

OREGON STATE DEFENSE COUNCIL
STATE CAPITOL
SALEM, OREGON

June 16, 1942

MEMORANDUM TO GOVERNOR CHARLES A. SPRAGUE:

On the face of it, my conferences with Dean James M. Landis, director of the Office of Civilian Defense, on Thursday and Friday, June 11 and 12, in Washington, D. C., were most satisfactory. The test is whether or not his future actions will suit his words -- but he gave every indication of desiring to cooperate fully with the state defense councils. In addition to Oregon, there were representatives there from Florida, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Indiana.

Dean Landis agreed to revise regulations and forms to which objections had been made by the states. Most of these revisions were in the nature of toning down peremptory orders and converting them into suggestions to the state councils. He showed neither patience nor sympathy with the attempts of some regional and sectional directors of OCD to dictate state programs or operations and to by-pass state councils by dealing direct with local communities -- except in those states not prepared to handle the program. He indicated that Oregon definitely was not in this category and warmly approved the chart of organization that has been adopted in this state.

I was greatly handicapped in the conference at first by the fact that fully half of the matters under discussion had never come to my attention by reason of the failure of the regional office at San Francisco to transmit to this state headquarters regulations which had been promulgated from Landis' office as long ago as last April. The bottleneck, which prevented new rulings reaching this state until many weeks after eastern states had received the information, apparently resulted from the desire of James C. Sheppard, regional director, to hold such data in his office pending the preparation of regional "directives". Dean Landis was unaware of this situation and was amazed to find that I did not have the information which had been in the hands of the other coordinators for some time.

Among matters not transmitted to Oregon were decisions dealing with the recognition of civilian volunteer groups not in the protection division, the adoption of new staff and instructor corps insigna, the extension of the privilege of the postal frank to state and local councils, and many other items of importance. Dean Landis promised that this situation would be corrected.

Discussion developed the fact that the organization in Oregon was as simple and practical as that of any state represented at the meeting and more so than several of them. The breakdown in the time allotment for the "alert" signals for air raid warnings, which I worked out with Major W. J. Herlihy in the early days of the Second Interceptor Command and which were later adopted by the Fourth Interceptor Command, were hailed by the Massachusetts representative as far more practical than the system now being used by the First Interceptor Command on the eastern coast and it was indicated that our west coast plan shortly would be adopted there.

Both Dean Landis and General Lorenzo Gasser, head of the civilian protection division of OCD, showed keen interest in the plan of the control center operation adopted by the city of Portland, following the conference which you called with Mayor Riley some months ago. They indicated that they were severely disappointed with the organization in Washington, D. C. and New York City and asked me to prepare a report on the Portland operations which they intended to recommend for eastern cities.

Dean Landis made the unequivocal statement that the criticisms of civilian defense activity on the west coast, which he made on his recent trip here, did not apply to Oregon as he had in mind primarily the cities of San Francisco, Los Angeles and Seattle.

I did not read your statement at the general meeting but discussed it in private with Dean Landis following the open session and at that time showed him our chart of organization and detailed some of the difficulty we had been having with the sectional and regional offices. He said his representatives in this territory were assuming altogether too much authority and made the request that I communicate direct with him in the event their future activities in any manner slowed up our civilian defense work.

At the general meeting, I made the following eleven points as things which I believed most states wanted:

1. Recognition of the fact that the OCD is dealing with volunteers who are ready and willing to make any personal sacrifice for the protection of their neighbors and communities but who must be convinced that requests made of them have a basis in sound reasoning and who will not be threatened or driven to action. (Admitted by Landis).
2. A minimum of reports and drastic simplification of same. Civilian defense executives are busy men and women. (Landis said new, simplified reports were under preparation).
3. Elimination of "gas mask hysteria", galloping jitters and cries of "wolf! wolf!" (With this Dean Landis thoroughly agreed).
4. Discontinuance of the regimentation of all citizens in "volunteer mobilization"; it is more important to find constructive activities for the hundreds of thousands already enrolled. (Dean Landis was not in wholehearted agreement with this though he did say that volunteer mobilization was going too far in many sections).
5. Recognition of the turnover in the Citizens' Defense Corps and the need for continuing training under Army supervision. (Landis in agreement).
6. Elimination of the jealousies and political angles involved in giving special assignments to powerful group organizations in civilian defense -- such as labor, Christian Scientists, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, negroes, Indians, etc. This is an all-out war in which every good American citizen is equally concerned and equally willing to serve. (Landis said no more such assignments were contemplated).

7. An explanation and sensible definition of what is meant by OCD coordination of all agencies involved in the war effort - - many of them creatures of OPA, ODHWS, Dept. of Agriculture, Treasury Department, etc. (Dean Landis frankly admitted that there could be no coordination of these agencies at the local level until there was better cooperation at the national level. He said many of the agencies involved had no idea what the civilian defense program embraced and that he had not been able to get the heads of departments to see the picture. He admitted that this coordination had to be made effective from the top down).
8. Recognition of state sovereignty and the ability of states to handle defense problems without federal wet nursing and dictation. (Landis nodded his head in agreement on this).
9. Establishment of a stable policy with respect to assignment of protective equipment to states. (Landis said this was being accomplished).
10. Establishment of direct liaison between military forces and state authorities without screening through sectional and regional CD offices which are unfamiliar with local problems. (Landis saw no reason why this could not be done).
11. Recognition by the OCD that local defense councils and their Citizens' Defense Corps organizations are the creature of and responsible to the state defense councils not the Office of Civilian Defense. (Landis agreed).

In the personal talk I had with Dean Landis, I discussed the threat of Stanly Donogh to open an Oregon Office of Civilian Defense, staffing it with some 25 people and proceeding to handle defense activities for the state. Landis laughed at this and said that Donogh was clearly talking through his hat as he had no authority to do any such thing. He said, if we wanted it, he could assign an OCD representative to Oregon but he saw no necessity for it. He said, however, that the sectional or regional office should assign a military man to Oregon who would be responsible to our state defense council for most of his assignments and make his headquarters in Salem.

In a meeting with Major General Gasser he told me that Portland was the only city in Oregon having first priority for fire-fighting and other protective equipment from OCD but that he thought within a short while that some equipment would be available for the cities of Astoria, North Bend and Troutdale which he said shortly were expected to have priority rating. Those he said, however, were absolutely all the communities that would receive any consideration in Oregon at the present time.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Dean Landis named the state defense executives who were present as members of a permanent committee to whom he said he would refer for comment and advice all matters having to do with state relations prior to the issuance of any regulations.

JERROLD OWEN,
State Defense Coordinator