

INDUCTION OF BLOCK LEADERS

You women who are Block Leaders have assumed an important job in a great national program of our country's Civilian Defense organization. And on behalf of your State's Defense Council, may I say how welcome you are as our government's, our state's, or your county's spokesman for vital war effort.

But perhaps before we go into details of this Block Plan, you might like something in the way of at least a broad outline of Civilian Defense's functions and organization.

So at the risk of being repetitious to you who are familiar with the history and set-up of this great nationwide movement of the civil population, I might state that Civilian Defense was organized because of the recognized value of our sister democracies' experiences. Organization of England's civilians has been acknowledged of immeasurable value. The disorganization of France's civil population was certainly a very decisive and contributing factor in its fall. Now, we in the United States today are profiting from their experience and example.

We have a Federal Office of Civilian Defense with headquarters in Washington and Sector Offices strategically placed around the country. Mr. James M. Landis is its national director. In each state there are defense councils headed by their respective Governors who follow the general plan made for Civilian Defense by the national office. In turn each county in a state follows the same practical pattern -- with its State Defense Council acting as interpreter for the federal plan.

Of course, as you realize, the first concern of our Civilian Defense program was quite naturally the actual physical protection of the populace and first efforts were concentrated to this end. We are all pretty familiar with the splendid work being done under the heading of Civilian Protection. The Air Raid Wardens are perhaps the most familiar example to us, but there are scores of other interesting and vital jobs being ably filled everywhere. We, as a nation, are generally ready for the emergency which we sincerely hope will never strike. But in addition to these emergency jobs there is another side to Civilian Defense -- the Civilian War Services. That is the side of the picture where all you Block Leaders fit in. The Block Leader Plan of Organization for cities and the Neighborhood Leader Plan for rural districts were devised by our government in these times of shortened gasoline and rubber supplies as a means of assuring complete coverage of all households for all Civilian War Services.

These Civilian War Services might be defined as the day-by-day work of civilian defense, in contrast to the emergency -- and perhaps more glamorous -- aspect of civilian protection. Not that our protective workers aren't faithfully on the job all the time, but we might say that maintaining the health, welfare, morale, and financial stability of our citizens is the job of the Civilian War Services and we recognize its daily importance. Many of these War Services were organized in peacetime and their tempo must now be increased to take care of situations peculiar to wartime. Other services have programs of wholly wartime activities, such as War Savings, Salvage, Recreation as it applies to our soldiers and defense workers. But every one of the service programs contributes in some way to our health, welfare, morale, financial stability, or the total

striking power of the nation.

With this in mind committees of volunteers have been organized in each state with a State Director at their head, and then in each county when and as they are needed. These county committees are likewise headed by volunteer chairmen who supervise the handling of their particular service programs.

The Service Programs directly resulting from the war are: Defense Housing, Conservation of Cultural Resources, War Savings, Consumer Interests, Defense Transportation, Agriculture and Victory Gardens.

We are all familiar with salvage and how it is being handled, just as we are with war bonds and savings. Defense housing is another program demanding attention and action in areas suddenly overcrowded with an influx of new workers.

Conservation of Cultural Resources is a rather resounding title for a program which is actually merely concerned with the preservation of vital statistics or material which may have future scientific or historic value. In France, at the time of the last war, many unhappy situations resulted from the destruction of official records. Deeds to land in one family, for generations perhaps, were destroyed, witnesses scattered or killed, and unjust awards of disputed property sometimes resulted.

The Victory Gardens program we can recognize likewise as another war result for apparent reasons. America is the granary as well as the arsenal of democracy, and it behooves us all this year to do our part in keeping it filled.

The program known as Consumer Interest may not as yet be too familiar to you. Under its committee a program should be developed with the aim of aiding you as a consumer -- and we're all consumers

of course -- in the knowledge of how and what and where to buy -- how to use, save, and repair your equipment and clothes, all of which is strategic defense information, because it builds our economic strength.

As for Defense Transportation, conservation of rubber and gasoline is that committee's prime purpose and its need is pretty obvious.

The programs which are having to be expanded, or supplemented, by volunteer civilian defense workers, can be broadly grouped as Health and Welfare Services. Public Welfare, Health, Nutrition, Physical Fitness, and Recreation from the standpoint of the average citizen, were present as active services before Pearl Harbor. Now their needs and urgencies have increased and hence their inclusion in Civilian Defense organization.

Every one of these Service Programs is staffed by volunteer workers, both on the state and county levels. Some workers have had previous specialized training, others have been newly taught in the fields in which they serve by means of training courses, such as those provided for nurses' aides; but mostly these volunteers are just average patriotic citizens who recognize there is a need for them. Under this plan your county's volunteer office is an important place, for that is where a citizen goes to register his desire to help and where the right job is found for each individual. After 50 hours of service as a volunteer anyone is eligible to membership in the Citizens Service Corps. Membership buttons and certificates and the privilege of wearing a uniform if desired are made available at this time and you block leaders likewise will be eligible for this recognition. In the volunteer office the necessary records are kept for this Service Corps credit, and al-

together it really is the personnel office of a pretty big business. The volunteer office will be a part of Civilian Defense you block leaders can assist, too, when making your contacts.

Tell your neighbors, as you go to them on the various campaigns you will be handling, of the increasing need for volunteers. You can make yourself a walking recruiting agency. You won't have a brass band, but you can have a straightforward message that there is a place for everyone to do his share in this organization army on the home front that is Civilian Defense.

Now you, as the block leaders, might be characterized as the dispatch bearers of this army. You are going to take to your neighbors the reasons why and the how of vital civilian war effort. The campaign, which the government and your local council will ask you to assist in carrying out, will mostly be to this purpose. Nearly always these projects will be sponsored by one of the Service Committees I have mentioned. You are the spokesmen, therefore, for all of these war services and you will want to do your best in order to get best results from them and for our country's war effort.

There are really only a few suggestions to make to this end, then. Most of them your own common sense would tell you anyway. But it would be a good idea, for instance, to learn the names of the householders you will be contacting, if you don't already know them. Find out the best time for you to call and, if you can conveniently do so, try to go at that hour. You wouldn't want to ring the doorbell of a graveyard shift worker at ten in the morning. And you couldn't expect a good reception and response more than once if you did.

Your approach to a housewife, or any member of her family, is

most important. You should conduct your interview with dignity, simplicity and seriousness. You might find out, if you can without sleuthing, something of the interests and background of your contacts, with a view to establishing friendly and neighborly meetings. In fact, you are approaching each householder as one neighbor to another, as well as an official government spokesman. This is your neighbor's war as much as yours, and we are all sharing what comparatively few real restrictions and hardships there are. It certainly wouldn't be a good idea to announce emphatically to a man who has perhaps just finished figuring his income tax deduction, just sent his only son off to camp, and vainly tried to get a badly needed new tire, that "There is a war on, you know." He knows it all too well, and you are going to find that he wants to cooperate. It is up to you to help show him how. Your job is not to arouse patriotism, but to show every family you will be contacting how they may demonstrate their patriotism by cooperating in the campaigns you will be telling them about. You might say to them that "Here is your chance to do something with that urge we all have to help our country win the war."

Your average neighbor will probably have already read in his newspaper, or heard on his radio, much of what the Government may want you to say as its spokesman or deliver in its literature; but the very fact of a personal meeting and request from you will give new emphasis to these messages. You know, yourself, the value of word-of-mouth advertising.

But aside from your value in assuring the Government of contacts and delivery of its messages, you block leaders have another value. For you are not only the Government's spokesman in this job, you are going to be the people's as well. By passing along your neighbors' reactions to your sector leader, who in turn will hand them to your

block plan chief, and so on down the line to Washington, the Government may well be kept in closer touch with its people.

When we say that you will be bringing back the people's responses, it is never meant in a "Gestapo" or policing sense. Not with the idea of reporting individuals, but rather in the sense of sampling a general feeling. Likewise, a block leader will try to make it plain, during her interview, that the information she brings in in no sense an "order". And that what is said to her by householder is confidential. I want to emphasize again that you will never be policing or reporting infractions.

In most instances you will be prepared beforehand to answer any arguments against certain programs by having attended instruction meetings held in preparation of a campaign. (And by the way, do try and attend any such instructional meetings, for they will give you these answers and special local angles likewise perhaps.) If you should encounter antagonistic reactions to your messages and requests, though, which cannot be answered briefly and with friendliness, end your interview as quickly and as pleasantly as possible. Your time is valuable and you shouldn't waste it in useless argument. Now that doesn't mean that discussions in good faith aren't constructive, but they shouldn't be too lengthy either, if you are going to interview your quota of neighbors in the scheduled time. And consider your neighbor's time as well as your own in any contacts. "Do unto other", you know, and the old principles of "Practise what you preach" and "Lead by example" are particularly applicable to this new job of yours.

You should be concise, calm, impartial whatever anyone's reactions, then, because these interviews are business calls in a way, in which you are representing your local Defense Council and your government. When you go out as a block leader, you are neither a republican, a

democrat, nor the representative of any other political party, but an American, pledged to help our country win the war by assisting your neighbor with civilian war information. And as such a representative you should try to avoid discussion of the program of the war or the management of the government's war policy and not ever engage in any---- well, squabbles. Besides, as you know, anger will never convince any one that you are right and they're wrong.

Of course, you'll always read yourself whatever literature you might be distributing on your calls, especially if you haven't had any preliminary training meeting. You'll usually have the answers to the general run of questions you will encounter, as I said before, if you've attended special instruction gatherings called by your sector leader or block plan chief, or if you have read all the literature given you; but may I emphasize that if you don't know the answer to a question, never, never, NEVER make an attempt to guess at it. Tell your questioner that you don't know, but will find out and advise him later. Then take it to your sector leader, or block plan chief, who will see that the right answer is obtained from the right place. It will be up to you to follow through, then, and see that your inquiring neighbor has his reply. And speaking of following up, you may find that will be necessary on your routine calls, you know. Patience, even persistence, is going to be an asset for you. Because you should stick to your attempt to make that personal contact with some responsible member of a household and not be tempted to give up and drop your message in the mail box.

But aside from your chief activity as a disseminator of important war information, when the need arises you may be asked to engage in other purely locally-inspired campaigns or surveys. You are going to

be not only an information-giver, but an information-gatherer, as well, on such things as a canvass to ascertain the number of children whose mothers are employed and who require some form of day care, or a survey for persons available in emergency farm labor.

Whatever your job of the moment, though, you can be assured that your Coordinator, and your Defense Council, and your block plan chief have consulted together beforehand and agreed on its merits and necessity and that you are being asked to do something that will materially benefit the national or local war effort. Be self-confident, then, and not apologetic. An apologetic attitude would indicate that you had lack of faith in the effort.

You can always go armed with the conviction that your position as a block leader is one of major importance in maintaining the efficiency of the home front army.

In the words of Mr. Landis, "This war job you have accepted will doubtless bring many headaches and little glory. But its importance to our total war efforts is of highest rank. My confidence in America would be small indeed if I had any doubt as to your success."

And may I add my own conviction of your future success here in
..... Thank you.