

ganization, his son has established a reputation in his own right in reporting and analyzing the news as well as the complicated task of directing the operations of a great newspaper chain. It is a pleasure to welcome this distinguished member of the newspaper field to our convention. I present to you Mr. William Randolph Hearst, Jr.

GREETINGS

William Randolph Hearst, Jr.

Well, Seaborn has said it. I guess most of you, if not all of you, know what a great friend Pop was to the Legion. As far as I am concerned, I will continue to pledge all of my support to you. If you doubt that statement for a second, then all that you have to do is to ask for it.

CONVENTION REPORT

of National Commander Seaborn P. Collins

Each of you delegates and alternates to this Thirty-seventh National Convention will receive in printed volumes a copy of my report on all commissions and committees of The American Legion.

I do want to take this opportunity, however, to briefly express my heartfelt appreciation to the other national officers, the National Executive Committee, the national staff and—most of all—to Legionnaires everywhere for their fine cooperation and support during the past year. They, far more than I, have made possible the achievements told in the annual report.

I want particularly to convey my thanks to the American Legion Auxiliary not only for the wonderful help given us in carrying out our mandated programs, but for the bountiful financial support which exceeded all previous records. To the leaders of the Auxiliary, I am grateful beyond expression. Certainly, no national commander has received greater or more constant cooperation than have I from the present national president of the American Legion Auxiliary and her staff.

My very able pilot, Jim Parham, who has been an invaluable friend as well, reminds me that during the 13 months of my stewardship we have traveled more than 130,000 miles through 48 states. I have addressed audiences of all kinds and sizes, some 450 in all—in an attempt to tell and sell the story of The American Legion.

Even more important, perhaps, I have discussed our organization, our programs and our problems with thousands of fellow Legionnaires. From their observations and my own, I have reached certain conclusions which I believe bear directly upon the future strength and growth of The American Legion. Some of these, I feel, merit your serious and immediate attention.

Let me say that I offer these comments in the spirit which first moved me to ask your support for this office—a spirit of dedicated belief in American Legion principles and objectives. Like you, I want The American Legion to do better the things which it has always done so well. And, like you, I recognize that improvement—whether of organization or an individual—must start with honest self-appraisal.

The American Legion, from the very beginning, has identified certain basic programs as being the natural and most important means of carrying out its pledge of service to God and Country. Rehabilitation, Child Welfare, community service, Americanism and national security are our chief concerns. Everything we undertake has value and

meaning only in terms of how it relates to these preferred activities.

Yet, we tend to stray from that standard. It has been pointed out to me time and again, in recent months, that we sometimes fail to give adequate and accurate consideration to resolutions which become department or national mandates. In some instances resolutions not in any way germane to American Legion programs are adopted as a result of the private interest of an individual or a group of individuals. The American Legion's name, too often, is tied to causes which may be perfectly good in themselves, but which do not merit our sanction as a veterans' organization. The result is a loss of prestige and impact for our major programs.

I have asked, and been asked, how an American Legion post can best secure the respect and active support of people in the community. The answer, in my opinion, is good leadership and community service activities. I sincerely hope that every post, in selecting leaders and planning programs, will give more and more emphasis to these two points. Only top leadership will provide an outstanding program. I am convinced that if every post will stress leadership and service, their membership problems will solve themselves and the Legion will grow and prosper to heights never before attained.

I have another suggestion—again based upon the reports and comments of American Legion leaders in all the states—and it has to do with earning and keeping public confidence. People trust an organization that proves itself responsible and worthy of trust. We can do that—in the post, department and national organization—only if every action we take and every declaration we make is supported by sure knowledge of the issues involved. This calls for serious thought and thorough research. To speak out or act without carefully considering the facts is to invite public distrust and indifference.

Our basic programs, themselves, take in a lot of territory—and a lot of complicated issues. We do not have—we cannot afford—the staff organization which would qualify us to make quick decisions on all the many problems involved. It follows that we should discipline ourselves to the extent of foregoing snap judgments and impulsive actions when invoking the name of The American Legion.

Our activities at the post level in the field of combating un-Americanism, for example, can be, but are not always, resourceful. The American Legion's interest in Americanism is not essentially national. It is local, stemming from a post's pride and solicitude in its own community. If The American Legion in the community represents a fair cross-section of all residents, if it has enrolled a good percentage of eligible veterans, if its members assert themselves in community affairs—then there can be little danger of subversion by un-American influence.

Nationally, we have neither the personnel nor the authority to function as an investigative agency. That is the role of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Our job is one of keeping informed, informing others, and cooperating under the law with lawful authorities. If we try to do more or less than that, we are doing the community and the Legion a disservice.

Another thing which I have observed is that all too often individuals within departments have spoken or given interviews as though they represented the entire organization of The American Legion. Many times these views were in opposi-

tion to mandates which had been passed by our governing bodies. In many instances this has been done without the permission of their post, district or department. As a consequence, The American Legion as a whole has been hurt and the public confused as to its legitimate stand or policy.

It also has been brought to my attention that we are prone to confuse policies with personalities. Nine times out of 10, The American Legion's concern is with a policy or issue—not with individuals, and certainly not with individuals holding high positions of trust in the government to which they have been elected by the people. We should be most careful to limit our attention and expressions to policies rather than personalities.

The American Legion through the years has been an aggressive organization. We are accustomed to vigorous expression of our recommendations and criticisms. This is good; it is the mark of a healthy organization. But we should never permit enthusiasm to lead us into actions which cannot be justified by fact and reason.

We welcome controversy where controversy will advance the objectives of The American Legion. By the same token, we do not need and we cannot afford to fight for the sake of fighting.

Some of these things of which I speak stem from human imperfections. It is easy for individuals, whether they are Legionnaires or not, to condemn when they mean to criticize, and to confuse private interest with the public welfare.

I submit, however, that as Legionnaires we have less excuse for making these errors than have those who have never known the privilege and the burden of defending the American flag in battle.

No one will fight harder than I to help prevent subversion and infiltration by communists or left-wing groups in America, as evidenced by my recent public statement regarding the fund for the republic and its president, Dr. Robert Hutchins. I can assure you, however, that this statement was made with knowledge of the complete facts involved, and after all of these facts had been gone over by highly qualified and responsible individuals who are also outstanding Legionnaires.

And now it is time to summarize these few remarks. I would say again that the leader of an organization as great and as influential as The American Legion must rely extensively on the advice and assistance of the officers and staff, and the countless devoted Legionnaires who work tirelessly and effectively to keep the wheels turning. To all of them, for the able assistance given me, I am deeply grateful.

I think the best testimonial of the value of the work that is done by so many fine Legionnaires lies in the visible results of that work and effort.

Perhaps the leading illustration of this can be found in the passage several months ago of the Armed Forces Reserve Training Act. When we reflect that The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary have worked for training legislation for 36 years, we realize how important it is to us that we were successful this year.

Two significant points relating to this legislation are pertinent to this report. The first is the fact that the enactment of reserve training legislation constitutes recognition by the Congress of the necessity for a strong civilian reserve; and this is the point that we have been impressing upon them year in and year out. Second, I believe we are justified in drawing the conclusion that through this Act, Congress has agreed that

if we are unable to recruit the manpower for a strong civilian reserve through the legislation as it is now written, then the only alternative is for the Congress to strengthen and improve the program. This, I know, will be a matter of concern to the incoming administration of The American Legion.

So, my friends, the time is rapidly approaching when I shall lay down the burden of the office which you conferred on me a year ago in Washington, D. C. When all the deliberations have been completed, and the decisions as to our future policies have been taken, one basic reality will remain. We are here because we are proud to be members of The American Legion. In this organization which we love we find an instrument through which we can give practical expression to our patriotism and to our desire to do things for our community, state and nation. We want to do these things because we are Americans, proud that we are privileged to wear our country's uniform in time of war. Through that wartime service we dedicated ourselves to God and Country, and we accepted a sacred trust of loyalty. In The American Legion we shall continue to carry that trust and please God we shall never falter.

REHABILITATION

Several phases of the program handled by the National Rehabilitation Commission have proved challenging during the past year. I have welcomed the opportunity to participate therein as national commander. At the outset I sincerely commend National Chairman Robert M. McCurdy, the Commission and staff for diligent and careful attention not only to the fundamentals of the program, but to some of the complexities that have arisen.

Veterans' Hospitalization Program

Having been invited to speak to the interim meeting of The American Medical Association House of Delegates in Miami on November 29, 1954, opportunity was afforded for consultation with the president-elect and other officials of that organization. The outcome was an agreement that each organization appoint a liaison committee for the purpose of clarifying facts and data as to the veterans' hospitalization program. These liaison committees have met twice (Chicago, February 17, 1955, and Indianapolis, August 16, 1955), and representatives of the respective staffs once (Washington, May 11, 1955). Although the two organizations may not fully agree upon veterans' hospitalization and presumptive service-connection, mutual understanding could nevertheless be attained on the facts and record in these two facets of Congressionally established programs administered by the Veterans Administration. The over-all mission of each organization is so far-reaching not only for the public in general, but also for the veterans in particular that same should not be tarnished or retarded by undue controversy in these relatively limited fields.

Presentation of Legislative Program

In the furtherance of legislation based upon convention mandates in the field of rehabilitation, I was glad to appear before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on February 8, 1955. In addition to outlining rather broadly the goals of these mandates, we also presented to the chairman of that committee a compilation of reports on the needs of the Veterans Administration Hospitals and homes for major renovation and repair. This was in response to a request from

Chairman Teague. The surveys were accomplished by the National Field Service and the report prepared by the staff of the National Rehabilitation Commission.

Commission on Veterans' Pensions

The President of the United States, on August 28, 1954, in signing H. R. 9020 (Public Law 695, 83d Congress) and H. R. 9962 (Public Law 698), which provided adjustment in compensation and pension rates, respectively, stated that he would appoint a commission to study "the scope and philosophy of our veterans' benefit laws in relation to each other and to other government programs." The details of same will be found in the report of the National Rehabilitation Commission. In order that the National Executive Committee and I would have full knowledge of the scope, background and activities of this commission, I appointed a special committee composed of Past National Commander Donald R. Wilson, chairman; Dr. Carl J. Rees and Dr. Deward H. Reed to take this assignment. The committee has a research specialist who has devoted many weeks to probing the inception and development of pension and compensation programs in effect today for the veterans of this country. This special committee has carried on its work without interference with the day-by-day activities of the National Rehabilitation Commission and its staff. It is expected that the special committee's report will be made available at either the national convention or the fall meeting of the National Executive Committee.

Survivor Benefits

Related somewhat to the study on veterans' compensation and pension has been the project of the 83d and 84th Congresses in the field of survivors' benefits. The staff of the National Rehabilitation Commission had opportunity to testify before the first Select Committee on Survivor Benefits on November 18, 1954. Upon the change of administration and opening of the 84th Congress, a new Select Committee was appointed and continued the work started in the 83d Congress. After weeks and months of studies, conferences and hearings, this Select Committee came up with a bill (H. R. 7089) which at the present writing is before the Senate Finance Committee. This is not an American Legion bill. However, after conferences with National Rehabilitation Chairman McCurdy, I requested the staff of his commission to offer any assistance it could in the preparation or refinement of the legislative proposal which finally emerged. A letter from the chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs attests to the constructive cooperation which the Legislative Director, the Rehabilitation Director and Assistant Director afforded the Select Committee. I notified the chairman of the Select Committee of American Legion support. At the same time, we shall continue a vigilant attention to the provisions of the bill and especially to the law if and when enacted.

Advisory Boards

The advisory boards to the commission have functioned effectively during the past year. A full report on the deliberations concerning insurance matters will be found in the commission report to the National Executive Committee last May. An account will also be found of the meetings of the Medical Advisory Board. It is the judgment of your national commander that the effectiveness and stature of our organization in the field of veterans' rehabilitation are enhanced by

the faithful support of these two advisory boards. A word should also be said for many members of the General Advisory Board to the commission.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I wish to pay my tribute to the volunteer workers of the American Legion Auxiliary and to the post, district and department service officers of The American Legion for their contribution to the total effort of The American Legion and its Auxiliary in the field of rehabilitation of veterans and assistance to their dependents. My sincere thanks to each member of the National Rehabilitation Commission, its Executive Section and its staff.

LEGISLATION

The national legislative program of The American Legion becomes more complex as the number and scope of official mandates to the Legislative Commission increase. Since each of us usually has some particular field of interest in American Legion activity, it is difficult to visualize the extent of the combined legislative objectives sought through resolutions adopted by national conventions and interim meetings of the National Executive Committee.

Having worked closely with Chairman Jerome F. Duggan and the members of the National Legislative Commission during the past year, as well as with Director Miles D. Kennedy and his staff, I have noted that many resolutions could well be eliminated through consolidations and the expressions of broader policy, rather than specific and meticulous technical approach. It is also apparent that in far too many instances we involve ourselves with legislation having little to do with our basic programs of veterans' and dependents' benefits, child welfare, national security and Americanism. Such demands upon Congress for enactment of extraneous legislation have the effect of dissipating our prestige and strength rather than concentrating it in behalf of the vital issues.

Letter to Chairmen

Accordingly, I have directed a letter to the chairman of each convention committee, urging close scrutiny of resolutions requiring legislation. In this manner I hope there will be elimination of conflicting policy and non-essentials.

As delegates to this convention, you have the responsibility of determining the program to be presented to Congress. When you have thus placed this great organization on record, it is equally important that you give department, post and individual support, when called upon, to the Legislative Commission, whose job it is to translate resolutions into legislative language and present same to Congress for consideration. The strength that can then be mustered in behalf of the legislation is often the deciding factor. The degree of your cooperation may well spell the difference between success or failure.

Veterans' Affairs

The House of Representatives long ago saw fit to create a Veterans' Affairs Committee which would analyze the legislative needs, initiate bills, conduct hearings, and make recommendations to the House on matters of compensation, pension, hospitalization and other matters pertinent to the veterans of this country. The fine work of this committee is well established by the record of its achievements. It is unfortunate that the Senate does not have a comparable committee. At the invitation of Chairman Olin E. Teague, I ap-

peared before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee on February 8 and outlined The American Legion's position on veterans' and dependents' benefits as mandated by resolutions of the 1954 National Convention and the October, 1954, meeting of the National Executive Committee. Minor gains were made, and our program is well established for Congressional consideration in the next session. It is important to note that nothing in the way of benefits was reduced or eliminated. There is no doubt that the Hardy Committee proposals for a new system of survivor benefits for career military personnel particularly, and the compensation and pension studies now under way by a Presidential (General Bradley) Commission acted as check reins on other legislation affecting the veterans' program. The latter commission is due to report to the President before the year's end. I appointed a special committee to undertake a study of the broad scope of compensation and pensions so that we will be prepared to compare our historic position with whatever recommendations General Bradley's commission may make, and meet any objectionable legislative proposals contained therein.

National Security Training

In accord with our mandate, the main legislative effort this year has been in support of legislation to implement the Universal Military Training and Service Act to give reality to same by the establishment of a training corps and the ultimate creation of an adequate Reserve Force. The result of our long struggle was the enactment of the "RESERVE FORCES ACT OF 1955."

In spite of the expressed approval of a vast majority of our population, a strong bloc in the House of Representatives was able to deter proposals for compulsory participation in a National Security Training Corps. Without the help of the Senate, they would have defeated authorization for even voluntary enlistment for training and service in the Reserves.

The above program for Reserve strengthening authorizes a ceiling of 2,900,000. This figure includes present National Guard and Reserve strength of about 700,000. Additional numbers will come from authorized enlistments of 250,000 in the Reserve (other than the National Guard) each year, and the ex-servicemen who volunteer or those who are drafted for service following signature of the bill by the President. Generally, these latter will be required to serve three years in the Ready (active) Reserve, and an additional year in the Standby (inactive) Reserve. Those volunteering for the Reserve will be obligated to train from three to six months and thereafter continue in the Reserve for 7½ years additional.

In our many hearings and conferences with Congressional Committees and individuals. The American Legion insisted that those who have served in war must not again be placed in double jeopardy, while many are not called at all. That point was gained. We were also pleased that our recommendation for the continuance of the National Security Training Commission was approved.

I feel, while the new National Reserve Plan has its shortcomings, that it represents a great step forward in the development of a sound Reserve System, which has been the ultimate goal of our endeavors for over a third of a century. It is my hope that the American people, through its Congress, will join in making the new plan work so that we can develop and maintain an adequate Reserve Force for as long as world conditions make it desirable or necessary.

Status of Forces Treaty

Two years ago the Senate ratified a treaty with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries which permits trials of American servicemen by foreign countries for non-military crimes committed in such countries. Many reports of injustices have been received and substantiated. The American Legion deplores the withdrawal of constitutional rights and protection from servicemen sent abroad in defense of NATO, and thus has strongly supported legislation urging nullification of treaties or agreements of this nature.

Bricker Amendment

Opposition by the Administration and a number of Senators has prevented Senate consideration of the Bricker or any similar resolution designed to amend the Constitution to prevent international treaties or agreements from becoming internal law, and to otherwise safeguard individual and states' rights. Almost sure to win Senate Judiciary Committee approval, the pro amendment group expects a Senate "showdown" in the 1956 session. We have supported this proposal for the past three years.

Appreciation

I want to express my thanks for your grand support in our fight for a strong Reserve program. At the same time I wish to pay tribute to the splendid women of the American Legion Auxiliary who stood shoulder to shoulder with The American Legion in that great and trying battle. The fine cooperation of the National Legislative Commission, its Chairman Duggan, and the members of the Washington legislative staff will always be pleasantly recalled.

AMERICANISM

Since its inception, The American Legion with the adoption of your Americanism program, assumed an obligation to teach a love of our American traditions and of our philosophy of government, as well as an obligation to combat subversive activities. Specific national programs have not been adopted haphazardly. They have been carefully selected only after they have been conducted successfully at the Post and Department level. This selectivity has resulted in the evolution of a well-balanced program which is designed to serve the twofold purpose of strengthening the moral character of America as well as combating subversive activities.

Again this year, your National Americanism Commission has devoted its efforts to stressing the essential community service aspect of your Americanism program. In program planning the focal point must be at the post or community level. Under the capable leadership of Chairman James F. Daniel, Jr., of South Carolina, primary emphasis has been placed upon improving program guides and promotional pamphlets in order that they may be of greatest possible assistance to post officials.

"Back to God" Movement

The National Religious Emphasis Committee, under the chairmanship of National Chaplain Albert J. Hoffmann, has been primarily responsible for the operation and improvement of the "Back to God" movement during the past year. On Sunday, February 20, 1955, The American Legion's Four Chaplains' Day program was presented to the American people over the television and radio facilities of the American Broadcasting Company. The program originated from Grand Central Station in New York City and from

Washington, D. C. This program was designed to urge all Americans to seek Divine guidance in their everyday activities, and to pay tribute to the four chaplains of different faiths who willingly sacrificed their lives on the sinking troop ship *Dorchester* in World War II so that four others might live.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower again was the principal speaker. The program also featured prominent clergymen of all major faiths, National Chaplain Father Hoffmann; Mrs. Percy Lainson, national president of the Auxiliary; the West Point Chapel Choir with Morton Downey, and your national commander.

Although the "Back to God" program had experienced an encouraging degree of success prior to this year, it had been recognized for some time that there was a need for an effective tool through which to implement the program further at the post level. Perhaps the most important accomplishment of the Religious Emphasis Committee and the Department Chaplains' Conference, this year was the preparation of the new "Back to God" Handbook as a program guide for post commanders and post chaplains. This Handbook has been distributed in quantity to all departments for further distribution to the posts.

Counter-Subversive Activities

I am pleased to report that interest in the Counter-Subversive Activities program at the post level reached a new high during the past year. Post chairmen and individual Legionnaires are more than ever before concerned about the menace of communism and subversion.

Quantities of the counter-subversive manuals have been distributed in many departments. There is every indication that the training program outlined in the manual is being put into operation in all parts of the country.

Particular emphasis should be placed on the improved quality of information developed by our staff in answer to requests from the field. This is in no small measure due to the untiring efforts of our National Americanism Director, Lee Pennington, whose many contacts with government officials in Washington, D. C., enable our counter-subversive section to keep abreast of government action against subversion.

The past year has seen a greater emphasis on the exposure of left-wing organizations and individuals through the medium of *The Firing Line*, The American Legion's own counter-subversive publication. In addition to *The Firing Line*, The American Legion for the first time published full-scale reports on various organizations.

Especially praiseworthy has been the effort on the part of individual posts, districts and departments to hold counter-subversive seminars. This exemplifies the highest point of our program of education of American citizens to the dangers which confront our country.

In the field of immigration, The American Legion has fought to prevent the emasculating of the present McCarran-Walter Immigration Act. Since 90 per cent of the hard-core leaders of the communist movement are deportable aliens, the provisions of our present law constitute one of our best weapons against communism. By action of our last national convention, The American Legion has supported every effort of the Department of Justice to apprehend and deport subversive aliens.

Education and Youth Activities

I can think of no more impressive evidence of why "It's Great to Be an American Legionnaire"

than that which is contained in The American Legion record of unselfish service to the youth of America through our education and youth activities programs. It gives me a warm optimistic feeling to examine our accomplishments in sponsorship and support of American Legion Junior Baseball, the oratorical contest, Boys State and Boys Nation, Boy Scouts, Boys Clubs, school medal awards and Flag Education. There is every indication that our activity in this field will continue to expand for years to come.

Since the appointment of Lou Brissie as Commissioner of American Legion Junior Baseball in March of 1954, there has been continued improvement in the operation of this program. As in other programs, our aim has been to increase assistance to Legionnaires at the post level. The 1955 Junior Baseball Handbook has been expanded to include sections on team organization and operation, sponsor relationships, information and planning, and proper uniform care. In addition, the JUNIOR BASEBALL GUIDE has been prepared and distributed to department officials in order to assist these officials in the program at the department level. Again this year, the American and National Leagues of organized baseball underwrote the national program to the extent of \$60,000. We sincerely appreciate the continued assistance of the Ford Motor Company and its local dealers as well as other local businessmen and civic-minded organizations. *The Sporting News* and its publisher, J. G. Taylor Spink, have continued to cooperate to the fullest extent in publicizing The American Legion Junior Baseball program.

Oratorical Contest

More than 325,000 high school students from 46 departments participated in the National High School Oratorical Contest, which was won by Michael Miller of California. The 1955 National Finals Contest was held at Blackwell, Oklahoma.

Boys State Program

Forty-eight departments sponsored Boys State programs, with more than 19,000 boys enrolled. This year, for the first time, this program has been extended beyond the continental limits of the United States as the Department of Panama conducted its first Boys State. Each Boys State sent two outstanding boys to the 10th Boys Nation held on the campus of the University of Maryland, July 22-29, 1955, where they received postgraduate training in the operation of the federal government. Two fictional political parties were formed for the purpose of conducting national conventions and elections. The young "senators" studied our national legislative process by conducting committee hearings and debating two bills on the Senate floor prior to final vote. The highlight of the program was the visit to the White House, where they were received by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Douglas J. Hopper of Glendale, California, was elected president, and Kenneth R. Jennison of Carthage, Missouri, vice-president.

Scouting at New Peak

This year a milestone was reached in our Boy Scout program as the number of units sponsored by posts and Auxiliary units exceeded 4,000 for the first time. The most recent survey conducted by the national organization of Boys Clubs of America indicates that The American Legion has rendered assistance to individual clubs on more occasions than any other national sponsoring organization.

Over the years we have made splendid accomplishments in the field of Americanism; however, there remains a great opportunity for expanded activity in all of these programs. I am convinced that the future strength and growth of The American Legion will stem from our achievements in service to the community.

NATIONAL SECURITY

As a former chairman of the National Security Commission, I have maintained a more than casual interest in the activities in this vital field during the past year. I have derived a great deal of satisfaction with the apparent progress made under the capable leadership of Judge Bruce P. Henderson of Ohio.

In this time of relative peace, the commission's task of keeping our members and, where possible, the general public, conscious of the indispensable nature of preparedness becomes increasingly difficult, for as the apparent threat of war recedes, the prospects for peace seem advanced. Nevertheless, their programs for the establishment and maintenance of sound national defense have continued their advance.

National Security Training

Although The American Legion sought a stronger program of National Security Training than was approved by the 84th Congress, its passage marks a milestone in our 37-year effort to obtain favorable acceptance of this legislation. While the Reserve Forces Act of 1955 does not guarantee as strong a civilian Reserve force as we believe is necessary, it does remove major inequities prevalent in the present system. It will inaugurate a plan of basic training designed solely to strengthen the Reserve and provide a reasonable means of enforcing Reserve obligations.

I would be remiss if I failed to give due recognition to my Special NST Committee and members of the staff who worked long and hard on this program. My sincere thanks to Past National Commander Erle Cocke, Jr., Past National Commander Perry Brown and to Granville Ridley, members of the Special NST Committee and to Legislative Director Miles D. Kennedy, Public Relations Director George Kelly and National Security Director James R. Wilson, Jr.

Aeronautics

Recent announcements regarding Russian air technological advances, clearly demonstrated in operational flights over Moscow, must remove any thought that we are competing with a backward nation in our struggle to maintain air superiority. With our Air Force acknowledged as the first line of defense and our major deterrent to world conflict, we dare not lose the air race, for to do so would be to invite disaster.

The pre-eminent position of airpower is reflected in the Air Force appropriation for fiscal 1956, which provides for continuing expansion toward a goal of 137 wings by June 30, 1957, but more immediately for 131 wings by June 30, 1956. Continued emphasis must be placed on the importance of research and development, air defense, strategic air power, and a constant long-range aircraft building and maintenance program.

Civil Defense

While many of this nation's military and civilian leaders regard civil defense as equal in importance to military defense, apathy and lack of public support continue to hamper the progress of this vital security program.

The Civil Defense Committee, sensing this de-

ficiency, launched a concerted promotion in September. The program scheduled to run through February, emphasizes the "self help" phases of the program, covering Conelrad, Ground Observer Corps, Warning Signals, Radioactive Fallout, Evacuation, Home Protection and Rescue Teams. The Federal Civil Defense Administration and State Directors of Civil Defense, realizing the important role our organization can play in civil defense preparation, are cooperating in the promotion.

Merchant Marine

What appears to be the beginning of a recurring problem faced the American Merchant Marine this past year when an attack was launched on the 50/50 provision—the Cargo Preference Act of 1954. This law presently requires that at least 50 per cent of all foreign aid cargo be carried on American merchant vessels. Based upon mandate, we have supported this measure in the past as indispensable to the future of our maritime fleet, which if it is to be available in war must be kept strong in peace. I am pleased to report that an attempt to remove the 50/50 provision in the Mutual Security bill was defeated.

Still other problems face the American Merchant Marine. Principal among these is the pressing threat of block obsolescence. The seriousness of world conditions continues to demand a policy of preparedness on all fronts, including the Merchant Marine, for without logistical support in time of war, our fighting forces would be incapable of carrying the war to our enemies, thus assuring the final victory.

Military Affairs

I have observed the considerable effort that has been directed by the Military Affairs Committee to measures which would make the military services more attractive and agree that the need is great. Needed improvements in benefits may indeed serve to raise the low reenlistment rates which continue to plague all branches of the military service.

During the past year, measures have been supported to provide a military pay raise, better housing for service personnel and their families, extension of benefits for dependents of servicemen and revision to the Status of Forces Treaty.

In spite of communist peace overtures, Russia continues to bolster her military establishment and that of her satellites. In light of this, while we sincerely and earnestly strive for peace, we must maintain sufficient military forces to prevent war by deterring aggression, or, in event of war, to achieve victory in the minimum of time.

Naval Affairs

While Russia, in previous years, had not been regarded as a serious threat to the free nations of the world, they have advanced in but ten years from seventh to second place among the navies of the world. This growing threat must weigh heavily on this nation's defense planning if we are to maintain freedom of the seas.

In fiscal '56, the U. S. Navy will operate 1,001 ships (100 fewer than last year), 10,061 aircraft and will maintain three Marine divisions and three Marine Air Wings. The budget also provides for the construction of 33 ships, including a new Forrestal-class carrier, eight submarines, including four that will be atomic-powered and 13,370 tons of landing craft.

I earnestly hope that the National Security Commission and its respective committees on Aeronautics, Civil Defense, Law and Order, Merchant

Marine, Military Affairs, Naval Affairs and National Security Training, will, through means of your January and pre-convention briefings, through news channels, in fact, through every available source, keep yourselves informed. In this way and at all times the position of The American Legion on security will serve as America's gyroscope in times when the need for preparedness is less apparent.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Foreign Relations Commission has provided The American Legion with a firm and realistic foreign policy program during the past year. Its chairman and members maintained contact periodically with high and informed American and foreign leaders to secure facts that kept The American Legion abreast of developments on all matters of national interest and security.

The commission held a series of hearings in Washington, D. C., January 27 to 30, 1955, out of which grew the statement of policy which was approved by the National Executive Committee in May. That policy called for American defense of the entire Formosa area; demanded release of American servicemen still held by Red China; reiterated American Legion opposition to any recognition of Red China or its seating as a member of the United Nations; called for a ban on any American aid to any nation which sends strategic materials to Red China or to any country behind the Iron or Bamboo Curtains; expressed continued opposition to any United States participation in a world government or in United World Federalism; re-indorsed the principles of the Bricker Amendment; called for exclusive military jurisdiction over United States personnel overseas so that American servicemen would not be subject to trial in foreign courts; and urged expansion of the United States program of psychological warfare.

I should like to commend the officers and members of this commission and all those Legionnaires who gave freely and without any compensation of their time and energy to make possible a realistic foreign relations program during the past year.

CHILD WELFARE

Since the beginning of history, one of man's noblest instincts has been to make the world a little better place for his children. Members of The American Legion share in this universal desire and have found expression for it through our nation-wide Child Welfare program.

The National Child Welfare Commission this year completed its 30th year of service—service to children of veterans in particular, and service to all children of America in general. During these 30 years, The American Legion and its affiliated organizations have established an enviable record in the Child Welfare field. The large sums of money which our organization as a whole expends in the interest of children—this year more than seven and a quarter million dollars—testify to our serious concern for the well-being of children and youth. Perhaps of even more far-reaching importance has been the enlightened and effective leadership which The American Legion has given in community after community, in all of the states, and at the national level. This leadership has resulted in numerous legislative actions of direct value to children. It has contributed to many volunteer movements in such fields as delinquency prevention, mental health, the spiritual well-being of fam-

ilies, the education of retarded children, a broader public acceptance of our basic Child Welfare principle that, as far as children are concerned, there is truly "no place like home."

Solid Accomplishments

The past year has been one of, perhaps unspectacular, but very solid accomplishments in our Child Welfare program. The American Legion National Child Welfare Foundation, which was chartered in July, 1954, as little more than a dream and a hope, is now a going business. Largely through the generosity of the American Legion Auxiliary, the Foundation now has cash assets of more than \$50,000. In addition, one oil well is already producing on land in the Williston Basin of North Dakota and Montana in which the Foundation owns an interest. There is every indication that within the immediate future other wells will be drilled and, we hope, start producing on other tracts in which the Foundation has been given mineral rights. Our new Foundation has a tremendous opportunity to help us achieve our two Child Welfare goals—to assure care and protection for children of veterans and to improve conditions for all children.

Thanks for Contributions

The continuing program of our National Child Welfare Commission has again been greatly aided by the generosity of our affiliates. We are indebted to the Forty and Eight for its contribution of \$50,000 to our 1955 National Child Welfare budget. The National Auxiliary, in addition to raising more than \$50,000 for the Foundation, also contributed another \$15,000 for the regular Child Welfare budget. The Eight and Forty has given \$4,500 to be used in the care of tubercular-contact children. To all I express my deep thanks.

While the work of our national commissions, committees, divisions and boards is important, Child Welfare, like all of our major American Legion programs, is and must continue to be primarily a local post activity. I would be remiss if I did not extend personal appreciation to the thousands of volunteer Child Welfare workers of The American Legion and to their co-workers in the affiliated organizations—the Forty and Eight, the American Legion Auxiliary, and the Eight and Forty. These local Child Welfare chairmen, working together and in cooperation with other responsible community organizations, are daily translating into reality The American Legion's goal of "A Square Deal for Every Child."

ECONOMIC PROGRAM

The National Economic Commission's activities encompass the fields of agriculture and conservation, housing, employment and veterans' preference.

During the past year we have again successfully repelled vigorous efforts to weaken veterans' preference. We have obtained a major amendment to the G. I. Home Loan Program which is of particular benefit to the rural veteran. We have voiced our vigorous opposition to certain recommendations of the "Hoover Commission" which would weaken the lending programs of the Veterans Administration and the Farmers Home Administration. We have voiced our support to legislation which would strengthen veterans' preference. We have succeeded in securing a change in the veterans' preference regulations by the U. S. Civil Service Commission which gives the veteran better opportunity in appointment to a federal position.

Many bills have been introduced in Congress which translate into legislation the changes recommended by the "Hoover Commission." To date, those bills directed toward veterans' preference have not been scheduled for committee hearings. Testimony has been prepared to oppose these measures and is in readiness for presentation if and when hearings are held.

The general tenor of the "Hoover Commission's" recommendations in the area of lending agencies was to the effect that the activities of the Veterans Administration in the G. I. Home Loan Program and the Farmers Home Administration in assisting rural veterans be curtailed and that the remaining loan functions be put on a self-sustaining basis. This, of course, would force these agencies to pattern their operations on the criteria followed by private lending institutions which are operated for the primary and exclusive purpose of making profit. While these recommendations were dressed in the garb of "government economy" they in fact advocate a radical constriction of sound and constructive veterans' aid. We pointed out this fact to the Congress and made it clear that we strongly opposed this proposal.

G. I. Home Loan Program

The G. I. Home Loan Program has been amended by Public Laws 84 and 88 of the 84th Congress to eliminate any limitation upon the purposes for which a guaranteed or direct loan may be obtained where security for the loan is farm realty. The changes make it possible to obtain a loan on farm realty for all of the purposes, and on the same terms which in the past could only be obtained when the security was a residential dwelling. This legislation also extended the Direct Loan Program to June 30, 1957.

Until the summer of 1953, the Veterans' Preference Act permitted the appointing officer of an agency, when considering the top three eligible applicants for a position, to pass over a veteran and appoint a non-veteran. This aspect of the law was amended to prohibit such action unless the U. S. Civil Service Commission approved the reasons for doing so. The regulations which were promulgated as a result of this amendment, however, permitted the appointing officer to continue the practice with some minor changes in procedure. In February, 1955, after one and one-half years' effort, the chairman of the U. S. Civil Service Commission informed The American Legion that the regulations would be changed to give force and effect to the 1953 amendment to the law.

Definite Progress

We have urged the Congress to enact legislation which would prohibit the reduction of a federal employee's pay when the position he has occupied satisfactorily for at least one year is reallocated to a lower classification through no fault of the employee, but solely because of a prior mistake on the part of a classification expert. We urged the enactment of this legislation because we believe the government, in all fairness and justice, owes this duty to employees and also because we have good reason to believe that such arbitrary reductions in compensation are a violation of the Veterans' Preference Act.

Definite progress has been made in the field of economics during the past year by the National Economic Commission, and we feel that one of our achievements has been the successful defense of all attempts to weaken or destroy the Veterans'

Preference Act. Nevertheless, all concerned are aware of the fight ahead and fully realize that eternal vigilance is a "must" if we are to protect the just rights of the veteran as given to the veteran by a grateful nation through its Congress.

In the years to come, and especially the coming year, we will have to give our utmost attention and effort to the revolutionary change in the world of veterans' affairs which, of course, is the anticipated legislative interlocking of social security benefits with those administered by the Veterans Administration.

MEMBERSHIP

All of our membership efforts this year have been to create a greater appreciation among eligible veterans of The American Legion's vast programs and objectives.

From our first strategy meeting in Washington, D. C., September 3, 1954, the day after my election as your national commander, we have traveled the nation's highways and skyways to bring our membership message to the veterans of America.

It matters not that your commander, as a spokesman for The American Legion, should speak in behalf of Americanism, National Security, Child Welfare or Rehabilitation. All of these things to my mind bespeak membership. None is possible without it.

It would seem at this moment that we failed to score a membership enrollment record for The American Legion year of 1955. We lack some 1,800 to equal last year's mark. There is little cause for celebration in this respect, but if our advance membership enrollment is any indication of the way veterans will be attracted to The American Legion ranks for 1956, we can say that we have helped to sow the seed.

Early Effort Vital

Fully realizing that early membership enrollment is the keynote of membership success, I have directed all-out advance planning to that end. My compliments to all of our membership ASK force for the job done in 1955. My special thanks to the departments and posts making their quota—and better. I also want to thank all of that same group who have immediately gone to work to get the job done for 1956.

For a complete report on the work of the Membership and Post Activities Division at National Headquarters, see that committee report contained in the Annual Volume of Reports.

Slogan for 1956

We approach the new American Legion year with the theme: "It's GREAT to be an AMERICAN LEGIONNAIRE." The day after this convention is over membership leaders from every department will meet with their newly-elected national commander and stage a membership pep rally.

My heartfelt appreciation for the membership work done during my year. My best wishes to the vanguard of our 1956 member-getters for an all-time high.

NATIONAL FIELD SERVICE

Throughout the past year the activities of the National Field Service have been a very important segment in the operations of the National Headquarters staff.

Beginning with the Post Convention Membership Conference held in Washington, D. C., on September 3, 1954, the Field Service played a vital role in the 1955 enrollment campaign.

Nearly every continental department availed themselves of this assistance in membership work.

The Field Service continued to render great service in the field of Rehabilitation. The staff carried on the regular visitations to Veterans Administration Hospitals, Domiciliary Homes and Regional Offices. In the early days of the recent session of the 84th Congress the chairman of House Veterans' Affairs Committee requested the national commander to submit the views of The American Legion with respect to the need for replacement, repair, renovation, installation of new equipment, etc., at every VA Hospital and Domiciliary Home. The Field Service was assigned the task of obtaining the necessary factual information. Although this job had to be completed within a specified time limit, the Field Service did it thoroughly. The House Veterans Affairs Committee expressed its appreciation to The American Legion for this great contribution toward better efficiency by the Veterans Administration which will be reflected in better service to the nation's veterans.

During the year several departments and other divisions of National Headquarters called upon the Field Service for special services. These tasks were accomplished with forthright efficiency that reflects credit upon the National Headquarters staff.

The National Field Service under the capable supervision of the national adjutant, and the director shall continue to improve their efficiency and be on the alert to better serve The American Legion at all levels.

FINANCE COMMISSION

The fiscal affairs of The American Legion during the past year were in good order and it appears that a surplus of receipts over annual expenditures will be forthcoming.

The American Legion on the national level operated during 1955 on a budget totalling \$5,559,526.

During the past year a new job classification and salary schedule plan for national employees of The American Legion was put into effect. It represented many months of study and surveys. The plan was approved by the National Executive Committee in May. It provides an orderly procedure in budgeting for salary increments, promotions and job classifications.

The commission held three meetings during the year. I should like to express my deepest appreciation to the entire commission for an exceptional job performed in a most difficult field.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

The ideals and programs of The American Legion are deserving of every veteran's personal support and every American's proud respect.

To explain and portray The American Legion in a manner that will win individual members and gain public support has been the single objective of the National Public Relations Commission during the past year.

Your national commander, through his understanding of public relations values, has tried to contribute at all times to that goal. He has endeavored every day to qualify as the organization's number one public relations practitioner.

We desire to constantly improve the services of the National Public Relations Division. We have emphasized, this year, three important and basic approaches: Namely, demonstrating by actual performance the division's value to other national staffs as a coordinating and supporting force; greater coordination with department or-

ganizations by keying services to their needs and programs; and a studied policy of concentrating on the advancement of basic American Legion activities.

In each of these fields, progress has been made. In each, continued and intensive effort is required.

The American Legion is judged by its actions as well as its beliefs. Every Legionnaire—particularly every officer at the post, district, department and national levels—has the responsibility of encouraging and performing positive, productive services which embody and express The American Legion's highest ideals. To secure credit for good work, we must do good work. Planning and executing such work is as much a part of public relations as focusing the public eye on results.

The American Legion during the past year has enjoyed good public relations. Teamwork at all levels, particularly a substantial increase in organized public relations activity within the departments, has been instrumental in introducing millions of Americans to the true American Legion story.

PUBLICATIONS COMMISSION

The Publications Division, whose activities are directed by the National Publications Commission headed by Past National Commander John Stelle of Illinois, is responsible for the production and distribution of *The American Legion Magazine*.

It is one of the most vital operations of The American Legion, and the monies derived from the net gain realized from *The American Legion Magazine* have become essential to the life of the organization, as these profits are channeled to the general fund.

Under the leadership of Chairman Stelle, the magazine has gained national recognition as an outstanding publication, resulting in the acceptance by the general public, as well as Legionnaires, of the editorial content.

Rising costs of printing, paper and distribution have become a major problem of the Publications Commission in its program of providing a magazine for the membership.

Approximately \$2,000,000 of American Legion funds (representing an allocation of 75c of each member's dues) is appropriated to the magazine in the form of subscription revenue. Advertising volume is approaching the \$1,500,000 figure each year.

The costs of production totalled about \$3,175,000, leaving a net profit, or gain, of more than \$300,000. In 1954 the net gain was \$333,389, and for the first five months of 1955 it totalled \$110,844.40—slightly under the pace of 1954.

Economies introduced with the full cooperation of the Fawcett-Dearing Printing Company of Louisville, Kentucky, have aided materially in the maintenance of a net gain—but all signs indicate that the saturation point has been reached as it relates to the lowering of costs by such methods.

Therefore, it is evident to me that a reappraisal of the over-all publications picture will be necessary within a comparatively short time, particularly if the present trends continue.

One of the important offices of public relations is maintained in New York and comes under the supervision of the Publications Division, but in complete coordination with the national public relations operations. Two outstanding programs have funneled out of New York this year—the highly successful BACK TO GOD television and

radio program, and the NEW GLORY FOR OLD GLORY project, emphasizing the display of our National Colors.

NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

The first three-year national convention program in American Legion history was approved during the past year. The NEC, upon recommendation of the National Convention Commission, approved Miami for 1955, Los Angeles, California, for September 3 to 6, 1956, and Atlantic City for 1957. The commission is now working to project convention planning a full five years into the future on a definite schedule. Cities that are interested in conventions beyond 1957 include Boston, Minneapolis and St. Paul, Philadelphia and Washington, D. C.

The 1954 national convention in Washington, D. C., was a financial success.

With NEC approval, the commission also established a new policy of having only one parade at future conventions. This was effectuated by making the Forty and Eight a part of the national American Legion Convention parade and eliminating a separate procession by the voyagers.

The commission recommended and the NEC approved a limited commercial sponsorship of floats in the national convention parade. This has led to the enrichment of the pageantry of the annual grand parade. It is the commission's hope that every department will be represented by one or more floats in the annual parade.

Plans were set under way during the past year by the commission for an official post convention American Legion tour of the Hawaiian Islands in 1956. The trip would be made right after the 38th national convention in Los Angeles. A special committee of the commission is now working on these plans and reports great interest in the proposed trip.

I should like to salute the commission upon its singular forward steps and accomplishments in its long-range program for bigger and better national conventions of The American Legion.

NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE

During the past year the national judge advocate has worked closely with the special committees which were appointed to investigate certain major problems involving the departments of France, Puerto Rico and the Philippines.

In accordance with convention mandates he has also filed briefs on behalf of The American Legion as amicus curiae in the cases of Toth vs. Talbott. This involved the right of the military to assume jurisdiction over Robert W. Toth for a crime allegedly committed during his military service after he had been returned to a civilian status pursuant to honorable discharge, for the purpose of court-martial. Briefs also were filed in the further case of Commonwealth of Pennsylvania vs. Nelson which involves the question of whether the Smith Act adopted by Congress superseded and voided the 1939 Sedition Act of Pennsylvania.

In addition he has rendered many opinions throughout the year on questions submitted from the various departments and individual Legionnaires therein.

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

For the gracious ladies of our American Legion Auxiliary, the year 1955 promises to set a new membership record—going over the 1,000,000

mark for the first time in the history of their group.

At this writing only a matter of mere hundreds stands between the Auxiliary and an all-time new record in enrollments. The margin is now so close that it appears almost a certainty that the Auxiliary will go over the top before the end of the calendar year. So at the risk of seeming to be presumptive, I desire to go on record as the first national commander of The American Legion to salute the Auxiliary on enrolling 1,000,000 members during 1955.

Whatever accomplishments The American Legion can pride itself on during 1955, they were in large part made possible by the energetic aid and support of the Auxiliary. This has been particularly true in the fields of Rehabilitation, Child Welfare, Americanism and national security.

In Rehabilitation the Auxiliary during the past year expanded its program of volunteer hospital work. Almost 13,000 ladies of the Auxiliary, a new high, contributed long hours as trained and uniformed hospital workers in VA installations throughout the nation. The Auxiliary Christmas Gift Shops operated this year in virtually every VA Hospital.

The Auxiliary poppy program set a new high during 1955 in sales receipts and in providing employment for thousands of bedridden and handicapped veterans.

The Auxiliary contributed the first \$60,000 for the new American Legion Child Welfare Foundation during 1955. It also gave \$15,000 to The American Legion for the Annual Child Welfare program and \$25,000 to the Rehabilitation fund.

As its part in the citizenship training of youth, the Auxiliary during the past year sponsored Girls States in all the continental departments and in the Panama Canal Zone. It also held a most successful Girls Nation in Washington, D. C.

The Auxiliary made available \$25,000 to aid The American Legion in its 1955 campaign for national security training legislation which resulted in the enactment of reserve manpower program.

In 1955 the Auxiliary served as the host to the annual Women's Forum on National Security in Washington, D. C., which enjoyed an exceptional success in attendance and publicity.

As the retiring national commander of The American Legion, I should like to salute the Auxiliary upon its steadfast and inspiring backing of our 1955 programs and objectives. The aid and support of our Auxiliary ladies have made light the great tasks undertaken by The American Legion. They have won my admiration and my affection far and beyond my gratitude.

PRESENTATION OF MEDALLION TO WASHINGTON, D. C.

National Commander Seaborn P. Collins

It now becomes my pleasant duty to recognize, on behalf of The American Legion, the city of Washington, where we held our convention last year. I believe that it was a wonderful thing that this greatest of all veterans' organizations should have held its annual convention in the capital city of our nation. I think that it was good for Washington to have a look at The American Legion in all of its glory and strength. Certainly it was a wonderful thing for the Legionnaires and their families to have an opportunity to visit the capital of the United States and to see the impressive grandeur that is the city of Washington, for it is all too true and sadly so that many Americans