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353 UNIVERSAL MILITARY TRAINING

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. John J. McCloy
Assistant Secretary of War.

In view of the statement of one of the labor leaders this morning as to the attitude of labor on the Selective Service Act in 1940, I thought you and the Secretary would be interested in what the real record is. You will recall that the Selective Service Act became law on September 16, 1940.

The following are statements by prominent labor leaders and labor organizations on this measure:

"We do not regard the Burke-Wadsworth Bill, which provides for compulsory military service, as a well planned measure The American Federation of Labor will give support to compulsory military service when such action becomes necessary to defend, protect and preserve America." - William Green, Press statement August 6, 1940.

"When I was privileged to appear before the resolutions committee at the recent Democratic Convention held in the city of Chicago, I expressed my own personal, individual opposition to military conscription at this time. I gave then what I believed to be perfectly valid reasons for my personal opposition to it, contending that there did not seem to be any particular need at the present moment of the application of a principle of that kind, that there should be given to the people of this nation an opportunity, through the processes of intelligent direction, operating under the auspices of the Federal government, to enlist voluntarily in the various branches of the armed forces of America for national defense. I expressed then my personal opposition to the very clear-cut distinction made by the promoters of military conscription legislation between conscripting certain eligible, qualified workers for military

11 Nov. 44

service, and giving no special regard, no special consideration to the privileges which corporations are obviously going to enjoy under this defense program.

"I am for conscription. If conscription is going to become conscription, let it become real conscription. Labor is prepared to make its contribution for national defense, as it has always been prepared. Our Congress of Industrial Organizations are prepared to give of their limb, of their life to protect that flag and to protect America from any enemy, whether he be within or without. Labor is asking, demanding that in the promotion of any constructive defense program that has for its purpose the conscription of young, able-bodied men to do this job, to give of their lives all they have -- and that is the only investment they have, the investment of their bodies, their limbs and their lives -- surely to God it is within the realm of reason for labor under those circumstances to ask also that when young men are being asked to make this special human sacrifice, that the Graces who are bold enough to do what I have told you they are doing here this morning should have a little conscription applied there, too. It won't hurt. It won't be a bad idea." ---Philip Murray, UAW-CIO Convention, August 1, 1940.

"Peacetime conscription is one of the major planks in the platform of reaction, standing beside calls for repeal of the Fair Labor Standards Act, the scuttling of the National Labor Relations Act and the destruction of our Civil Liberties." -- John L. Lewis (at that time the President of the CIO), NBC Broadcast, September 2, 1940.


"The Congress of Industrial Organizations has taken a position against it. If our Congress should undertake to enact such a law in peacetime it will mark a turning point in the policies of this republic and constitute a departure from our expressed and foresworn ideals and objectives as a nation such as were never contemplated in all the years of the life of this republicThe Chief of Staff of the United States Army nonchalantly comes before a

committee of Congress and proposes a standing Army of 2,000,000 armed men, quartered on the citizens of the United States.....Build up a defensive Army of that magnitude and train our millions of young men in the arts of war at the public expense, and as sure as the sun will rise tomorrow, by that Act our Congress is planting the seeds of destruction of democracy and is paving the way for the rise of a new imperialistic nation within the confines of the United States of America.....Build up, if you please, a gigantic instrumentality of that character and quartered upon the people of this nation under a Roosevelt or under any other president, call it a defense mechanism, if you please, but sooner or later will come a Chief Executive, a man on horseback, who will believe the instrumentality is not a defense instrumentality at all, but an offensive instrumentality that will carry out his imperialistic dreams and conceptions." ----- John L. Lewis, UAW-CIO Convention, July 30, 1940.

"Foreign to our mode of life and existence. A potential danger to organized labor. Do everything in their power to prevent."-----R.J.Thomas, President, UAW, UAW-CIO Convention, St. Louis, August 3, 1940.

UAW-CIO CONVENTION RESOLUTION

"The development of a huge standing Army is fraught with danger, because in the future, it may lend to imperialistic adventures, and development of a military caste in this country. Compulsory military conscription is entirely foreign to our mode of life and existence and this is a potential danger to organized labor and individuals connected with the labor movement." -- St. Louis, August 3, 1940.


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Under Secretary of War.