men of Our New Armies

DRINK and immorality have been the bane of the soldiers' camps in all countries. At times as many as one-fourth of the enrollment have been in the clutch of one or the other. In Europe, during the present war, the ravages of disease and the effects of inebriety have been so extensive at times that the most stringent regulations have been established. But in the main the measures adopted have been repressive and curative after the fact. The attack on the camp evils was not begun until their inroads made action imperative.

In the United States the problem of camp evils is to be attacked in a way and on a scale never undertaken in the world before. Greatest emphasis is to be placed on prevention, on effective action before the fact, instead of after it. To achieve this, to evolve a new kind of soldiers' training camp, is the task of the newly appointed Federal Commission on Training Camp Activities. Already this work has begun, with the opening of the thirteen training camps for the preliminary officers' training corps.

It is known that there was much rivalry in different parts of the country for the location of the camps. The communities that won are proud, both for the honor and the profit. But their victory is not necessarily permanent. So important, so primary, does the Secretary of War regard the work for which the new commission was created that if a community near which a camp is now situated persistently refuses to co-operate in the control of vice the camp will be moved to some other place.

Immediately around the camps will be zones, according to the plans of the commission, to bar out infections and alcoholic excess, but the aim will be, in following out the later principles of psychology, to withdraw, so far as possible, the attention of the soldier from the rigid restrictions of the zones by the organized presentation of better means of recreation and enjoyment. It is to be a great affirmative system, instead of a merely sterile negative one.

In order to develop this feature, to supply the new ideas and the new machinery to carry the purpose into effect, experts in recreational activity and relaxation methods have been named for the commission. Raymond B. Fosdick, the Chairman, formerly Commissioner of Accounts of New York City, has previously made special study for the Secretary of War on the Mexican border and in Canada. Other members are Dr. Joseph E. Raycroft, Professor of Hygiene and Director of Physical Education at Princeton University; Joseph Lee, President of the Playgrounds Association of America; John R. Mott of the International Y. M. C. A.; Lee F. Hammer of the Sage Foundation, Charles P. Neill of Washington, Thomas J. Howells of Pittsburgh, Malcolm L. McBride of Cleveland, and Major Palmer E. Pierce of the United States Army.

Mr. Fosdick, discussing the work of the commission, had this to say:

"The commission has two distinct functions: First, we are charged with the responsibility of keeping the Secretary of War informed as to conditions in training camps and the zones surrounding them. Secretary Baker is determined that the training camps shall be as free from vice and drunkenness as it is humanly possible to make them. In the second place, our task is to co-ordinate the different agencies that are seeking an opportunity for service among the soldiers. We are operating as a clearing house to eliminate the waste and competition of overlapping organizations, at the same time stimulating rational recreational facilities.

"Our first function is aimed, of course, to do away with the evils that have been too often associated with army life, not only in America, but in Europe. Our boys are to be drafted into service. We cannot afford to draft them into a demoralizing environment. The responsibility of the Government is doubly obvious in

view of the measure of conscription. A man might volunteer for service and run his chance with vicious surroundings. When conscription comes into play, however, the Government itself must assume the responsibility for eliminating these evils. It is a responsibility which we owe to the families of the men, to the communities from which they come, and to the men themselves.

"The amendments to the Army bill now pending before Congress will, of course, be of immense aid to the Government in carrying out this purpose. Other instruments, however, can be employed. It will be possible in many cases, I believe, to secure the co-operation of the local Government officials to keep local conditions clean. When such co-operation is not possible, and in the failure of all other attempts on the part of the

with regiments, brigades with brigades, and divisions with divisions.

"A member of the British Mission now in Washington, Colonel Goodwin, told me that these games which had been encouraged, in fact, enforced, by the army officials in France were one of the great influences in keeping men sane and balanced behind the lines. The War College in Washington now has under consideration an adaptation of the Aldershot system submitted by our commission. It will be carried out, I believe, in all the camps in the United States.

"Another important function lies in the line of co-operation between camps and the communities in the neighborhood—to make the community feel its responsibility for providing amusement and recreation, and plenty of amusement and recreation for men on leave. Joseph Lee,

the 'Take the Soldier Home for Dinner Movement' was organized, and through this agency a number of men found homes which they could visit whenever they were on leave in the city. Work of this kind can be multiplied almost indefinitely.

"Too many of the evils surrounding camp life in the past are traceable to the lack of adequate amusement and rational recreation for the soldier. Our commission does not intend to attempt to apply impracticable idealistic standards. We shall be dealing with a fine lot of healthy, red-blooded men, and we must have healthy, red-blooded forms of recreation. My point is that there must be plenty of it to absorb the surplus energies of the soldiers in their hours of relaxation."

Dr. Raycroft of Princeton, another member of the commission, said that he considered the idea of the creation of a new kind of environment for the soldier in camp one of the greatest that had come out of the war.

"The work as I see it will divide itself into two divisions—one to throw safeguards around the camp to limit the sale of alcoholic liquor and to keep out the immoral women; the other to provide attractive and varied forms of recreation," he explained. "Work along these lines will not only have a profound effect on the efficiency of the soldiers, but also on the communities to which they return after the war is over. It makes a great difference whether a group of men come back to a community with clean ideals and clean bodies or the opposite. Much will depend on how the work is instituted. Most of the soldiers will be young, in the formative period. Their family ties will have been cut. They will be adrift in a good many ways. There should be agencies at hand to pick up these loose strands of life and weave them in vital touch with influences that are good. The indulgence of bad habits, of the lower appetites, is due to the lack of something better to do.

"A variety of forms of recreation and entertainment should be provided. They will have to be based in general on a study of the time when the men are off duty. Take the less active forms of recreation and rest. There should be well-arranged reading rooms, with ample facilities for letter writing. Moving pictures would afford an enjoyable diversion in this class. There should be dramatics also, preferably with the boys taking part.

"In the more active forms of recreation there is a wide field to draw from. These divide themselves into more and less highly organized games. Baseball belongs to the former, volley ball and quoits to the latter. In baseball, in a large camp, there could be a league composed of a number of clubs from different regiments; one may imagine how the interest in close contests of this kind would grow. Military games would be very appropriate, such as contests in wall scaling, trench rushing, and with bayonets. Boxing contests would also stimulate the fighting spirit.

"A part of our work will be the promotion of harmonious and beneficial relations between the camps and the neighboring towns. There are already a number of agencies, highly organized, through which this can be taken up. There is the Y. M. C. A., which has demonstrated its great value in the work conducted by it in connection with the armies in European countries. The Young Women's Christian Association is another agency that should be of much assistance. The Red Cross is a third from which much is expected. The aid of the various churches may be counted upon to cause a community to exert its best influence on a camp. It only needs the joining together of these benign forces to make a new environment for the soldier when off duty and to put life into an ideal that will strive to return him finally to his home a better man than when he left it."



Raymond B. Fosdick, Chairman of the Commission That Will Try to Banish Camp Temptations.

Government to eliminate vicious surroundings, it is the intention of the Secretary of War to move the camp.

"On the positive side of our program is the necessity of competing with what I have termed 'demoralizing influences,' such as the saloon and the vice resort. This function of our work divides itself naturally into several lines. Within the camp activities of the Y. M. C. A., an organization now officially recognized by an executive order of the President, as Commander in Chief of the armies, form an important part in the recreational program. In connection with the work, but under the direct control of the army, is the promotion of athletic sports and games such as are now carried on in England under the Aldershot plan, and promoted to a large extent in Canada. Briefly, these games are built up on the inter-unit system, their idea being to develop the competitive instinct in the soldier. Boxing, wrestling, bayonet exercise, and all forms of hard physical games are followed. Everybody must take part. Squads compete with squads, companies with companies, regiments

a member of the commission, is himself President of the Playground and Recreation Association of America, and has general charge under the commission of this important activity. We shall have an expert community organizer in every town or city in the neighborhood of all the camps in the United States, whose aim it will be to co-ordinate all the activities along this line. Just at present we have thirteen of these trained men in the communities nearest the thirteen Officers' Reserve Camps now opening up. Dr. Rowland Haynes, for example, is representing us at Plattsburg, and through his efforts a local committee has been organized, and all agencies intending to work in Plattsburg will find full scope for their plans in the large program that has been laid out, while overlapping will be eliminated.

"In some communities, for example, outside the camps, there will be 'canteens' for the soldiers run by women's organizations, where food and tobacco can be obtained at cost prices, and where an opportunity will be afforded for meeting and talking with women. In Toronto