

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN WAR WORK  
(Oregon)

Before America entered the World War as an active participant it had been discovered that that war was largely a war of mechanics.

Soon after the declaration of war by America a commission from England, and possibly France, visited the United States and presented to the Chief of Staff, Secretary of War and others interested, the advisability of training men in the industries for a double purpose, (a) to meet the needs of the army, (b) to prevent the dissolution of the industrial pursuits in America.

There was at that time an organization in the United States known as the Federal Board for Vocational Education. This board was organized and in direct touch with industrial conditions and also with the educational conditions and facilities in the United States. There was already a very liberal appropriation for carrying on vocational training. The attention of the Chief of Staff and Secretary of War was directed to this organization and an arrangement was entered into whereby the Federal Board for Vocational Education, through its existing organization, should cooperate with the War Department in arranging and working out a plan for training needed men in the industries for the war service. In the year 1917 the Federal Board for Vocational Education called their regional agents into Washington, D. C. and completed their organization for handling this work.

Under this plan Hon. J. A. Churchill, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Salem, Oregon was appointed by Charles A. Prosser, Director Vocational Education to take charge of such work as might be carried on in the state of Oregon under this arrangement.

Under this organization there was very little done in the state of Oregon. Officially the only work offered was in radio operation. The

Oregon State Agricultural College, Corvallis, Oregon, immediately organized a class in radio and signal service work. As Acting State Director for Vocational Education, Frank H. Shepherd, of the Oregon Agricultural College was given direct charge of this work by W. J. Kerr, President of the institution. A number of instructors were engaged and classes for conscripted men formed. The class meeting at 8 A.M. and continuing without break until 10 P.M. This work was carried on until March 1918. About four hundred men were given training in this work.

In addition to this the Y. M. C. A. of Portland established a class in radio operation but as they were charging a fee for their services they were not officially known as meeting the requirements of the Federal Board.

Early in the 1918, the War Department decided that this organization, The Federal Board for Vocational Education was not putting the job across. So under the act of Congress, May 18, 1917, which authorized the President to build up a large army by selective process, it was found necessary to broaden the scope of the work and to have the training more systematic. With this end in view, general staff order number 15 creating the committee on education and special training was issued. This committee consisted of Colonel Hugh S. Johnson, Lieut.-Col. Robert S. Reese, Major Grenville Clark. This committee were given the right to appoint assistants, commissioned and civilian and they chose as an advisory committee a number of well known educators who were familiar with the industrial and vocational conditions in the United States. This committee immediately organized and divided the United States into certain districts. C. R. Dooley, then with the Westinghouse Electrical people as Welfare Supervisor, was chosen as educational director and as director given full charge of the vocational training of men. In the latter part of March 1918, Frank H. Shepherd, Head of the Department of Industrial Education, Oregon State Agricultural College, Corvallis, Oregon, was called to Washington D. C. by the

following telegram which says in part:

" The Committee on Education and Special Training is organizing the United States into several districts. Each district requires a manager to develop and supervise the work and otherwise, to represent the War Department in all educational matters. Pay not to exceed that of Major. Plan involves mobilization of educational facilities of the nation to meet army demand for technicians which now exceeds one hundred thousand and is increasing.\* \* \* \* \*"

Mr. Shepherd immediately reported to Washington, D.C. and in conformity with the above telegram was given charge of the district composed of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming, with his home station located at Corvallis, Oregon. On his return from Washington, D. C. he began at once to organize the educational facilities of the state of Oregon and made contracts with different institutions in the state for the training of the enlisted man.

It had been found that the army, as organized, required for every 100,000 men 82,000 specialists. Of every 100,000 men used by the infantry, 40,000 needed to be specialists. Every combatant division composed of 36,000 men required the following:

691 Chauffeurs (auto and truck)	128 Machinists
360 Telephone repairmen	122 Truck masters
167 Mechanics	78 Auto mechanics
163 Telegraphers	67 Blacksmiths
156 Radio operators	64 Mechanical draftsman
151 Carpenters	63 Electricians
142 Linemen	52 Leather and canvas workers
128 Tractor operators	29 Switchboard operators

To train these men with the idea that the war might continue for ten years and with the intention of staying in the war until the finish and at the same time keeping the wheels of commerce and industry revolving was the Herculean task that was given to the War Department Committee on Education and Special Training.

The plan of the War Department Committee on Education and Special Training was absolute decentralization. Lieut.-Col. Rees, acting as Chairman of the Committee representing the general staff stated to each of the district directors:

"This job must be done. It is up to you to meet the situation and to know the conditions in your district. You are the responsible party. Refer nothing to this committee that you can handle. While this committee is a court of last resort, we frankly state to you that unless there is a good and sufficient reason, the War Departments Committee on Education and Special Training will never reverse one of your decisions."

With this understanding, Mr. Shepherd immediately began to organize the schools of the north-west for the purpose of training the required men. As in other war activities, the state of Oregon nobly responded to the call. A number of schools responded without any base, in fact, for such a response. The Benson Polytechnic School, Portland, Oregon, by the action of the school board, turned over their entire plant and equipment to meet the requirements for training these men. The general plan was to send men direct from the local boards to induct them into the service when they reported at the school and in other words the schools were mobilization camps. These men were given six hours a day vocational training under the direction of competent technical teachers and from two to three hours military training. They were kept in this training for a period of eight weeks and were then ordered to different camps, cantonements, or to France, where they were placed in the corps where their particular services were needed. As evidence that Oregon did her part in this wonderful work, the number of men in training in the different states of the north-west district when the armistice was signed shows as follows:

Idaho	2, 300
Montana	1,900
Oregon	4,085
Washington	4,800
Wyoming	none

The Benson Polytechnic School began this work with the first contingent of two hundred men, but as the emergency continued and increased to meet the situation, the school board authorized the building of additional shops, lecture rooms, etc., and increased the facilities for training until they were ready to successfully carry on the work with six

hundred men in class work. In passing, it is only fair to give credit not to the state of Oregon alone but to individuals who so efficiently gave their services to meet this insistent demand for training men.

L. Alderman, who was at that time city superintendent of schools in Portland, was active organizing and administering this work. C. E. Cleveland, Principal of the Benson Polytechnic School, gave up all thought or hope of the vacation period and devoted his time literally night and day to this work. The school board for Portland gave all the resources in the way of time, support of teachers, school houses, and equipment, so far as was necessary to carry on this work. During this training it developed that no school that is a part of a public school system west of Kansas City so efficiently met the crisis as did the Benson Polytechnic School in the way of teachers, equipment, enthusiasm, and number of men trained.

The Oregon State Agricultural College, Corvallis, Oregon was the only other school in the state of Oregon that was found able in instructors, equipment, and ability to handle the men. The first contract with this school called for training two hundred men. This two hundred was received and the number increased from time to time until the Oregon State Agricultural College had eight hundred and forty men in training for needed vocations. In addition to these they had a contract to train two hundred bands-men and were contemplating the training of two hundred army cooks. To meet this condition it was necessary for barracks to be built, cafeteria established and many physical changes made about the campus, W. J. Kerr, President of the Oregon Agricultural College did all than any man could do to not only meet the situation with the existing facilities of the college, but interested different commercial and economic and industrial organizations over the state in the great problem that confronted them and through his efforts succeeded in caring for many more men than could possibly have been trained in the state of Oregon had it

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not been for his work.

As a historical fact it is pleasing to remember that the state of Oregon met the situation and at no time from the beginning of the work until the job was completed was there an adverse report of the vocational work that was done in this state. As the training periods ended and the men were sent to places where they were needed, evidence shows that more than 50% of these men made good in the occupation or industry for which they had been specifically trained.

As a further means of preparation, the War Department, Committee on Education and Special Training, acting for the General Staff, late in the summer of 1918, organized what was known as the Student Army Training Corps, Collegiate Section, which afterward became known as Section One. The intention of this work was to mobilize an army in the colleges and universities of America and to procure through this mobilization trained specialists who were so much needed in the world war.

A great many difficulties were encountered in organization and in the colleges and universities readjusting their curricula to meet the requirements. The armistice was signed before these difficulties and readjustments were overcome and thus ended probably the greatest educational experiment ever undertaken in this or any other country.

Through it all the state of Oregon and the schools of Oregon were whole heartedly devoted to this work and their entire resources given over to the Committee on Education and Special Training.