

Five Million Boys to Work on American Farms



CARRYING IN ONE OF THE BOYS A LITTLE BOY SOON LEARNS ON THE FARM. THESE PHILADELPHIA BOYS, ON A FARM IN CHESTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, SEEM TO BE ENJOYING LIFE.



WILLIAM C. HALL, of New York city, who is serving as national director of United States Boys Working Reserve.



THE AMERICAN FLAG FLYING OVER THE CAMP OF A GROUP OF BOYS WHO ARE ADDING TO THE FOOD PRODUCTION OF THE UNITED STATES.

Special Correspondence
 WASHINGTON, D. C., August 1917.
 NE of the very latest subjects for study in the new curriculum created by war is boys. A summer semester in this course has been undertaken by men scattered over the country and ordinarily engaged in straightening out quite different problems. And "problems" is the word, according to the Department of Labor, which has accepted the services of William E. Hall as national director of the season's study. How this enthusiastic, experienced young man, working in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture and under the Department of Labor, is progressing is worth looking up.

A want ad for 5,000,000 boys appears to be rather a large order, yet this number being put on a farm or work under the direction of the United States boys working reserve, is up for consideration. Mr. Hall reports that almost half that number of youths in this country between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one are unemployed during June, July and August. He doesn't believe in idle boys, regardless of the shortage in labor just now, and he is credited with knowing something of the subject of "boys" through what he has done in the past in establishing and maintaining clubs for them in New York city.

The phrase "the mobilization of boys" sounds like the last war cry of Germany, though, in fact, such a phrase is in constant use by the officials of the reserve. Several governors of states have come to Washington to talk the matter over. Gov. Sleeper of Michigan being among the last to visit the Department of Labor for that purpose. Michigan wants boys for fruit picking as well as harvest field work and "chores." Any one who has eaten peaches from Benton Harbor, Mich., would take a chance on going to the state that is across the lake from Chicago, as an unemployed boy there once put it in locating the state of hemlock and spruce.

On his return to Lansing, the capital city, Gov. Sleeper named a state director for the boys working reserve, and since then a number of similar state directorships have been established in other states. There was an offer to accept the Michigan position and lodging also.

From Utah J. Edward Taylor, the

state director, whose headquarters is in Salt Lake City, telegraphed during the latter part of June to announce to the Department of Labor the placing of twelve to fifteen boys in the sugar beet fields. He added that 250 applicants had rushed in at the first call for help on farms.

"The reserve, while a national organization," said an authority on the subject, at the general headquarters here, "is working through state and local bodies, merely aiming to coordinate the work of these various state organizations toward helping to solve the present emergency labor shortage on farms and in industry. The majority of the boys are sent to the farms either singly or in small groups, but wherever practicable they are sent in camps of twenty-five or more. They go out from there to the surrounding farms every morning. The boys in these camps have a leader, who is either a Y. M. C. A. man, a teacher in some agricultural school or some one who is used to handling boys.

"When the boys go out on the farms singly the federal reserve impresses upon the local body the importance of having some supervisor or instructor who will make regular weekly trips to the farms to see that the boys are being well treated and that the conditions under which they are living are what they should be in every respect. These inspectors also take up the adjustment of any question of wages which may arise, for instance, in one place some boys were hired by a farmer. They lost three days because of rain, yet insisted that they be paid for that period. This had to be taken up and adjusted by the inspector at that vicinity.

"In most cases wages have to be fixed by the varying conditions. The boys are given \$1.00 a day, with board and lodging. In some places, where they are working picking fruit, they receive from 20 to 30 cents an hour. Jefferson C. Smith, director general of boy labor in Maine, has written to the office here something worth quoting. One sentence in his letter reads: 'Our boys think as little of the money they receive as do the privates in the National Guard. They are working for their country.'

One purpose of the boys working reserve is to prevent duplication of effort. In nearly all of the states the potato problem is of similar nature, the state council of defense. No attempt is being made by us to take over the work of the local bodies, but simply to impress them with certain general lines which should be followed.

There is a veritable New England system connected with such generosity, however, and the number of articles compulsory for each volunteer to bring from home might be, in size, akin to that which a freshman dreams of during the summer preceding his entrance to college. A blanket, a dress hat, swimming trunks, cocoa butter for sunburn, a Bible and a good disposition are a few of the numerous requirements.

Rev. M. H. Wakefield of the Baptist Church at Windsor, Me., once chief herdsman on a famous farm in Massachusetts, lectures on the subject of cows, and gives practical lessons in the delicate business of milking. More than half of these boys have had experience working on farms, however, and they will not need so much drilling and tutoring.

It is claimed that discipline is the watchword of the Y. M. C. A. camp at Winthrop Center, overlooking Lake Umbagog. These lads in the khaki suits, having practical demonstrations given them upon matters vitally concerned with farm work, present a training camp no less than similarly uniformed soldiers getting into readiness for the business of war. There is room for 300 in this camp, and just as soon as the full quota is

taught and departs to the farms of Maine there comes an equal number trooping in with their blankets and good dispositions, etc.

Prof. George D. Simmons of the University of Maine is in charge of the agricultural projects of Winthrop Center camp. The general discipline and military instruction are under the direction of Lieut. Fred D. McAllister, a retired officer of the National Guard of Waterville, Me. The way he has mapped out the day for the lads of the reserve has all the earmarks of a busy business. The first call is at 5:30. This means rise and dress. Flag raising and reveille come ten minutes later, followed by assembly at 5:45. Mess call sounds at 6:15, while chapel is held at 7 o'clock. Such rapid-fire motion goes throughout the day until, at 8:30, taps are heard and all is quiet. Several hundred boys already have been

From Arthur P. Payne, who is acting director of the reserve in New York state, there comes the report that "there has been a decided reversal in the attitude of the farmers toward these boys, as they are now very glad to have them. Of all the boys sent out from New York city only fourteen have returned. I feel that this is a remarkable showing. The farmers are doing their share and are treating the boys carefully for the first week or so, studying them and making the very best use of their individual abilities."

"The reserve," said Mr. Hall, national director, "is asking the state and other organizations under which the boys are working to see to it that careful and frequent inspection is made of the con-

ditions under which the boys are working. The federal organization does not aim to take the place of any of the state or other associations formed to do similar work, but merely to coordinate the work so that the best results may be obtained in mobilizing the boys of the nation for doing their best in the present emergency."

New York alone asks for the co-operation of more than 25,000 boys for agricultural purposes. The recent census of farm help in this state, with a greater population than any other, reveals the fact that there are 15,000 less laborers employed on its farms during this year than there were during the previous year, while nearly 15,000 young people born and raised in the rural sections of the Empire have left the scenes of their childhood for those of the cities. There are thirty camps of New York city boys scattered over the state.

Arthur M. Wilson, an assistant to Mr. Hall in his capacity as national director, in New York, and some other large cities have been proving of excellent advantage in fitting the boys to make good from the start on the farms. In most of these places they have been unable to hold the roads during the full training period, since farmers have taken them away.

In no way do the boys working reserve aim to do with the boy proprietor who farms or gardens for his own profit, and it is also to be distinguished from the permanent work of the employment service conducted for men and boys by the immigration bureau of the Department of Labor.

Boys must be physically fit for work, must be at least sixteen and not more than twenty-one years of age. They must secure the consent of their parents or guardians, and be recommended by the local Y. M. C. A. There is sufficient formality connected with the workings of the organization to render the idea of being a part of it worthy the serious consideration of young men.

There is an "oath of service" which they sign and which is signed by the enrolling officer of the district. But enrolling does not constitute membership in the reserve until the applicant is formally accepted by being accepted by the official badge furnished by the reserve. Various conditions are attached to this. When the applicant has proven his fitness by actual work for the period stated, he is given the official bronze badge, and at the end of the year he is given a certificate of service. He may receive a bronze bar to be attached to the lower part of the badge if he is in the "Honorable Service, 1917."

The United States is divided into districts, each under a district director, who has offices for the work of this general organization. There is also a national advisory board which advises the national director, William E. Hall, and the committee consists of the several states or their appointees and the leaders of the national boy organizations. There are traveling organizers, too. All are sworn into federal service.

While inexperienced city men seem to be failures on the farms, the inexperienced city boys are commendable. It is probable that in New York, at least, as one result of this experience, the farmers after this year will call for boys as harvest helpers. Thousands of boys are now gaining valuable experience.

From Pennsylvania reports come that from among seventy kind of labor he went to work on a farm in Mercer county, but four were satisfactory to their employer, Gov. Brumbaugh of the state recently issued a proclamation for the express purpose of increasing the enrollment in the Boys Working Reserve. Appeal was made to Boy Scout companies and other organizations to support the movement in the state and to endeavor to sustain the federal government in its lofty service to humanity and democracy.

Near Philadelphia more than 500 boys have been placed on farms which keen-

ly felt the shortage in labor and needed help to maintain crops. In other parts of the Keystone state there are thousands of boys who have gone into the fields for the summer. The last would be close to the city of Brotherly love are directly under the auspices of the Philadelphia mobilization committee.

In Indiana fifty boys have been called for to work in onion fields, many hundreds of acres having been planted with that more useful than fragrant vegetable. In Connecticut the camps were started by J. A. Van Dusen, secretary of the New Haven Y. M. C. A. At one of these camps they are using the ground and the fair grounds for a lodging house. In California and New Jersey many thousands of city boys are organized into reserve bands for picking fruit, helping to harvest grain and working in vineyards and cranberry bogs.

Intensive training camps which have been established by local organizations for boys outside of New York, Philadelphia, New Haven and some other large cities have been proving of excellent advantage in fitting the boys to make good from the start on the farms. In most of these places they have been unable to hold the roads during the full training period, since farmers have taken them away.

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Forty-two Bushels of Potatoes From an 8-foot Plot by New Method

Special Correspondence
 WASHINGTON, D. C., August 1917.
 HOW would you like to raise enough potatoes on a plot no bigger than a flower-bed to supply your family for a year? It can be done.

R. E. Hendricks of Kansas City, Mo., has come forth lately with the announcement that he raised forty-two bushels of potatoes on a plot of ground eight feet square by growing them in pens.

He has also made public the details of his method and officials of the Department of Agriculture say that his plans possess a great deal of merit.

The achievement is an example of gardening on an intensive scale, and wonders may be accomplished by such a scale of plant culture with almost any crop. But in the light of last winter's soaring prices of potatoes and the nationwide campaign to speed up the food production of the country, Mr. Hendricks' plan assumes a significance that it could not command if world conditions were normal.

To begin with, the pens are founded on simple principles. Nearly every housewife knows that a potato pile in a cellar bin, for instance, will send out shoots in the springtime through every possible crack and crevice. Sometimes these sprouts will creep along the floor a distance of several feet to reach the light. From this basic fact Mr. Hendricks conceived the idea that if this pile were removed into the open and given the moisture and the potatoes would grow and reproduce. His potato pen is nothing more or less than a huge potato hill with the sides supported by a loosely constructed enclosure built after the fashion of an old rail fence.

In a pen one foot by eight feet, the potatoes planted in thin layers six inches apart and the moisture and light, a yield of forty bushels was obtained. The second experiment brought forth thirty-two bushels from the same sized pen. The third experi-

ment eclipsed the others by producing the astonishing total of forty-two bushels. This new method of potato culture solves the problem of the unending sources of cheap food supply. The details of the construction of the pen suggest a plan by which every farmer having access to a small plot of ground can raise a crop that will supply an average family for a year.

As the pen rises, Mr. Hendricks suggests, place on the fourth layer in the center of one side, about two feet from the ground, a moist tester. This may be made of any piece of timber about the size of the arm, four by four inches by three feet long, placed so that it will penetrate the pen about a foot. After the potatoes have been planted three weeks loosen this tester, pull it out and run your hand in the opening to determine the moisture condition. By doing this, one learns how much water to use on the pen. After the tester has once been removed, it is easy to make the test once or twice a week afterward. This will keep the soil in proper condition.

The pen should be near a water supply so that it may be well watered during a dry spell. It should be watered from the top about twice a week, unless nature performs the task with rainfall. As an aid, the top layer should be sloped toward the center so that the soil will absorb moisture and not shed it, but care should be taken by the grower so that mud does not form on the top and bake into a crust.

When this preliminary preparation is finished the potatoes will soon begin to grow through the sides and top of the pen—the nearest way to the light. As the shoots emerge through the cracks they conceal the wooden framework with the coat of living green.

As soon as the potatoes are matured, the pens may be taken down and the potatoes rolled out of the thin covering of soil and rake, the soil may be saved for another year. This is the extent of the operation.

The pen may be started as early and as late as desired. The potatoes mature in ninety days. In the north the potato crop is usually planted from March to June. Under this new method they may be planted much later. This is possible because the hot dry weather,

which cannot be controlled in the ordinary field, does not operate adversely against the pen. It has moisture, drainage, ventilation and all the conditions necessary to insure a perfect crop. Aside from the enormous yield the saving of labor and of land by this method are strong factors in its favor. Also, when outside conditions are unfavorable the production can be carried

on under glass. It has even been suggested that with the aid of steam, properly regulated, with a temperature of about seventy degrees, maintaining and nitrogen electric lights burning twelve hours each day, potatoes may be grown in pens erected indoors throughout the winter. But this, of course, is anticipating the specter of ordinary coals or prohibitive prices of

foods, for no other condition but an abnormal one would make such excessively intensive agriculture worth while.

At present Mr. Hendricks is experimenting with different kinds of potatoes to see which are best adapted to the pen and he says he will have some interesting announcements to make next November.

In any event, his revelations to date

are startling. The average yield of potatoes to the acre is 250 bushels. By the new method it is possible to raise 25,000 bushels in an acre of ground space. As a solution for the high cost of living, the idea seems well worth a trial.

The Old Spirit.

NOW that we Americans are in this war," said Booth Tarkenton the other day, "we'll show the allies that we've still got the old bridge builder's spirit."

"Stonewall Jackson, you know, had a bridge builder called old Miles. Miles was very necessary to Jackson because the flimsy bridges on the line of march were continually being swept away by the floods or destroyed by the enemy, and in these contingencies Miles was a jewel. He could run you up a bridge in the time it would take another man to make the measurements."

"One day the Union troops burned a bridge across the Shenandoah. Stonewall Jackson called old Miles to him and said:

"You must put all young men to work, Miles, and you must keep them at it all the time. I've got to have a bridge across this stream by morning. The engineer will draw up the plans for you."

"Well, early the next morning Jackson, very much worried, met old Miles. 'Give me the plans,' said Stonewall, 'how about that bridge?'"

"Give you the plans?"

"No, General," said the bridge builder, "I dunno whether the piers is or not."

Our Failures.

GEN. GORTHALS was talking about a man who had not succeeded in life.

"From the start," the general said, "he was meeting the excellence of their excuses."



SHOWING HOW THE POTATOES ARE PLANTED ACCORDING TO THIS METHOD OF RAISING THEM. Figure 1. End elevation. Figure 2. Layer plan, showing plat as laid on top of dirt, with "moist tester" in position. Large dots on cross lines indicate how potato seed is placed.