The Civilian Conservation Corps in Pennsylvania: A Case Study of A New Deal Relief Agency in Operation

Unquestionably, the Civilian Conservation Corps was one of the most successful of the New Deal agencies. Despite the fact that it was conceived and developed in a very short period of time, the CCC was nevertheless an effective work relief agency from the beginning. Before it was disbanded in 1942 it provided outdoor employment for 2,500,000 young men with as many as 519,000 enrolled at a given time. These workers operated some 3,000 camps located throughout the United States, and they accomplished a great many tasks in the areas of conservation and reclamation which had for many years been left undone.¹

Observers have long marvelled at the fact that an organization with an administrative structure so apparently cumbersome could have been so successful. The CCC, it will be remembered, was a bureaucratic monstrosity in which the Labor Department recruited the men, the War Department ran the camps, and the Agriculture and Interior Departments, along with various agencies at the state level, supervised the projects.² However, despite numerous clashes of personality and interminable jurisdictional and ideological wrangles, it must be said in the final analysis that the success of the CCC was attributable for the most part to the abilities and the dedication of the men at the helm. Success was also derived in large

¹ John A. Salmond, The Civilian Conservation Corps; 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study (Durham, N. C., 1967), 1-25.
² A wealth of material for use in studying the origins of the CCC may be found in Record Group (RG) 35, Data Reference file 6, National Archives, Washington, D. C., hereinafter cited as N.A.
measure from the fact that the CCC program met distinct social and economic needs. Though it by no means brought an end to unemployment in the nation, its programs helped to salvage hundreds of thousands of lives. This aspect of its significance can never be adequately measured. The administration of the CCC has been adequately studied from the standpoint of the federal government, but much remains to be done concerning the effects of the program on people and on the relationship between state governments and Washington.

An assessment of the administrative history of the CCC in Pennsylvania must begin with an introduction of the program's leading administrators. The national director was Robert Fechner of Tennessee, a former official in the Machinists' Union who was personally selected for his position by President Roosevelt. Fechner was a stolid and unimaginative man who viewed the mission of his agency in the narrowest possible context. The CCC showed the mark of his direction very clearly, although he received a great deal of advice from an Advisory Council made up of representatives of the various federal agencies concerned with CCC operations. While this group met regularly to deal with matters of general importance, it rarely descended to the level of daily administration. This responsibility was left to others at lower levels.³

those of Morrell, except that he proceeded from the standpoint of his own agency.4

For the Army the most important voice was that of Colonel Duncan K. Major, a member of the Advisory Council. However, the Army administered the CCC camps through Corps Area Headquarters, so Pennsylvania administrators had much more direct contact with Colonel James P. Barney, CCC liaison officer for the Third Corps, and the various Corps Area Commanders who served during the period. The Army men tended to see their responsibilities through the narrow prism of military procedure completely enshrouded in red tape. The result, in the Third Corps Area at least, was almost constant conflict between the Army and the state authorities. Conflict with regard to CCC operations was by no means confined to this particular relationship, but when trouble bubbled to the surface in the administration of this otherwise placid agency the Army was usually involved.5

One other federal bureau was heavily involved in CCC operations, and this was the Office of Education. The educational program of the CCC was an important though controversial part of the overall program. The Office of Education under George F. Zook and John W. Studebaker tried valiantly throughout the existence of the CCC to make it a "university in the woods," and in so doing engendered a great deal of friction. This in turn had its effects within the states, and Pennsylvania, as we shall see, provides a typical example of the results.6

At the state level the most important administrators were those in the existing relief agencies who were called upon to act as selection officers in cooperation with the Labor Department, and those connected with the agencies which would provide the supervisory personnel for projects carried out on state land. In Pennsylvania the former was the State Emergency Relief Board (SERB), until it was

4 Snyder interview, May 29, 1973; Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 82, 163–164. This assessment of the views of Morrell and Wirth is based upon a study of their correspondence in RGs 95 and 407, Forest Service Files, and Minutes of the Advisory Council, RG 35, File 9, N.A.

5 Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 45; Minutes of the Advisory Council, RG 35, File 9, N.A.

6 The controversy over the educational program and its results in Pennsylvania will be discussed later.
replaced by the Department of Public Assistance in 1938, and the latter was the Department of Forests and Waters. The Director of the SERB in 1933 was Eric Biddle and the Secretary of Forests and Waters was Lewis Staley, both of whom were actively committed to the success of the CCC program in the state.7 Of course, it goes without saying that Governor Gifford Pinchot regarded the program as a very significant project indeed.8 But more important, perhaps, than any of the aforementioned leaders was J. Fred Kurtz, the Assistant Director of the SERB, who acted as the state selection officer. Kurtz was one of the most enthusiastic and able selection officers in the nation and through his activities one can follow the operations of the CCC in Pennsylvania in detail.9

The CCC was very well received in Pennsylvania by the press as well as by state officialdom. Most newspapers, while not ecstatic, certainly evidenced a positive attitude. In a survey of twenty papers located in all parts of the state, only one was found to be critical at the outset.10 That one maverick was the Philadelphia Inquirer, always an implacable foe of the New Deal, whose editors argued that the program had too many overtones of a quasi-military operation, and that it would be very costly and inefficient.11 More typical of the general response was the editorial of the Warren Times-Mirror on May 26, 1933: “Some people have the idea that the

7 Regrettably the records of the SERB, the Department of Public Assistance, and the Department of Forests and Waters for this period are extremely thin. That material which is available is located in the Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.
8 Gifford Pinchot to Franklin D. Roosevelt, Apr. 3, 1933, RG 35, CCC, Pennsylvania, N.A.
9 J. Fred Kurtz was an independent coal operator in Pennsylvania for many years before he was ruined by the Depression. He went to work for the state in 1931 and was named Assistant Director of the SERB after the creation of the latter agency in 1932. In that capacity he was responsible for CCC selection activities. More important for historical purposes, however, is the fact that he is the only constant factor in the administration of the CCC in Pennsylvania. Biddle was soon replaced as SERB Director by Richard Stilwell, who in turn was succeeded by Karl de Schweinitz, Robert Johnson, and Arthur Howe. Secretary of Forests and Waters Staley was succeeded by Ralph Bashore.
10 Those newspapers surveyed were: Philadelphia Inquirer, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Lewistown Sentinel, Johnstown Tribune, Chambersburg Public Opinion, Huntingdon News, Williamsport Sun, Lancaster New Era, Carlisle Sentinel, Warren Times-Mirror, Sullivan Review, Gettysburg Times, Altoona Mirror, Butler Eagle, Sunbury Daily, Harrisburg Patriot, Wilkes-Barre Record, Fulton Democrat, Hazelton Standard Sentinel and Connellsville Courier. Of course there was some criticism of the CCC from time to time during the nine years of its existence, but, as suggested, there was almost none at the beginning.
11 Philadelphia Inquirer, Mar. 31, 1933.
forest camps are of little utilitarian value—that their main purpose is to provide room and board for idle men. This is not true. They are ‘making forests’—preserving one of our greatest national resources.”

The first business of the CCC in that dark spring of 1933 was twofold: the selection of projects and campsites, and the selection of men. Both were carried out in haste. Since most CCC camps in Pennsylvania were intended to be on state land, the Department of Forests and Waters played a large role in their creation and operation. Unfortunately, the records of the Department for this period are not available, but nevertheless an outline of camp establishment procedures can be developed from the fragmentary records which do exist and from newspaper sources. The state was divided into ten forestry districts presided over by district foresters responsible to the Chief Forester, who, in turn, was responsible to Secretary Staley. Campsite and project selection was usually undertaken as a joint effort by the district forester and representatives of the Army who would then submit their recommendations to their superiors. If acceptable, the campsite would be laid out at once and the project inaugurated. This process took place so rapidly that by September, 1933, eighty-eight campsites had been designated and a good many were in operation.

As the process of campsite selection went on apace, the more tedious process of first-round enrollee selection began. This process was enormously complicated because it required the quick identification of thousands of eligible young men, and because the administrative machinery used for the job was inadequate. At first it was decided that with certain minor exceptions the age limits for participation in the CCC would be 18 to 25, that the enrollees be unmarried and should come from families on relief, and that the period of enrollment should be one year. The men were to be paid $30.00 a month, of which $25.00 would be allotted to a dependent.

13 Col. Duncan K. Major, Acting Chief of Staff, to Commanding General, Third Corps Area, Apr. 21, 1933, RG 407, Sec. 8A, N.A.
14 Seventeen year olds were not allowed to enroll in the CCC at the outset, but after 1937 they were admitted. Also from the beginning a small number of Army veterans and local experienced men were permitted to enroll, but they constituted a tiny minority of the total. The veterans were placed in camps of their own, but the local experienced men, or LEMS,
Because of the need for haste the actual selection process was delegated by the Labor Department to the existing relief agencies in the states, and through them to local agencies.

In Pennsylvania these local agencies were the county and city relief boards, and it was at this level that administrators experienced the greatest difficulty in the early stages of the program. Dorothy C. Kahn, for example, Director of the Philadelphia County Relief Board, found it necessary to remain in almost constant contact with both Harrisburg and Washington during the period. She found that many more men presented themselves for enrollment than could possibly be handled. Of these, many were ineligible for one reason or another, but they were very difficult to identify. Some proved to be from families not on relief, others misrepresented their age, and still others claimed to be unmarried when in fact they were not. In some cases, when the men were told that most of their pay was to be allotted to their dependents they balked, yet insisted on being processed anyway. In every case, when a question arose during the early period it was referred to Harrisburg or Washington and an answer had to be devised. Usually the Labor Department would simply insist upon proceeding according to the general guidelines and would allow the local authorities to make decisions themselves. Only gradually were more precise regulations and administrative procedures evolved.¹⁵

Once selected, the enrollees were transported to “reconditioning” centers located at Army bases. In the case of men from the Third Corps area, most were sent to Fort George Gordon Meade in

¹⁵ W. Frank Persons to Earl S. Auford, Fayette County Emergency Relief Board, Apr. 20, 1933; Richard Stilwell to Persons, May 3, June 6, 1933; Dorothy Kahn, Philadelphia Emergency Relief Board, to C. E. Fox, May 4, 1933; Stilwell to All County Emergency Relief Boards, June 8, 1933; Persons to Stilwell, June 6, 30, 1933; Dorothy Kahn to Persons, Apr. 25, June 17, 1933; Persons to Miss Kahn, June 21, 1933; unsigned Dept. of Labor Memorandum Re: Recruitment in Philadelphia, Apr. 17, 1933; Marjorie Fish, General Secretary of the Family Welfare Association of Bethlehem, to Persons, June 12, 1933; Durham to Persons, Department of Labor Memorandum, Apr. 13, 1933; Thelma B. Dade to Eric Biddle, Mar. 15, 1934; Kurtz to Persons, Sept. 27, 1934, RG 35, CCC, Pennsylvania, N.A. Also see RG 23, Civilian Conservation Corps Enrollment Procedures, Records of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Assistance (SERB), Section IX, Part II, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.
Maryland. There they were put through an orientation program which was supposedly designed to prepare them for camp life. For many this should have been an important phase of the program, since they were men of urban background who were about to enter a new and unfamiliar environment for the first time. Unfortunately, experience soon demonstrated that the reconditioning program was not entirely successful. The process only lasted from ten days to two weeks, and upon its conclusion the men were immediately transported to their camps, where it was soon discovered that many were still quite unprepared for life in the woods.

The early camps in Pennsylvania were among the first in the nation to begin operations. Typical of these were the ones in Fulton and Warren Counties, and, typically also, the newspapers followed their early operations very closely. For example, the *Fulton Democrat* published in tiny McConnelsburg, covered the activities of District Forester Fred Shearer as he prepared the way for the construction of a camp at Cowan’s Gap. As he coordinated the efforts of the Forest Service, the Army, and the Labor Department in the initial stages of this project, the *Democrat* reflected great pride that this was to be one of the first camps to be built on state land. The paper also reported the early activities of the workers with interest, noting how well they bore the stress of living in the wilderness without adequate shelter, and urging the residents of the area to visit them, encourage them, and provide them with recreational equipment.16 The *Democrat* minimized the fact that for all his efforts Shearer was unable to delay the arrival of the first group of enrollees until the campsite was ready for occupancy.

Typical also of the newspaper coverage of this period was that given to the construction and occupation of the camps in Warren County. Here also the first contingent of workers arrived before the campsite was ready. However, they were given a royal welcome by District Forester L. L. Bishop, railroad officials, representatives of the Army, and a group of well-wishers from the surrounding area, and were immediately whisked away to the campsite where they found a city of tents awaiting them. During the remainder of the spring the enrollees worked diligently to develop their project, and while doing so they continued to be the object of much local atten-

16 *Fulton Democrat*, Apr. 6, May 4, 1933.
tion. The Warren Times-Mirror urged local residents to visit the camps on weekends and to get to know the men so as to reduce the possibility that their presence in the area might cause uneasiness.\textsuperscript{17}

Although it would be impossible to provide an adequate generalization about camp life because of the enormous variations which existed, some common factors may be cited. Having passed through the process of selection and reconditioning, the enrollees would eventually arrive at camps such as those in Warren or Fulton Counties. For the earliest arrivals the first sight of the camp must certainly have been disheartening, for often the spring weather was inclement and the tent cities were utterly devoid of any conveniences. "My first view of the campsites caused me to become disgusted with the place," wrote Allen Tainierry. "I thought I would never stay in that hole more than six months. . . . Then I thought of home and decided I had better stick as I was the only bread winner."\textsuperscript{18} Similar thoughts must certainly have crossed other young minds, yet most did "stick" and soon solidly built, permanent facilities were rising all across the state, some of which were quite beautiful. Among the most attractive in the nation was Camp 1327 near Lancaster, which in the mid-thirties, under the command of Captain John C. Andrake, was widely known as the "flower camp" for the colorful displays of plant life festooning its grounds.\textsuperscript{19}

A day in camp typically began at 6:30 with reveille, followed by physical training and a hearty breakfast. CCC food was plain, but very nourishing and served in large quantities. Most enrollees seem to have enjoyed it for compliments far outweigh complaints in their letters. Many were delighted with the weight gain and more vigorous feeling they experienced as a result of their new diet of nourishing food and hard work.\textsuperscript{20} After breakfast and roll-call the enrollees set out for work under the direction of their project supervisors. In

\textsuperscript{17} Warren Times-Mirror, Apr. 26, 27, 1933.
\textsuperscript{18} Allen Tainierry to Fechner, n.d., RG 35, CCC, Pennsylvania, N.A.
\textsuperscript{19} Happy Days, May 30, 1936.
Pennsylvania a typical project might include road building or improvement, reforestation, clearing, bridge building or small dam construction. Enrollees were also frequently called upon to fight disasters, particularly floods and forest fires. At the end of the work day there were additional activities to occupy their time if they desired to participate. Most camps had extensive recreational, athletic, and educational programs. Athletics ranged from intramurals to highly organized competitive programs in track, baseball, basketball and football. There were district, state, and Corps Area championships in all sports, with some of the competition at a very high level. Major league scouts even followed CCC baseball, ever on the lookout for budding professionals.

In some camps the educational program was also very elaborate, if not entirely satisfactory. Enrollees could select both academic and vocational courses, and frequently, too, they could study at local high schools or colleges. Indeed, there were many who completed their education and learned a trade as well while serving in the CCC. The unsatisfactory element of the program arose primarily from debates among administrators regarding its content and quality. These difficulties will be discussed later.

Many enrollees spent a great deal of their free time practicing journalism. A large number of the camps had their own newspapers, and almost every camp contributed to the national CCC newspaper *Happy Days*. Unfortunately, the only extensive collection of CCC camp newspapers which remains in existence is housed in Chicago at The Center for Research Libraries, where it is in permanent storage and cannot be used for research. If it were available, it would be an invaluable source for students of the social history of the 1930s. Nevertheless, it is possible to at least obtain a glimpse of enrollees' attitudes from the random copies of certain papers and the volumes of letters which are available in the National Archives.

Most enrollees who recorded their sentiments were pleased with their CCC experience. They thought camp life was exhilarating, the food better than their accustomed fare, and the educational program a wonderful opportunity for self-improvement. The existing testimony indicates general agreement among enrollees concerning the personal benefits they derived from service in the Corps. They

21 *Happy Days*, May 27, 1933.
gained self-esteem, improved their health, developed their social abilities, and, most important, they assisted their families. These sentiments seem to have transcended class and intelligence levels if the surviving letters of the enrollees are an accurate indicator. Two will suffice to illustrate this point. On December 1, 1935, Enrollee Andrew Sakara wrote as follows in his camp newspaper, *The Voice of Youth*:

Caught in the economic catastrophe that plunged us into various depths of deprivation, my circumstances made me suspicious and hostile in temper and contemptuously cynical of all and sundry. With such an attitude, bitterly ungrateful, discontented, disobedient, recalcitrant and rebellious, there was little humanity in my make-up. My short stay in the CCC has greatly tended to eradicate these misanthropic influences and has rendered me more equable and affable in spirit, more optimistic in outlook, and more tolerant of my fellow beings and the code of life to which we are all subjected in this world. The ideals of "Americanism" are clearer and I have a stronger faith in their purposes after I have seen their reaction upon me through the activities of the CCC.

While such florid language as that of Enrollee Sakara was by no means atypical, neither was the semiliterate rambling of John Banjack who recorded the following sentiments in a letter written December 11, 1935:

When I was home I count get a gob no place. and my mother and father was all ways mad at me. and now they are glad I am in camp. I now that my father worked hard to keep me when I was small and now he ant working and I think thats time for me to help him we have ten in are family and boy sometimes we dint have nothing at all home . . . and then I got to the camps and this is the best place for me. I like the place because its neat and clean, a boy that says it ant no good here dont no what his tacking about or cant take it . . . . I am taking care of the family now so I have to stay. I wrote this in a hurry because I had to wash close.

As further evidence of the generally positive reaction to the CCC in Pennsylvania one may cite the results of a poll conducted in Philadelphia in 1935. Of 722 boys questioned, 498 were favorably impressed with the Corps after enrollment, and 175 unfavorably.

A simultaneous survey of parents in the Philadelphia area indicated that 518 of those questioned regarded the CCC as a worthwhile enterprise while 130 did not. Public opinion polls of this magnitude were not conducted in other counties, but a general survey of opinion taken by the county welfare directors, and summarized for the Labor Department by Eric Biddle, indicated that attitudes toward the CCC were overwhelmingly favorable throughout the state.24

Despite the positive reaction to the CCC in Pennsylvania, there were internal administrative difficulties which were occasionally very severe. One of these arose from the fact that there was often a distinct lack of cooperation between the Army and the civilian administrators at the state level. This problem, which showed up initially during the early stages of the program when recruitment and transportation techniques had yet to be refined, was threefold. In the first place, the Army often failed to coordinate with civilian officials the movements of enrollees from application centers to reconditioning camps. The latter, therefore, never knew exactly how many applicants to send forward.

Secondly, the Army often failed to provide adequate transportation from the application centers to the reconditioning camps, thus causing severe bottlenecks at the centers. And finally, the Army frequently permitted camp commanders to recruit on their own, thus duplicating and in some cases frustrating the efforts of the local relief agencies. The first and third of these problems were especially acute during the first year of CCC operations in Pennsylvania, while the second was an almost constant problem. However, when state administrators pointed out these difficulties to the Army the usual response was to deny their existence and to call upon the civilians for greater cooperation. As a result, such problems were never entirely resolved.25

Another difficulty grew out of the allotment system. Under the original regulations, it will be recalled, CCC enrollees were paid

24 Eric Biddle to Frank Persons, December, 1935, ibid.
25 Richard Stilwell to Persons, June 3, 6, 10, 29, 1933; Persons to Stilwell, June 9, 30, 1933; Biddle to Persons, Jan. 5, 1934; Persons to Biddle, Jan. 6, 1934; V. M. Beaver to Col. H. Landers, Jan. 6, 1934; J. Fred Kurtz to Commanding Officer, Third Corps Area, Dec. 2, 1936; Capt. N. F. McCurdey to Kurtz, Dec. 3, 1936; Kurtz to Persons, Dec. 8, 1936; Persons to Kurtz, Dec. 15, 1936, ibid.
$30.00 per month and were required to allot most of this amount to a dependent. Many enrollees were disturbed by this requirement and it soon became clear to relief officials in Pennsylvania that the $25.00 allotment was too large. No one could meet even his incidental monthly expenses on $5.00, and it was suspected that this problem was becoming a significant deterrent to enrollment. Yet to reduce the allotment would increase the relief burden of the state, and this the state officials were reluctant to do. Thus they were faced with a serious dilemma. On the one hand, they desired to maintain the highest possible federal contribution, but on the other hand they desired to maintain the highest possible enrollment. They considered two alternative solutions. First, they could allow enrollees to choose their own allotment. This alternative was rejected by both the state relief men and the Labor Department. The second alternative was to decide in each individual case whether to permit reduced allotments, and, despite the fact that it would increase the work load at selection centers, this option was chosen. In dealing with this problem the Labor Department was characteristically very cooperative, but the Army proved to be recalcitrant by refusing to accept any enrollee who would not agree to the $25.00 allotment. Since the Army controlled the payroll their obstinacy was a serious matter; the state appealed to the Labor Department for help. W. Frank Persons responded by requesting that the War Department give the state discretionary powers regarding the allotment question beginning January 1, 1937. This was done and eventually, in 1938, the mandatory allotment was reduced to $22.00.26

Enrollment was declining by 1935, with the problem further compounded by desertion, which became a noticeable factor that year and reached crisis proportions by 1937. J. Fred Kurtz, who gave these matters considerable attention, perhaps more than any other selection officer in the country, concluded that the military was largely to blame. Flatly rejecting the Army’s assertion that 85 per cent of all enrollees did not want to join the CCC in the first place, but did so under parental pressure, Kurtz argued that most

26 Kurtz to Snyder, Sept. 4, Dec. 23, 1936; Persons to Karl de Schweinitz, Dec. 21, 1936; Karl de Schweinitz to Commanding General, Third Corps Area, Dec. 7, 1936; Kurtz to Persons, Dec. 15, 1936, ibid.
applicants sincerely desired to join the Corps and complete their enrollments. However, too many of them found camp life to be far different from their idealized preconceptions. In Kurtz’ judgment both declining enrollment and desertion were largely attributable to this fact, coupled with the youthfulness of most enrollees and the inexperience and inefficiency of many camp officials. The problem could only be solved, he argued, by the establishment of a more thorough orientation program which would be the responsibility of the Army.\(^\text{27}\)

Kurtz’ incessant criticisms of the Army caused friction between Pennsylvania state officials and Third Corps officers, especially Colonel James P. Barney. The problem soon became so intense that Persons and Snyder began to fear it might permanently hamper the program. Consequently, they sought to mediate the difficulties by calling upon Barney to be more understanding of the severe administrative problems facing the CCC administrators in Pennsylvania as a result of their infinitesimal staff, and upon Kurtz and his associates to make the selection process as efficient as possible.\(^\text{28}\)

The efforts of the men at the Labor Department to arbitrate such disputes as these were only partially successful and the state administrators, especially J. Fred Kurtz, remained very sensitive to them throughout the life of the program. Believing that the Army could not be relied upon to act in good faith, Kurtz devoted much of his time to the numerous complaints about camp conditions which reached him from enrollees. These complaints usually arose from conditions for which the Army was responsible, and yet it was the Army which was asked to conduct the investigations. Almost invariably the Army would conclude that the complaints were exaggerations caused by homesickness, inability to adjust to new surroundings, or laziness. However, the complaints generally conformed to a pattern suggesting they may have had more substance than the Army was willing to admit. Bad food was the most common charge, ironically, since food was regarded by the majority of

\(^{27}\) Kurtz to Snyder, Apr. 15, 1937, Apr. 28, 1938; Col. J. P. Barney to Kurtz, Oct. 26, 1937; Kurtz to Persons, Oct. 28, 1937; Snyder to Persons, Feb. 2, 19, 1938; Fechner to Persons, Mar. 18, 1938; Persons to Arthur Howe, Nov. 15, 1938; Persons to Kurtz, Oct. 1, 1940, \textit{ibid.}

enrollees as one of the most positive attributes of the Corps. Dirty quarters, hazing by older enrollees or camp officers, and boredom were also common problems.

The first complaint which stirred Kurtz to action came early in the life of the CCC when young Randall Bickel reported that not only was there hazing and bad food in his camp, but the camp commander on his own authority had imported a group of tough "prize fighters" from Philadelphia and attempted to pass them off as experienced workmen apparently in anticipation of an approaching athletic contest. Bickel charged that the prize fighters were terrorizing the camp. Kurtz demanded an investigation, but when he was interrogated by the military authorities Bickel changed his story completely and declared that all his charges were based on rumors. Kurtz pursued this case no further, but, as more complaints arrived he became increasingly exasperated with what he considered the deliberate attempts of the Army to whitewash all problems. One enrollee complained that the camp to which he was assigned was dirty and that the beds were infested with vermin. He stayed nine days and then went home. Another man charged that he left camp because he was "assessed" by the commander. Yet another requested a transfer to a new camp claiming that he encountered bad food, rough treatment and theft at his first assignment. He said the camp commander told new arrivals that it was a rough place to which they had come and that if any of them had gold in their teeth they had better sleep with their mouths closed. Later his clothing was stolen and he was fined for requesting more food. Although these were serious charges, there is no record of any investigation. Other equally serious complaints, however, were investigated albeit with mixed results.

Frequently, enrollees would simply leave camp without permission as a protest. In one such case several boys, complaining of bad food, deserted Camp #7 near Hillsgrove. The Labor Department sent a representative into the area who, after conducting

29 Randall Bickel to Kurtz, Jan. 20, 1934; Kurtz to Bickel, Jan. 29, 1934; Lt. Arthur Symons to Commanding General, Third Corps Area, Feb. 4, 13, 1934, ibid.
31 Kurtz to Persons, Sept. 4, 1935, ibid.
32 Earl Witt, Acting Director, Bedford County Emergency Relief Board, to Kurtz, Dec. 13, 1934, ibid.
what he described as a “thorough investigation,” concluded that the situation was “splendid,” that the majority of the enrollees were “for the most part happy,” that the menus seemed “adequate,” and that the boys who complained were probably “just homesick.”

In another case, however, Pauline Lewis of the Philadelphia Emergency Relief Board reported that thirty-four Pennsylvania boys stationed at a camp in Maryland were summarily dismissed and that her investigation revealed that all of them had complained of bad food. Kurtz asked the Army for an explanation and was curtly informed that the boys were discharged for refusal to work. Although the investigation he requested was not made, Kurtz learned later that the menus at the camp were “improved.”

Much more serious was the case of Elmer Sheppard who charged that he and his friends were subjected to beatings, theft, and sodomy by an organized group of thugs known as the “syndicate” in the camp where he was assigned. As usual, Kurtz demanded an investigation and as usual the inquest which followed was conducted by the Army. The report alleged that Sheppard had “over-reacted” to “horseplay” and the complaints of his friends were likewise exaggerated. One of the boys was even accused by the Army of being a “radical agitator.” Kurtz was not impressed by the report and requested that the Director of the Allegheny County Emergency Relief Board interview Sheppard. After this Kurtz concluded that the Army was attempting to cover up a very serious matter. “Either every boy who made a complaint was a malicious liar,” he wrote in disgust, “or else these investigations were not exactly as impartial as we have been advised.”

There was one further negative aspect of CCC life which must be discussed, although it produced surprisingly few complaints—the Corps was comparatively dangerous. By 1935 the national monthly injury rate was seventeen per thousand; hardly a month went by without a death somewhere in the country. No statistical summary of the injury and death rate for Pennsylvania has been attempted, but a random sampling of the voluminous accident reports which are

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33 Kurtz to Persons, Oct. 24, 1934; Charles H. Taylor to Persons, Nov. 1, 1934, ibid.
34 Pauline Lewis to Kurtz, Dec. 4, 1936; Maj. James Hagen to Kurtz, Dec. 8, 1936; Kurtz to Persons, Dec. 11, 1936, ibid.
available, coupled with a survey of newspaper coverage suggests that danger was a constant companion to the corpsmen in this state. The greatest potential for injury came from truck accidents and forest fires. There were hundreds of the former, occasionally resulting in injury or death. The first enrollee to die in such an accident was Morton Myers who was killed on December 12, 1933, and the worst truck mishap was on June 16, 1937, when two men were killed and twelve badly injured when their vehicle overturned.

The worst tragedy, however, in CCC history in Pennsylvania came in connection with a forest fire. On October 19, 1938, eight young men died attempting to extinguish a blaze in Cameron County. One of the enrollees, Howard May, was only sixteen years old and had been in the CCC for only two weeks. His mother addressed a poignant letter to Fechner asking how it could be that her son, with no training or experience, could have been required to fight a major fire. Her letter prompted the Director to encourage an investigation which was conducted by District Attorney Edward W. Tompkins, George W. Wirt of the Pennsylvania Department of Forests and Waters, and representatives of the Army and the United States Forest Service.

The inquest began on October 31, 1938, before a county coroner’s jury. Twenty enrollees testified in addition to Lt. Rodman Haynes, the camp commander, and Earl Getz, the project supervisor. The testimony showed that the boys were ordered to fight the fire after only a brief rest following a previous fire. It was also confirmed that they had no formal fire-fighting instruction, that they were poorly equipped for the task, and that they were inadequately supervised. Despite the damning nature of this testimony, the coroner’s jury ruled only that “unintentional laxity and negligence contributed to the deaths.” No further action was ever taken.

There was, however, a concerted effort to reduce accidents, prompted not so much by this incident as by the overall high injury rate. Fechner demanded that camp commanders emphasize safety more adequately, and, happily, there were positive results. By the end of 1938, accidents had been reduced by 66 per cent from 17 per 1,000 a month to 8 per 1,000 a month.36

Despite the obviously serious nature of some of the complaints, the occasionally cavalier attitude of the Army, and the element of danger, it must be reiterated that, during the early years of the CCC at least, the disenchanted made up a small minority of the enrollees in Pennsylvania. As suggested previously, the files of the Corps are literally crammed with testimonials from enrollees who enjoyed their experience and felt they had derived lasting benefits. Still, the complaints were significant. They affected the administration of the program, particularly the relationship between Harrisburg and the Army, and, what is more important, the bad publicity they engendered was a deterrent to many potential enrollees.\(^{37}\)

In order to minimize the adverse effects of complaints and desertion, Pennsylvania officials carried on a constant propaganda campaign to stimulate interest. This campaign was conducted largely through the office of the county relief directors who were told to seize every opportunity to publish attractive news about the Corps in their local newspapers and to do everything possible to squelch rumors and stories of unhappy experiences.\(^{38}\) The federal government also participated by allowing the publication and distribution in the camps of Happy Days, the weekly CCC newspaper created by freelance journalist Melvin Ryder. Even though it received no direct subsidization from the government, Ryder's publication was obviously a blatant propaganda tool full of pleasant stories about camp life, the accomplishments of the Corps, athletic and other recreational events, and, most important, testimonials.\(^{39}\) Despite all these efforts, however, retention was always a significant

\(^{37}\) Persons to Fechner, July 19, 1935; Kurtz to Persons, July 11, 1935. Kurtz reports here that he was informed by Helen Bolger of the Berks County Emergency Relief Board that it was practically impossible to enroll anyone from her area because of widespread rumors concerning unsatisfactory camp conditions. Also see Donald C. Galehouse, Executive Director, Dauphin County Emergency Relief Board, to Lt. Kennard A. Hoyt, Sept. 24, 1935, in which Galehouse reports that many parents in his area refuse to allow their sons to enroll in the CCC due to stories about rowdiness in nearby camps. RG 35, CCC, Pennsylvania, N.A.

\(^{38}\) Kurtz to Persons, May 31, 1934, Aug. 13, 1936; Kurtz to All County Relief Directors, Oct. 23, 1935, ibid. Also see: CCC Circular Letter #8, Sept. 24, 1937; Circular Letter #12, Dec. 6, 1937, RG 23, SERB Files, Pennsylvania State Archives. For an example of the types of articles produced in response to Kurtz' requests, see Fulton Democrat, Sept. 30, 1937.

problem in Pennsylvania. It seems clear that the CCC suffered from three major difficulties. First, was the matter of camp conditions. There was just enough truth in the stories and rumors which constantly circulated to produce hesitancy and fear in many minds. Second, was the fact that after 1935 young men had more numerous options in their search for work relief. Not only could they join the CCC, but now the WPA and the National Youth Administration offered employment opportunities which were often more attractive. Working on WPA projects, for example, one could stay home and make more money at the same time. Finally, after 1939, the spectre of militarism became more apparent than ever before and caused reluctance on the part of many potential enrollees. All these factors combined were simply too much for the CCC to overcome entirely.

The race question was yet another problem. Black Americans suffered most from the Depression since they were located at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder. They needed greater assistance in proportion to their numbers than any other group. Yet, while theoretically the federal government set standards to prevent discrimination in the CCC, enrollment quotas based upon race were merely set so that the proportion of Negroes in the Corps would approximate their proportion in the total population. Many state officials agreed with this practice, but not those in Pennsylvania.

Constantly bombarded with many more applications from blacks than they could possibly handle, Pennsylvania administrators pleaded for increased quotas. Almost all of the pressure for more flexibility came from Philadelphia and Allegheny Counties, where the majority of Pennsylvania’s black population resided. There, relief directors Dorothy Kahn, Pauline Lewis, and A. P. L. Turner repeatedly stressed the need for larger black quotas to Kurtz, who, in turn, badgered the Labor Department and the Army, but without success. Persons and Snyder at the Labor Department agreed that the need was great, but they could not budge Fechner. The Army also seemed determined to keep black enrollment to a minimum.

40 Pauline Lewis Kurtz, May 4, 1937, RG 35, CCC, Pennsylvania, N.A.
41 Alfred Goodfellow, Executive Director, Chester County Emergency Relief Board, to Kurtz, July 17, 1934; Col. F. G. Turner to Persons, July 25, 1934; Eric Biddle to Persons, Sept. 18, 1934; Thelma B. Dade to Persons, Sept. 19, 1934; A. P. L. Turner, Assistant Execu-
Another aspect of the problem was segregation. Blacks lucky enough to be selected were sent to all black camps. So rigidly was this policy enforced that the Army even refused to permit black cooks to serve in white camps despite the fact that there were plenty of black cooks available and very few white ones.\(^{42}\) Worse, however, was the fact that very few black camps were established because the Army followed the policy of establishing such camps only after obtaining the consent of nearby towns. Such consent was difficult to obtain, often more so in the North than in the South. Thus, the residents of Thornhurst in Lackawanna County petitioned the government against the establishment of a camp in their vicinity. Their plea was typical in that it expressed fear that the concentration of so great a number of unattached Negro males would constitute a danger to the wives and daughters of the community.\(^{43}\) Once the original black camps were established Fechner and the Army resisted pressure to establish more, and indeed by 1935 this resistance became general policy.\(^{44}\) Thus, even at the peak of CCC operations in Pennsylvania there were only twelve black camps in the state with a maximum of 2,400 men.\(^{45}\) Yet in the large cities of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh blacks accounted for 25 per cent of the total relief load, while they were allowed to make up less than 8 per cent of the CCC selection quota. Clearly, the state could easily have filled three times or more the number of black camps available.\(^{46}\)

The Army further exacerbated the problem by adhering to a strict policy of segregation at the reconditioning camps and refusing to expand that portion of the facilities assigned to blacks. Early in the program Third Corps Headquarters undertook to advise the administrators at various selection centers how many black applicants to send forward, but since the administrators did not know

\(^{42}\) Eric Biddle to Persons, Sept. 18, 1934; Thelma Dade to Persons, Sept. 19, 1934, ibid.

\(^{43}\) H. S. Sage to Fechner, Aug. 1, 1935, ibid.


\(^{45}\) Kurtz to Persons, June 7, 1934, RG 35, CCC, Pennsylvania, N.A.

how many of the applicants were black until they arrived, and since there were always more than the Army wanted, they found themselves in the embarrassing position of having to send men who were otherwise fully qualified back to their homes simply because they were black. Outraged, and fearing reaction from the black community, relief administrators in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh pleaded with Kurtz to wrench concessions from the Army. He attempted to do so, but as usual without success.47

Throughout the entire history of the program in Pennsylvania J. Fred Kurtz fought for an expanded black quota, constantly warning federal administrators of the potential for violence in the large cities of the state. Finally, in 1941, after years of effort, and at a time when the Corps was nearly defunct, he received authorization to enroll 150 black corpsmen over the quota limit for assignment in Maryland. A thorough review of the record indicates that this was the only concession of its kind made during the entire history of CCC operations in Pennsylvania.48

In connection with the matter of de facto discrimination in the CCC it should be noted that Fechner always insisted that the maximum black quota be maintained. A case in point is that of the two black camps located in Gettysburg National Military Park. In the summer of 1936 Fechner discovered that both camps were undermanned. He visited them and immediately thereafter issued orders that they be brought up to full strength. There followed an intense recruiting campaign in the nearby counties of Adams, Cumberland, Franklin and Fulton, but, since there were very few blacks in those counties, the campaign produced no results. Finally, fifty blacks were brought to the area from other parts of the state and Fechner was satisfied.49

Ironically, despite fear of racial tension, there were no major incidents involving black corpsmen in Pennsylvania. On the other hand, there were numerous cases of alleged drunkenness and rowdy-

47 Kurtz to Persons, June 7, 1934; Memorandum, Col. F. G. Turner, June 8, 1934; Transcript of telephone conversation between Kurtz and Snyder, Mar. 24, 1936; Fechner to Kurtz, Oct. 23, 1937, ibid.
48 Mrs. Violet L. Whitney, Executive Director, Chester County Emergency Relief Board, to Kurtz, Jan. 23, 1941; Kurtz to Persons, Jan. 27, 1941; Kurtz to Persons, Apr. 22, 1941; Persons to Kurtz, Apr. 29, 1941, ibid.
49 Fechner to Persons, July 28, 1936; Fechner to Col. George P. Tyner, July 31, 1936; Snyder to Kurtz, Aug. 1, 1936; Robert Prather to Kurtz, Aug. 3, 1936, ibid.
ism on the part of white enrollees seeking weekend relaxation.  
All in all, it must be said that the record of the CCC in handling the race question was poor, and the bulk of the responsibility must be assigned to Robert Fechner. As opposed to his attitudes and policies, those of CCC administrators in Pennsylvania, particularly J. Fred Kurtz, were very progressive indeed.

In contrast to many New Deal agencies, politics played a relatively minor role in the CCC, but it was by no means entirely absent because the program was viewed by congressmen as a patronage bonanza. From the beginning, most appointive positions—project superintendents, foremen, and the like—were filled through the patronage of congressmen. Frequently, this meant that a candidate's political views were more important than his technical competence. In the spring of 1937, at hearings on a bill to make the CCC a permanent government agency, Republican Senator James J. Davis raised this issue. He had been told, said Davis, that all applicants for supervisory technical positions in Pennsylvania were pressured to change their political affiliation in exchange for favorable consideration. The Senator demanded an explanation. Fechner in turn requested that the Forestry Service and the Park Service poll all their employees in Pennsylvania to determine whether there was any truth to the charge. In response, Fred Morrell of the Forestry Service answered that Democratic registration in the state at large had increased from 22 per cent to 43 per cent, and Republican registration had declined from 77 per cent to 56 per cent between 1933 and 1936, but he argued that it would be impossible to check each individual change in a given organization such as his agency. E. K. Barber of the Interior Department was more explicit, saying that no applicant for a CCC position had ever been asked to change his political affiliation in order to obtain a job. Fechner communicated these responses to Senator Davis, but he was not satisfied.

Although it appeared from their responses that the operating agencies did not take the patronage problem seriously, the fact is that they were very much concerned. In 1935 the Forestry Service

50 For example see transcript of telephone conversation between Kurtz and Snyder, Mar. 23, 1934, *ibid.*
51 RG 35, Reference Data File 6, N.A.
52 Fechner to Fred Morrell and Conrad Wirth, Apr. 14, 1937; Morrell to Fechner, Apr. 23, 1937; E. K. Barber to Fechner, Apr. 30, 1937; Fechner to Sen. Davis, Apr. 29, May 7, 1937; Davis to Fechner, May 4, 1937; RG 35, File 1-300, N.A.
conducted a confidential poll of state foresters, the results of which indicated that virtually all of them considered patronage to be one of their main difficulties. From forty-six of the forty-eight states came responses which were not only negative, but highly emotional. The general trend of opinion was that politics had reduced the effectiveness of the CCC considerably and that there was little chance for improvement until the patronage system was abolished. In a summary of the poll which was circulated confidentially to high ranking officials of the Forestry Service, no state was mentioned by name, but there is sufficient circumstantial evidence to suggest that Pennsylvania was not one of the two exceptions. For example, Congressman J. B. Snyder complained frequently about appointments he did not like, often resorting to rancorous telephone calls to CCC officials in Washington. The inordinate interest of congressmen in the CCC is also reflected in the correspondence of Benjamin Focht of the 18th District. Focht was a Republican who frequently complained of unfair treatment regarding his appointment recommendations. “I voted for all these New Deal measures,” he wrote disgustedly, “never dreaming they would be administered so as to discriminate against Republicans.” Focht’s complaint was not entirely justified, however, for he seemed incapable of distinguishing between administrative appointees and enrollees. He insisted upon recommending young men for “positions” in the CCC when what he really wanted was to get them enrolled.

Another indicator of congressional interest in CCC patronage is to be found in the vote on the permanency bill of 1937, which would have placed most nonenrollee personnel under Civil Service. In common with congressmen from most states, the Pennsylvanians voted overwhelmingly to defeat the amendment in order to save their patronage. They also opposed the permanency bill itself, but this came as a result of hostility to President Roosevelt, not to the Corps. Congressmen were also quick to defend their interests when the CCC was threatened with retrenchment. Thus, Representative

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53 Summary Report of Survey of State Foresters, 1935, RG 95, Section 144, N.A.
54 A. J. M. to Persons, May 24, 1934, reporting Snyder’s call; Benjamin Focht to Persons, Mar. 1, 1935; Persons to Focht, Mar. 16, 1935, RG 35, CCC, Pennsylvania, N.A.
55 Congressional Record, 75th Cong., 1st Session, Volume 81, Pt. IV, 4430, as cited in Salmond, The Civilian Conservation Corps, 153. Many Congressmen, Democrats and Republicans alike, were aroused by Roosevelt’s alleged steamroller tactics in 1937, and used the CCC Permanency Bill, a pet project of the President’s, to get back at him.
Harry Haines addressed a sharp letter of protest to Fechner opposing the cutback of 1936, and Peter J. DeMuth did likewise in 1938. State officials also complained about retrenchment on grounds it would increase their relief burden, and Director Fechner felt the pressure intensely, but the cuts stood because the President was determined to economize. 56

The problems of partisanship also appeared at the state level. When the Democrats swept into power in Pennsylvania in 1934, many appointive officials such as J. Fred Kurtz feared they would lose their jobs. Kurtz was especially concerned after he discovered that his immediate superior, Director Eric Biddle, was to be dismissed, and he plaintively wrote to Dean Snyder that although he was a registered Republican he had "always tried to vote for the man and not the party." 57 Kurtz was also alarmed when the WPA was organized in 1935 and it was anticipated that the CCC might be made an administrative subdivision of that agency in much the same way as the NYA. He openly asked his friends in Washington for support and letters of praise to help him keep his job; he even applied for a position with the CCC office in Washington should the worst occur. Persons and Snyder were only too happy to write letters on Kurtz' behalf, since they were genuinely pleased with his work, but they gave him no encouragement to anticipate a federal job. "Our administrative budget," wrote Snyder, "is too small to support anything but a skeleton staff for the CCC here in Washington." 58

Kurtz faced yet another period of uncertainty in late 1936 and early 1937 at the time of the Goodrich Commission investigation. Established by Governor Earle in 1936 under the chairmanship of Dean Herbert Goodrich of the University of Pennsylvania Law School, the Commission made sweeping recommendations for change in the administration of poor relief in the state. It called for the dismantling of the SERB, which had existed since 1932, and the elimination of the County Poor Boards, which had existed since

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56 Haines to Fechner, Feb. 27, 29, 1936; Fechner to Haines, Mar. 3, 5, 1936; Peter J. DeMuth to Fechner, Apr. 5, 1938; Fechner to Fred Morrell, Apr. 6, 1938, RG 35, CCC, Pennsylvania, N.A.
57 Kurtz to Snyder, Jan. 10, 1935, ibid.
58 Kurtz to Ruth Blakeslee, Dec. 11, 1935; Kurtz to Persons, Apr. 8, May 1, June 26, 1936; Snyder to Persons, June 24, 1936; Persons to de Schweinitz, June 23, 1936; Snyder to Kurtz, June 29, 1936, ibid.
1682. In their place was to be a State Department of Public Assistance headed by a secretary of cabinet rank. There was also to be a new board in each county, the members of which were to be selected by the citizens of the local communities.\textsuperscript{59}

These proposals were submitted to the 1937 session of the state legislature by Governor Earle and, despite strong opposition from the Republicans, they passed. The new agency came into existence on January 1, 1938, amid rumors that many state relief administrators would lose their jobs. Once again Kurtz implored his friends at the Department of Labor to praise him to his superiors, and once again they obliged. Frank Persons wrote to Arthur Howe, the newly designated Secretary of Public Assistance, that Kurtz was doing a marvelous job. As it turned out, however, Kurtz was in little danger as a result of the creation of the new department. He remained in his position, and, at the recommendation of the Selection Division officials in Washington, was given an assistant in 1938 to ease somewhat the heavy burden of his duties.\textsuperscript{60}

As suggested earlier, one of the most controversial, and, in some ways, least satisfactory aspects of the CCC was its educational program. From the beginning, certain officials at both the state and federal levels felt strongly that the opportunity to provide education as well as work relief for the enrollees should not be wasted. Among those most strongly committed to education at the federal level was Frank Persons who received most of his support from the United States Forestry Service and some state forestry departments, including that of Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Department of Forests and Waters was, indeed, one of the first state agencies to prepare forestry educational materials for use in the camps.\textsuperscript{61}


\textsuperscript{60} Kurtz to Snyder, Jan. 8, 1938; Persons to Arthur Howe, Jan. 13, 1938, RG 35, CCC, Pennsylvania, N.A. Howe was the first Secretary of Public Assistance, taking over from Karl de Schweinitz the last Director of the SERB.

\textsuperscript{61} S. Keplinger, Senior Forester, United States Forestry Service, Department of Interior, May 24, 1933; speech, H. R. Kylie, United States Forestry Service, at the annual meeting of the Society of American Foresters, Feb. 28–29, 1936, RG 35, Section 144, N.A.; George A. Duthie, Acting Assistant Forester, United States Forestry Service, to Lewis E. Staley, Secretary, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Forests and Waters, Oct. 2, 1933; Staley to Fechner, Oct. 6, 1933, \textit{ibid.}
At the outset, the main opposition to the establishment of an educational program came from the Army; it was powerful enough to nearly destroy any chance the program might have had. At length, however, Chief of Staff General Douglas MacArthur submitted a proposal envisioning an educational system for the CCC to be administered by the Army, but operated through the Office of Education. It was a cumbersome plan at best, but it was approved because there seemed to be no other alternative acceptable to the military.  

As the program developed it became clear that the men at the Office of Education, particularly Commissioner George S. Zook, his successor John W. Studebaker, and C. S. Marsh and Howard Oxley, CCC Education Directors, were somewhat visionary and unrealistic in their approach. Whereas most forestry men conceived of "education" primarily as a process of work training, the educators tended to see it as an opportunity to provide not only basic literacy and vocational training for those who desired them, but also a "complete educational experience" such as would be available in the public schools. Their approach caused friction from the beginning between the educational advisors who were placed in the camps by the Office of Education on the one hand and Army and technical service personnel on the other. By 1937 the conflict reached crisis proportions.

The technical service people, particularly the foresters, were bitter over what they considered lack of recognition for their contributions to the education of the enrollees. Their contribution, of course, was in the form of on-the-job training which occurred while the enrollees were at work, and was not considered an official part of the education program. As a direct result of the tension, Fred Morrell, Conrad Wirth, and Adjutant General George P. Tyner appealed to Fechner to approve a new distribution of responsibilities with regard to education. While this proposal was under consideration, Fechner received another from Dr. John W. Studebaker, which if adopted would have made the Office of Education independent from Army control in the administration of the camp programs. Fechner ap-

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62 Gen. Douglas MacArthur to Franklin D. Roosevelt, Nov. 22, 1933; C. M. Granger, Acting Forester, United States Forestry Service, to X, Nov. 2, 1933; Granger to J. P. Wright, Nov. 23, 1933, RG 95, File 144, N.A. Also see RG 35, Data Reference File 6, Vol. 3, N.A. for documents relevant to the origins of the CCC educational program.
proved the Studebaker plan but it was never put into effect because it was discovered that under existing law funds could be expended only under the old structure. Thus the original organization was continued and conflict persisted.

In December, 1937, Morrell and Wirth sent another proposal to Fechner, this time calling for the complete dismantling of the educational program. They claimed the effort to provide academic training in the CCC camps was a failure and that on-the-job training should receive more emphasis. This proposal, together with the continuing tension between the technical services and the Office of Education, led Fechner to appoint a special committee to investigate the entire matter and make proposals for adjustment. The committee's report, presented in January, 1939, was very critical. It called for the removal of the program from the jurisdiction of the Army, more emphasis upon on-the-job training, and better training for the educational advisors. In short, the report virtually duplicated the previous recommendations made by Morrell and Wirth. Most of these recommendations were ignored; however, Fechner did approve the notion of better training for camp teachers and more emphasis on vocational education.63

Generally, the educational program in Pennsylvania reflected national trends. During the early years the extent and quality of the program varied from camp to camp so that summary statements are difficult to make. At one extreme were programs such as that in Camp NP-4 near Birdsboro which provided only weekly lectures on "scientific and timely topics," in addition to organized instruction for the illiterate. In 1935 this camp had no textbooks available and no instructional equipment. At the other extreme was the remarkable program at Camp 317 near Hillsgrove, where, since as early as 1934, there had been a highly competent educational advisor and teaching staff including two professionals supported by Federal Emergency Relief Administration funds. Further, visiting lecturers from Penn State and Mansfield State Colleges made frequent appearances. Twenty-three courses in both vocational and academic areas were offered, and the enrollees were given incentive awards to encourage participation. The enrollees called their camp

63 See Salmond, The Civilian Conservation Corps, 48-53, 162-168, 219. Documents relative to this conflict are to be found in RG 35, File 6; RG 95, Sec. 144; RG 407, Section 8, N.A.
"Hillsgrove University." While it was considered to have one of the most outstanding programs in the nation, it was admittedly an unusual case. Overall, the program was quite substandard because many camp commanders opposed it and obstructed rather than encouraged the efforts of the educational advisors whenever possible. Furthermore, supervision was inadequate. Neither the Office of Education nor the state had sufficient funds or personnel to carry on a constant program of observation. Thus evaluations were usually based largely on the reports of the educational advisors themselves which were normally somewhat exaggerated.

The enrollees often did not see the defects which were so apparent to their leaders. Their letters are full of comments favorable to the educational program, both the academic and the vocational portions. Typical of letters written even during the early period, before the reform of the educational system, was that of John E. Hussey, Camp SP-5, Johnstown, addressed to Fechner on December 2, 1935:

I began my education by enrolling in a class which taught all the phases of automotive mechanics. . . . I am enrolled for a business course starting out to master the typewriter and English Grammar. I am going to stay here until I master these courses and combining my knowledge of automotives with these, will place me in position to be valuable to others as well as myself. With this knowledge, I will in the future, be able to step out into civil life with many new possibilities open to me, far advanced from where I was when I entered the 3 C's, a better citizen, and take the place in life that is rightfully mine.

In a group of twenty letters selected at random from a large bundle written in 1935, it was found that almost all contained sentiments similar to those of Hussey. The quality of the education offered in the CCC may have been low by professional standards—it undoubtedly was—but nevertheless the enrollees appreciated it deeply.

Gradually after 1937, as controversy heightened, greater emphasis

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64 Happy Days, July 5, 1935, RG 35, File 18; Files of Camp NP-4, Birdsboro, RG 35, CCC, Pennsylvania, N.A.
65 C. W. Mattison, Report to Regional Foresters on the Status of the CCC Educational Program in Pennsylvania, Jan. 28, 1939, RG 407, Sec. 8, Part 3, N.A.
67 See note 21.
was placed on educational facilities in the camps. This trend is reflected in the annual camp reports, which, though exaggerated, provide useful clues. They suggest uniformly that more space, more equipment, broader curricula, and better trained teachers were more common after 1937. There were also efforts to improve vocational training. In regard to the latter the Pennsylvania Department of Forests and Waters took the lead with a method known as the "Pennsylvania Plan." Specifically designed for vocational training, this technique involved a simplified program in which the job foreman was provided with a set of instructions which enabled him to design his own teaching plan based on his current needs. For a period of several months in early 1937 progress charts were kept which indicated increased efficiency in camps where the system was used. Subsequently, it was introduced in all camps under the direction of the United States Forestry Service.68

Another change after 1937 was the increased number of cooperating schools. Prior to this date only one institution, the Williamsport Industrial School, offered formal training to CCC enrollees, although they were allowed to use the facilities of numerous high schools on an informal basis. By 1939, however, there were twenty-four such programs offering a wide variety of vocational courses, but, as before, only a tiny fraction of all enrollees benefitted from these programs because available space was so limited.69

Only one other significant change was made in the CCC educational program, and this was occasioned by the war. Beginning in 1940 the Corps was used to train young men in noncombat skills that were considered vital to the war effort. This program was usually conducted in cooperation with nearby high schools or colleges and received special funding. In Pennsylvania twenty-one vocational programs were established by February 1, 1941, to train enrollees in such skills as automobile repair, radio repair, sheet metal work, electricity, welding, woodwork, printing, and the like. Although its operation was never quite satisfactory to the Army, this program continued until the end of the CCC in mid-1942.70

68 Memorandum by H. R. Kylie, Aug. 9, 1937, RG 407, Sec. 8A; Happy Days, July 3, 1937, RG 35, File 18, N.A.
69 Report on Cooperating Schools, Pennsylvania, RG 407, Sec. 8A, N.A.
The war wrought changes in the CCC and also hastened its demise. By 1940 the program was in decline throughout the country, but in Pennsylvania the trend became apparent more slowly than elsewhere. Indeed, during the last quarter of 1939, Pennsylvania enrolled 6,462 young men to lead the nation. These were more than enough to fill the 48 camps still in operation in the state so that many had to be sent elsewhere. Soon, however, the declining enrollment affected Pennsylvania too, and it became increasingly clear that the days of the CCC as an effective organization were numbered. The major causes of this development were the war scare which prompted many people to believe that the CCC was a stepping stone to the Army, and the upswing of the economy which made jobs in the private sector more readily available. With the decline newspapers throughout the state began to speculate that perhaps the usefulness of the CCC had come to an end. The Harrisburg News, for example, declared that, “To drain workers from industry rather than towards it in these urgent days seems as stupid as it is wasteful.”

“Waste,” indeed, now became the battle cry of the opposition. Even in contracted form, it was argued, the CCC cost too much for the return it provided, and, furthermore, there was considerable negligence in the handling of material. In early 1942 the Philadelphia Inquirer, always hostile to the New Deal and one of the few papers in the entire country to criticize the CCC, “discovered” what was allegedly to be a clear-cut case of negligence in Camp SP-51 near Pine Grove Furnace. Here, it was claimed, valuable defence supplies including trucks, tractors, tires, clothes, blankets and tools were being wrecked or abandoned. The charge, of course, triggered an immediate inquiry by the CCC administration which had become extremely sensitive to this sort of thing. Charles H. Kenlan, who had long served as a special investigator and trouble shooter for the Corps, was despatched to the scene. His final report issued in May, 1942, showed there was no truth to the charge. Some equip-

72 CCC Circular Letter Number 51, Nov. 20, 1939, RG 23, Files of the SERB, ibid.
73 Harrisburg News, June 10, 1941.
74 Philadelphia Inquirer, Mar. 8, 1942.
Demonstrating the obvious exaggeration of such reports as appeared in the Inquirer, however, could not turn the tide. The CCC was definitely on the way out. By early 1942 there were only fourteen operating camps in Pennsylvania and eight of these were scheduled to close. Congress was debating the CCC appropriations bill and in July voted it down. With its funding now completely cut off, the program was doomed, and when it expired officially on July 2, 1942, the Philadelphia Inquirer suddenly became magnanimous. Probably reflecting the sentiments of many others, the editor wrote: “The CCC did a good job but its usefulness is over and the House did well to refuse it further appropriations. . . . Its elimination will save $76 million this fiscal year.” It was ironical, but true. A program which was originated to save natural resources and salvage human lives, and which had produced results of incalculable value, was ultimately abandoned in order to save money.

It would be impossible to present a summary statement of the social and economic value of the CCC to the people of Pennsylvania with any sort of precision. However, two things are clear: the Corps was definitely an effective work relief program for young men; and its operation over a period of nine years demonstrated the capacity of the federal system to meet and overcome crisis conditions satisfactorily.

By 1940 more than 160,000 young men had participated in CCC activities in Pennsylvania. Most of these were natives of the state and 80 per cent of them came from urban families of four or more. Thus it may be concluded that the enrollees not only provided relief for themselves, but for more than half a million others as well and that they contributed significantly to the mitigation of unemployment in the cities of the state. We can never know how many families were literally saved by this program, but we can certainly assume that they were many.

75 Report of Charles H. Kenlan re: Camp SP-51, May 10, 1942, RG 35, CCC, N.A.
76 Salmond, The Civilian Conservation Corps.
77 Philadelphia Inquirer, July 2, 1942.
78 Some characteristics of CCC enrollees, compiled by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Public Assistance, April, 1939, RG 35, CCC, File 59, N.A.; Quarterly Report on Selection, Pennsylvania, July, 1940, RG 95, Sec. 144, N.A.
Despite the fantastically complex nature of the CCC administrative structure, the program not only survived for nine years, but operated rather well. True, there were difficulties, but generally the War, Labor, and Agriculture Departments worked fairly well together and in conjunction with the state authorities. There were times when the system might well have collapsed, but it did not, and this is due in large measure to the skill and determination of men like J. Fred Kurtz in Harrisburg and Frank Persons and Dean Snyder in Washington. Perhaps it could be said that ultimately the success or failure of any bureaucracy depends upon the quality of leadership and dedication of its administrators.

One of the major criticisms of the CCC was its cost. It was admittedly expensive compared to other relief programs. CCC operations cost approximately $1,175 per man year compared to a cost of approximately $835 per man year for WPA projects. Yet the work performed was of lasting value. By the end of 1940 CCC workers in Pennsylvania had planted nearly 50,000,000 trees and built over 6,300 miles of roads and trails through woodlands and parks. They also built 98 small dams, 86 lookout towers, numerous small bridges; undertook disease control measures over more than 450,000 acres; and spent more than 65,000 man days fighting forest fires. When compared to these material benefits and the salvation of human lives already mentioned, one must conclude that the funds were very well spent.

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79 Fechner to Morrell and Wirth, Dec. 31, 1937; Glenn G. Wolfe to L. C. Stockdale, Jan. 5, 1938; Stockdale to Fechner, Mar. 15, 1938; Morrell to Silcox, Nov. 10, 1937, RG 35, CCC, Pennsylvania, N.A.