Schools can help the adolescent develop mental fitness for combat

We'll Be in the Army Soon

JAMES L. HYMES, Jr.

IT IS HARD to realize that 16- and 17-year-olds now sitting behind school desks will, within so short a time, be trained soldiers, holding bridgeheads, bombing and being bombed, fighting with life as the stake.

Youth is well aware of this impending future. It wants help.

War and armies, training, fighting—these are new in American life. Questions persist about them. When must I register? Can I enlist? What happens at the Induction Station? The Reception Center? Do I have any choice about my Army assignment? What is basic training all about? What does the Cavalry do? The Signal Corps?

Boys would be helped if each school had one person on its staff, a wartime counselor, who would have the time to collect and use official, accurate information about Army life, Army jobs, Army training. This person could answer boys' questions authoritatively. He could save the frustration of not being able to find out.

But answers are not enough. Rumors spread: There is favoritism in inducting some boys and not others. . . . At the physical examination all they do is to make sure you have two arms and two legs. . . . There are just two sizes for uniforms: too large and too small. . . . No mail at the Reception Center because they send you overseas immediately. . . . There are misconceptions, too: There's no use studying with the Army just ahead. . . . Only math and science count. . . . Everyone who gets in the Air Corps flies.

Boys would be helped if each school gave its prospective inductees an orientation to Army life. This could be included in social studies classes. Assembly programs, with returned service men as the guests, would be useful. English classes could help by reading books about the Army. Displays in the library, bulletin boards, posters that describe the Army, would all aid.

The adolescent wants full and complete information, in advance, about Army life.

Johnny Doughboy-to-be Wants to Know Why He Fights

Even advance information does not do the whole job. The boy who will be a soldier needs the will to fight. He needs to feel that this is *his* war. He needs what the Army calls "an impelling belief in his mission and a sense of urgency about getting at the enemy." Why are we at war? What has happened thus far? What is the score?

A practical approach to the matter of how schools may help boys of high school age—either in or out of school—to prepare for induction into the armed forces is discussed here by James L. Hymes, Jr., who at the time this article was written was on the staff of the Pre-Induction Training Branch of the War Department. He is now working on the child-care program of the Kaiser Shipyards on the West Coast.

What is at stake? What are we fighting for? The prospective inductee should know the reasons for this fight; he should feel them in such a personal way that he can accept the war's purposes as his own.

The Army's goal is this: "Not just the best trained soldier in the world; not just the best equipped soldier in the world; but the BEST INFORMED soldier in the world." And this is the average boy's goal, too. He wants to know about his allies, their hopes and ways of living, their strengths, the ways they differ from Americans. He wants to know our enemies . . . about how the war has changed the world . . . about the plans and problems of making a decent peace.

The adolescent wants this preparation, for it will give him "mental fitness for combat." This cuts to the heart of his morale.

Boys would be helped if each school would modify its social studies, history, and government courses so that these focused on the ideas that matter most to the prospective inductee. In English classes boys could read literature, books of yesterday and today, that would give them insights into the values we fight for and facts about our fighting.

He Wants Straight Facts About His Army Future

But more, too, is needed. Youth dreams. To many, war means flying; it means PT boats; it means officer's stripes and bars. The boy who will be in the Army wants to prepare, but his own eager hopes can handicap him in planning realistically. The prospective inductee has the right to an honest interpretation of the life that lies ahead. He should know, for example:

. . . that the Army needs only a certain number of officers. The way is open to all but everyone can't be a General.

. . . that millions of soldiers are needed who will march, carry a gun, and do the straight, hard job of fighting that must be done to win a war.

. . . that the Army operates on a "shortage" basis. Preference, training, experience, all count but some men must be assigned to the job that needs filling at this moment, now.

. . . that the Army is a huge organization, forced many times to make urgent decisions in haste. The Army wants each man in the right job but some mistakes are inevitable.

. . . that only those boys scoring in the upper 20 per cent of the national norms of standardized scholastic aptitude tests are likely to be eligible for the Army Specialized Training Program in contract colleges. And that there is no guarantee that even the full 20 per cent likely to be eligible will be so assigned.

. . . that although inductees are allowed to state a preference at the Induction Station for service with the Army, Navy, Coast Guard, or the Marine Corps and although Army inductees may state a preference for a particular branch at the Reception Center, factors other than preference also govern the decision. Physical condition, educational background, occupational training and experience, plus the number of openings in particular services and branches of the armed forces must also be taken into account in making plans for the future activities of new recruits.

The Axis must propagandize or com-

pel. Our boys want to face squarely the duty they recognize is theirs.

Boys would be helped if they had access to authentic information about the Army. A special shelf in the library would help; many subject-matter fields can provide data; meetings with men from the community who know the Army at first-hand would be valuable. But, in addition, some one on the school staff, a wartime counselor, must interpret this information in light of each boy's hopes and fears and plans. Boys must be led to ask themselves: Am I being realistic?

He Wants to Be Ready to Do His Job

But interpretation does not suffice. Army life demands skills. The boy who will be in the Army wants to know what abilities soldiering demands. He wants to know how his own strengths and weaknesses stack up against these demands. He wants training that will ma' e him ready for his military job. This is mechanized, technical warfare. There are more than 650 skilled Army jobs. Nine out of ten men must be trained as specialists so that they will know how to do their particular job in keeping the military machine moving forward.

And more is needed. There are basic language and mathematical abilities and ideas which the soldier uses in his personal living and in the course of his work. A command of these can heighten his morale and increase his effectiveness as a fighting man. And the soldier must be physically fit. He must have skills in healthful living so that he stays well under battle conditions.

Boys would be helped if each school used its vocational training facilities to the utmost. General high schools can modify their physics courses so that these give practical experiences in radio, electricity, and machines—fields which are basic to many Army jobs. Many boys can be encouraged to work more with tools. Many schools can provide work experiences. English courses and mathematics can be modified to focus more on the abilities the soldier uses. Schools can use tests and other devices to help boys know what their abilities are and what training they need. The wartime counselor can help by knowing the Army's situation—the range of jobs, the skills all soldiers use—so that students have a measuring rod against which to stack their abilities.

The adolescent wants the confidence that comes from being well-trained. He does not want to enter unskilled into a situation where skills are demanded.

He May Need Special Help

There is one last thing. Most young people will enter the Army eager and with whole-hearted enthusiasm. Their patriotism, the honest desire to help, the sense of being needed, the opportunity for action, the lure of adventure—these will sustain them as they take this important step. But some boys will need special help. Leaving home, for some, will be a major blow; facing up to a totally new life for others will be hard; finding friends with like standards and similar interests will seem difficult to others.

Some boys will have physical defects which must be discovered and remedied before the time for induction. Others will obviously not be able to serve on the military front; they must be helped so that they can come through this war with the satisfaction of having contributed to the limit of their abilities.

Some boys will be out of school, but they, too, deserve help. They may want assistance in finding jobs that develop skills the Army can use; they may want further training which the school can give; they may need counsel in closing their personal and business affairs when the time for induction does come.

The way each boy will be helped will depend on the nature of his problem and on his past development. A school may help one boy by encouraging him to spend a summer in a work camp away from home. It might guide another boy into a club where he would have a chance to meet people and to make friends. Another boy may need medical attention; another a trade skill which will win him a place in war production. One boy out of school may want information about Army pay, insurance, and the allotments for dependents. If the school has someone on its staff who is available for diagnosing problems, helping to set goals and to plan programs, and to give advice, there are many ways in which the school will help.

He Can Be Trained as Soldier and Citizen

Youth is aware of these needs. The Army is, too. For it knows that the boy who enters military life prepared in advance with knowledge, with skills, and with positive attitudes makes the best fighter for his country. To do their part schools will have to drop the concept of grade level, for it is the 18-year-old who will be inducted, not the twelfth grader. Many changes in emphasis and some new curriculum provisions will be required. It is worth many adaptations to give each boy the training and the will to fight that may mean not only his happiness, but his life. If a good job is done, the boy prepared with what the soldier needs is also on his way to being prepared with what the citizen in post-soldier days will need.

Discipline for Today's Children

"THE RESOURCEFUL, self-controlled soldier who respects leadership is preferred by American military leaders. This is the kind of citizen our democracy needs in peace and in war. Schools must develop such self-discipline." This is a quote from our Department program. We are all aware of the fact that some are accusing the schools of being "soft" with children—that the rising delinquency rate is blamed on "lack" of discipline. We feel that teachers, parents, and youth leaders need help in thinking through what discipline means.

In the December issue of *Educational Leadership*, Mary S. Fisher, Department of Child Study, Vassar, discusses discipline as a skill.

In addition to articles in the journal, we feel there is a need for inexpensive pamphlet material which can be given wide distribution. Such a pamphlet on discipline is now being prepared by George Sheviakov, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Vanport City, Ore., and Fritz Redl, Wayne University, Detroit. We think you will want to have a copy of this pamphlet when it comes from the press, not only for your own use, but also as a basis for discussion in P.T.A. meetings, in college classes in educational psychology and child development, in meetings of teachers, at child-care centers, and in family living classes in high school. Watch for its release.

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