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WAR EMPHASES
ON PHYSICAL TRAINING

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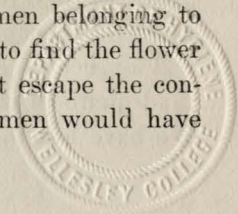
State Inspector of Physical Training

In my discussion of war emphases in physical training to-night, I wish to make it perfectly clear that I am concerned with the broad subject of physical training and not with its narrow limitation to physical exercise. The physical training that I am thinking of is the physical training that is covered by the program of the Regents of the University of the State of New York — as proposed to them by the State Military Training Commission, some years ago. This program includes provision for information, provision for examination, and provisions for application. In other words, physical training involves information concerning the laws of health and the care of the body; examination concerning the physical condition of the individual; and application whereby habits of health may be developed by the individual. One of our most important health habits is the habit of physical exercise — games, play, recreation, and athletics. As a result we think too frequently of physical training as being limited to various forms of physical exercise.

The emphases made during the last five years have given us in physical education a great deal to think about. Our successes and our failures have been frankly exposed. Wisdom dictates that we should formulate a vigorous program for the future, avoiding the mistakes which the war has shown for the past and utilizing the values of physical education which the war has so dramatically emphasized.

The fact that something like 30 per cent of our young men were found physically unfit to meet the supreme demand of patriotic citizenship at the time of the draft, seems to me to be perfect and incontrovertible evidence that our pre-war physical education was a failure which we should be at great pains not to repeat.

A large number of these young men were found incapacitated by avoidable, preventable and remedial health and physical defects. They were discarded from the group of young men belonging to that age period in which one has a right to expect to find the flower of our vigorous American manhood. One cannot escape the conclusion that a large percentage of these young men would have



been saved from the military scrap heap, had they been given the physical education they deserved during their earlier age periods.

Through these findings at the draft, the war has emphasized the fact that we have neglected our citizens in their training and that our boys and girls have been permitted to reach maturity with entirely too little physical education. The fact has been emphasized that 70 per cent of our boys and girls never reach the high school; that 61 per cent of the children who enter high school fail to graduate from the high school. The Commissioner of Education in Washington has stated that in the classes that graduated from American high schools in the year 1918, each group of 117 of those graduates was all that was left of a group of 1000 who entered the elementary grades together, some years before. Only $11\frac{7}{10}$ per cent passed through the grades of the elementary and secondary schools to graduation. Obviously a large proportion of our older children of school age were, and are still, beyond the reach of our school program of physical education.

The war has emphasized the fact that our school teachers, taking the country as a whole, are immature, poorly prepared, inexperienced, and underpaid; as a result the children that do go to school throughout the length and breadth of America, receive on the average a very ineffective physical education.

We know, too, that our programs of physical education have not always been intelligent and that the time devoted to these programs is, in the majority of cases, inadequate. Too many educational institutions have been satisfied with two thirty-minute periods a week or less for their program of physical education.

With the majority of the boys and girls in America receiving little or no physical education, and with such a large percentage of our teachers immature, inexperienced and poorly trained, and with so many of our programs insufficient in time allowance and imperfect in content, and with such a great part of our older boys and girls wholly beyond the reach of the school program, it is a great wonder that a larger percentage of our young men were not found incapacitated because of avoidable or preventable physical or health deficiencies. We as a people have made wholly inadequate provision for the physical education of our children. We have left their physical growth, their development, and their

functional education to the vagaries of chance and to the influence of economic conditions over which the growing child has absolutely no control.

Our great training camps have emphasized another important failure in physical education. In spite of a final universal recognition of physical training values by military men, we did not succeed in securing an even or systematic program of physical training activities for general application in all of our camps. There seem to have been as many types of program adopted as there were camps and camp commanders. Programs applied to some groups of recruits were tremendously successful. Other groups had little or no program at all. In other groups, athletics, games or recreation were poor.

This situation is simply an emphasis of the situation in physical training as it has existed for these many years throughout the United States. Every institution and every school system devises and develops its own program, places its own limitations, and sees its own possibilities. There is an excuse for such differences between groups of independent communities, but it does seem there could easily have been formulated a general program standardized in its larger details for use in all of the great American training camps.

We are not satisfied with the products of our physical education. We are not satisfied with the limited amount of physical education we are permitted to give. We are not satisfied with the absence of well-rounded programs of physical education for those boys and girls who cannot go to school. We are not satisfied with the fact that our teachers as a whole receive but little preparation in physical training themselves. We are not satisfied with the fact that there is only a meager supply of special teachers of physical training. And we are not satisfied with the fact that there are so many differences in the program of physical training as it is operated in the various schools and communities of the country. These conditions have been emphasized by the war, their bearing upon the defense of the nation has been impressed upon us insistently and sternly during the years of this great war. If we are a wise-minded people we will see to it that these faults and failures will not be continued or repeated.

On the other hand, the war has done much to emphasize the

important value of physical training. We have informed our soldiers concerning many of the fundamental laws of health and found that it pays; we have protected them from health injury and we have shown them how to avoid such injury; and we have found that such care saves them from the hospital, the sick list, and from physical incapacity. Informational hygiene has been shown to have a practical and definite military value.

The war has emphasized most convincingly the importance of health examination. Examination at the draft, examination after the draft, examination of the individual soldier for special purposes have been powerfully productive in their influence upon the better health and higher vigor and greater physical resource of the men in the army and the navy.

The emphasis of the war upon those special phases of physical training that have to do with recreation, games, gymnastics and athletics has produced the most convincing demonstration that the world has ever seen of the value of interesting physical exercise and entertainment, especially under war conditions, when health and vigor and morale are so obviously essential to military success.

Every military man with whom I have had conversation has been thoroughly awake to the importance of the several great divisions of physical education and has been convinced, it has seemed to me, of the fact that a wisely ordered and effective program of physical education is a fundamental preparation for useful citizenship in peace or in war, and must inevitably be developed as a foundation for whatever special military training there may be applied later in the life of the individual.

As a consequence of these emphases of the war there will be a reorganization of our national military program and a very much heavier emphasis than has been made before will be placed on physical training.

As a result of these war emphases, thirteen of our States now have laws, some of them good and some of them poor, requiring that physical education be a part of their school program. We have a National Committee on Physical Education and a National Physical Education Service concerned with stimulating legislatures to make physical education a requirement in the schools of all the States of the United States. There are now two laws before Congress, each one of which provides Federal assistance for States

that make physical education a requirement in their schools or a requirement in their communities.

The Federal Government, largely because of the emphases of this war, has placed an appropriation under the control of the United States Interdepartmental Social Hygiene Board which that Board is using for the purpose of assisting normal schools, colleges, and universities that train teachers, to establish departments of hygiene which in their general content are concerned with the subject-matter of physical education. This Board is concerned particularly with the preparation and training of teachers so that every teacher of children will be as well prepared in the elements of physical education or hygiene as she is in the elements of arithmetic or geography. For the Board believes that no other individual has a greater influence upon the health habits of the future citizen than the teacher who teaches children—no other person with perhaps the exception of the child's mother. If, therefore, this Board whose existence has been stimulated by the war, succeeds in its purpose, it will make hygiene—or its equivalent, physical education—a required part of the training of every teacher so that the hygiene and sanitation of the classroom in the elementary school or the secondary school, college or university will in the future be of a higher grade than in the past and the information and the education of our citizens in matters of hygiene will be as common as their information and education in reading and geography.¹

No State in our Union possesses greater evidence of this emphasis of the war upon physical training than is possessed by the State of New York. Because of this war we have the first State Military Training requirement applying to boys that, so far as I know, has appeared in this country. Furthermore, as a result of this emphasis, the State of New York adopted a law three years ago requiring that physical training be given in every elementary and secondary school of the State, public, institutional and private. Along with this State law on physical training, New York has a State program proposed by the Military Training Commission and adopted by the Regents of the University of the State

¹ This Board is concerned especially with the prevention and control of venereal diseases. A successful education in general hygiene is regarded by the Board as the best educational measure for the accomplishment of these objects.

of New York that is a better physical training program than is possessed by any other State in the Union. It is a better program because it more nearly covers the whole field of physical training than any other program and because it requires a more nearly adequate amount of time than does any other program. The State program in New York covers information, examination and application in physical education to a degree unsurpassed by any other State, and it requires approximately an hour a day for the operation of that program in the schools of the State. Our State law is better than any other law I remember having seen in that it makes provision for the part payment by the State of the salaries of teachers engaged to teach physical training in the schools of the State. Furthermore, no other State in the Union has made the ample provision which our Legislature has made for the support of the central administration of this program of physical training. The Department of Education in Albany has had and will continue to have at its disposal for administrative purposes a group of experts in physical training whose membership contains men and a woman who rank with the best there is in the country. Practically the entire personnel of the Bureau of Physical Training of the Military Training Commission will go over to the State Department of Education on July the first. This group contains one man who has no superior in rural physical education. It contains a woman who is known internationally for her success in folk dancing and in athletics for girls. Another member in the group was an extraordinary athlete and makes a very productive and practical use of his unusual athletic experience in connection with his fine preparation in physical training. Another member of the group is especially equipped and experienced in the problems of the normal school of physical training. Another member has had an unusual experience in physical education of private schools and in the management of large mass competitions among school children. Latterly this member of the staff was an effective and active participant in the organization and direction of a series of great athletic programs in connection with one of our large military training camps, in which he rose from the rank of private to that of first lieutenant. Another member of this group combines a fine medical training with the high type of preparation in physical education and a unique experience in the physical educational

problems of elementary and secondary schools. And finally one member possesses a quality of safe, dependable, solid, all-around good judgment in general physical education that classifies him with the best we have in America.

New York State possesses still another asset in physical training due to the emphases of the war, in that its military training program for boys of 16, 17 and 18 years of age is already reflecting in its content the physical training influence of the war. As a result of this influence and because of the vision of the Military Training Commission and the far-sighted policy of the Bureau of Military Training under the Commission, it is wholly probable that within the not very distant future the military training program of the Commission will carry the body-building influence of physical training to the great group of boys who are unable to go to school and who are under obligation to take the military training prescribed by the State. For every boy in school 16, 17 and 18 years of age there are nine boys who are at work and who cannot, therefore, enjoy the benefits of the program of physical training and other educational programs carried by our school curriculums. The new military training, the military training that is being adopted by this Commission, will bring to those boys (about 220,000 in number) opportunities for physical development and for health achievement which they would not and could not otherwise secure.

As I see it then, because of the physical training emphases of this war, the State of New York is in possession of opportunities in physical training that are unequalled elsewhere in the United States. The State has the necessary law; it has an adequate program required by the Regents; it has a resource for the financial assistance of communities in the employment of teachers; it has a central specially trained administrative personnel; and it has the machinery with which to reach the boys of State military training age who are not in school.

With this resource the State of New York should meet its obligations to prepare its girls and boys for a vigorous, enduring and productive citizenship. A future draft in this State should not find a large per cent of our young men disqualified because of remediable, avoidable, preventable physical or health deficiencies. Our soldiers for peace and our soldiers for war should know how to

take care of themselves, how to protect themselves and how to conserve their vigorous health.

The war emphases that have given New York this tremendous resource and this unparalleled opportunity must, in the long run, influence other States in the United States to make like provision whereby they may meet their obligations to their citizens-in-the-making. And the Government which has spent so much money to inform and to examine and to prepare our drafted men for the defense of the nation in time of war, cannot afford not to spend its money liberally for a physical education which will prepare its future adult population for their opportunities, for their responsibilities and for their obligations in the time of peace.

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