

# The Future of the CCC

by C. S. MARSH

**E**VEN CRISP New England Republicans admit that the CCC camps are a good thing. An estimated two and a half million young men have gone through the camps — have had plentiful good food and clothes, have built up their bodies by living and working in the open, have shared the camaraderie of barracks life. Roads and trails and bridges and dams and shelters in every State of the Union are their enduring monuments. Enrollees have scrambled over the mountains to find crashed airplanes, fought through forest and scrub hunting the lost. In fire, storm, and flood, they have risked death to save life and property.

The Civilian Conservation Corps was hastily set up as an emergency relief measure in

the first month of Roosevelt's first term. Now after seven years, the emergency phase is past. Congress has continued the Corps to July 1, 1943. No one expects the camps to fold up on that date. They are here to stay. They may be changed. I think they should be, but in some form they will be kept. Why? Because they are our best means of taking care of hundreds of thousands of boys whom the schools can't hold and employers can't take. It is time to plan ahead.

I have visions for the future of the CCC, naturally, for I was the first Educational Director of the Corps, worked with it, studied it intensely, inspected hundreds of camps from coast to coast — in mountains, on deserts, up



Woodcut by Clare Leighton

From the Collection of William Edwin Rudge

## THE FORUM

canyons, near big cities, and near small towns. But before we consider what the CCC could be, let us see what it is now.

Applicants for enrollment outnumber vacancies two to one. At present, the boys average nineteen years old, and, though the law does not so stipulate, are chosen principally from families on relief. They may stay in the Corps two years, but the actual average is nine months.

The boys work eight hours a day, five days a week. The base rate of pay is thirty dollars a month, of which not less than twenty-two dollars is allotted to dependents or, if there are none, paid to the enrollee when he leaves. Present strength of the Corps is 300,000 in 1,500 camps of 200 men each. Ten or more in each camp may become Leaders at forty-five dollars a month, an additional sixteen or more Assistant Leaders at thirty-six dollars a month, getting valuable experience in handling men.

Most enrollees, I suspect, are given more clothes and better clothes than they ever had before. Recently, a new dress uniform of spruce green, with shoulder insignia and green overseas cap, has been approved.

The Corps feeds well. In one year the boys ate nearly 100,000,000 eggs, 3,000,000 chickens, 30,000,000 pounds of sugar, 62,000,000 pounds of beef, and also 3,000,000 pounds of dry beans — 39 carloads of them. Brother, that's a lot of beans! Small wonder that a chamber of commerce protests to its Congressman whenever it hears that a nearby camp may be moved.

On such food, the average youth entering the Corps will gain eight to twelve pounds in three to six months. He will cost his Uncle Sam about one thousand dollars if he stays a year.

Most of the work done by the CCC is part of a long-range nationwide conservation program planned jointly by the Departments of Interior and Agriculture or by State agencies. There are enough projects already proposed to keep the Corps busy for thirty years.

During its seven years, the CCC has planted almost fifteen trees for every man, woman, and child in the United States; strung enough telephone lines to reach three times around the earth; made truck trails or minor roads to go four times around the earth. Forty-two thousand bridges have been constructed, four million erosion-control dams built. The boys have put in nine million days of forest-fire fighting, prevention, and suppression.

Conservation takes a variety of forms: forest improvement, work on recreational areas, on historic restorations, on wild-life refugees, on roadside improvement, on swamp drainage.

Then there is emergency work. In bad years the boys help fight the grasshoppers. Forty camps were assigned to a clean-up job after the New England hurricane. Thousands of distressed citizens facing storm, flood, or fire have thanked God when the CCC trucks rolled in.

## II

**A** CAMP LAYOUT is ordinarily five barracks buildings, a mess hall, a recreation hall, a schoolhouse, a hospital, shops, headquarters, living quarters for the camp commander — an army man — and his staff.

Army welfare funds provide each camp with athletic equipment. These huskies play hard, bruising games, and they are good sports. Many a CCC baseball player has graduated into a minor professional league.

Camp life has rough but effective ways of teaching certain elements of good citizenship.

A boy bragged too much, and his listeners plotted. They held him, head first, in the fire-prevention water barrel for what must have been to him an age. He lived — but after that was fairly quiet.

One boy condemned the United States Government and praised communism. That night, the boys held their "kangaroo court" and gave him one hour to go permanently A. W. O. L. — or else! (which meant that camp life would be unbearable). He left. The C.O. never knew why.

Wise company commanders can influence boys and maintain discipline without breaking their spirits.

An enrollee stole five dollars. The C.O. stated at assembly that he would pardon the thief if he returned the money either to him or to the loser by 10:00 P.M. and that no punishment or publicity would follow. In the meantime no one could leave camp. The money was given to the C.O. after dark. The boy had never stolen before. He said his mother needed glasses and he had wanted to help her. Investigation proved this true — the woman was slowly going blind. This boy never gave the camp any more trouble.

One company commander had the carpenter build a wooden trough down the middle of a

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table in the mess hall. The following day, five sloppy eaters were taken from their regular places and seated at the "hog's table," where meat, vegetables, and dessert were spread out along the trough. The men were given only spoons. Two days of this, and their table manners improved. But a better way is common: the company commander gives his Leaders coaching in table manners, then assigns one to each table.

Out in Idaho, we drove into a camp that had been moved there from West Virginia. A smart company commander that camp had! At retreat he led the singing. "Comin' Round the Mountain" comes close to being the CCC anthem. Good at pantomime, the captain "drove the six white horses" and "killed the old red rooster" while the boys grinned, sang, and yelled. Later that evening their hillbilly band entertained. Ever hear a bunch of homesick West Virginia boys sing about their hills? No problem of discipline in that camp!

Contrast this with the tactics of another officer, who, on coming to camp, called for a general assembly. His first words were: "See this pistol?" — as he took it from its holster. "I know how to use it, and, if any of you fellows think you can start a riot, just try! I'm boss here and I intend to be the boss!" Rebellion started right there and then. Of course he was soon fired.

### III

**T**HE CAMP SUPERINTENDENT has charge of the boys on the job. He is named from the Forest Service, Soil Service, or some other government service, depending on the nature of the camp's work project. He and his staff give job instruction during the work day and in classes at night. They make recommendations for promotion. What they say and think on all manner of questions is absorbed and quoted by the boys.

Four young men were placed on a surveying crew. The camp engineer asked them if they wanted to get ahead. They did. He worked three nights a week with them, teaching them mathematics, contour maps, running a transit. Within one year, the four obtained surveying jobs in a nearby city.

The camp educational adviser, a college student, appointed by the U. S. Commissioner of Education, has a difficult task. He must

make self-improvement attractive to enrollees who have just done a day's work in the open. For the educational program is mainly a leisure-time activity limited to night hours. "Education is voluntary and not compulsory," says the Director of the Corps.

In a single camp the boys may range from illiterates to college graduates. The supply of textbooks, maps, and reference books is limited. There are counterattractions: sports, recreation, and movies. Teaching must be not only ingenious but even seductive, to succeed under such circumstances.

Yet nine out of ten enrollees are making some effort at self-improvement. What do they want to know? Mostly about jobs. And so they are taught about the jobs the camp is doing: building a road, a bridge, a trail, shelters; stopping soil erosion, preserving the forest. Much job instruction is given during the day, right on the job. But that isn't all. Some boys want to learn accounting, journalism, dramatics. And there are hobby clubs — photography, fossils, stamps. Moreover, thousands go into nearby night schools.

The records show that last year 5,176 boys, while in camp, earned their elementary-school diplomas; another 1,048, their high-school diplomas; 97 received college degrees.

Anybody and everybody teaches — the educational advisers, officers and foremen, WPA teachers, citizens from nearby towns, and some enrollees. Schools have given discarded books to augment those the government provides. Each camp is given a library of approximately a thousand volumes and about twenty-five magazines. Many camps have bought movie outfits out of canteen money.

The good camp educational adviser is much more than organizer and teacher of classes. Living in camp with the boys, he is confidant, buddy, counselor, and, frequently, job getter.

Three high-school graduates were discouraged because they had no trade or special training. Their educational adviser persuaded them to enter a night class in airplane metal work in a nearby town and lent them money to buy tools. Each finished as apprentice airplane metal worker. Then the adviser took them to an airplane factory where they obtained jobs in the riveting department.

In one camp there were eighty illiterates, fine-looking native stock from back in the



hills. About twenty of them didn't know who was President; forty didn't know the capital of the United States. Four of them, when asked, guessed they were from five thousand to one hundred thousand miles away from their native hills. They were fanatically religious but they drank hard, fought viciously. Some of them resented singing "She'll be Comin' Round the Mountain" as impious, for to the same tune in church they had sung: "It's the good old ship of Zion when she comes."

A few such found learning their letters too difficult. But it is estimated that 65,000 CCC boys have been taught to read and write.

Experience as camp cooks, stewards, storekeepers, and office clerks often helps boys find jobs. When the cooks in a big hotel quit, the management went to a nearby CCC camp and hired the whole cooking staff, all of whom had learned to cook in camp.

What's it worth to the boys? What does the CCC experience train them to do? What does it give them to live on, to live with, to live by? Though there has been no thorough follow-up study of the boys after they leave camp, there have been some samplings.

There is much evidence from employers that enrollees have learned how to work, have learned how to carry out instructions, have acquired some self-discipline and self-confidence. They have been taught accident prevention and first aid. Nearly half these boys never had a job before going to camp. In general, the CCC experience makes them more employable.

The boys go home improved in mental state and social attitude. Sample studies support this statement. A spiritual lift comes to the boy who sends money regularly to his needy parents. He gains something of poise and self-reliance in the give and take of barracks life. His work gives him pride and courage in place of the aimlessness and discouragement that darkened his precamp life.

## IV

**E**XISTING REGULATIONS forbid military training, and the CCC has never been more military than the Boy Scouts. Many enrollees would like drill. They wanted the bugle and got it, though at first it was denied. In 1933, some foreign powers could hardly be convinced that the CCC was not in essence a military enterprise; one, indeed, is reported to have

sent a mission to visit camps and see for itself.

At retreat, as the flag is lowered, I've seen some companies stand rigidly at attention in good military order. I've seen others gathered respectfully around the flagpole with little semblance of military style.

At noon, at a camp in Virginia, I heard the top kick's whistle and saw the boys line up in columns of squads before their barracks.

"Why this military touch?" I asked the captain.

"Teaches 'em neatness and manners," he said. "They have to be washed and combed for this formation, and I dismiss them by files to enter the mess hall. That stops rough-house and scuffling around the door."

"Which platoon enters first?" — for it was a raw, winter day.

"The one with the neatest barracks on inspection this morning, followed by the neatest yesterday, and so on."

Another wintry noon, in a Carolina camp, the boys were arriving by truckloads. Climbing down out of each truck, they lined up. "Forward hike," and the Leader marched them off.

Again my query — "Why the military touch, captain?"

"One broken leg," he said. "These trucks come in fast. The boys used to scramble off before a truck stopped. Snow on the ground — one fell in front of a truck."

I found no semblance, ever, of military drill; the device of formations was used only for the protection or benefit of the group.

And if war should come? A major general once pointed out to me the military value of hundreds of thousands of young men trained not only to drive but to care for trucks, road graders, bulldozers, and tractors; of hundreds of thousands more who are skilled in building roads, bridges, retaining walls, in the care of tools and machinery. But this is more important: they are experienced in living together, trained in sanitation and health measures; they have been taught first aid, and are used to carrying out orders. And the Leaders have already had responsibility like a sergeant's, the Assistant Leaders like a corporal's. Do you wonder that the general was enthusiastic as he talked about what the CCC would mean to the army if an emergency arose? Veterans of the

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CCC could be made into soldiers quickly.

The army, with more than 150 years' experience in caring for men, has done a good job in running the camps. No epidemics, no serious scandals in purchase of supplies — these are tributes to good camp management.

But the army has missed a big chance. It has never really comprehended the importance of the Corps. Under its general theory that any officer can do anything, the army's practice is to move officers at regular intervals from one post or job to another. This has resulted in some admirable, some grotesque assignments to CCC duty.

The army picks officers with great care for the Citizens Military Training Camps in the summer and for the Reserve Officers Training Corps in colleges. In both cases civilians are to be handled, not soldiers. No leather-hearted bronco busters for these posts. For the R.O.T.C. assignment, the president of each institution approves the officers selected by the army.

So, for CCC duty, officers should be chosen whose training and experience clearly qualifies them for management and understanding of civilian youth. Too many have been appointed merely to give them experience as officers.

Camp commanders should be approved by the Director of the Corps and by the U. S. Commissioner of Education. We choose high-school teachers with that much care. This is a more important, a harder task. For the camp commander lives with his boys twenty-four hours a day — boys young, impressionable, away from home.

### V

**T**HERE IS NEED for a shift of emphasis in the CCC. The whole concept should be that the CCC is an essential part of the American educational structure. As the President told Congress, the CCC's "major purpose is to promote the welfare and further the training of the individuals who make up the Corps, important as may be the construction work which they have carried on so successfully."

The CCC, firmly established in the good will of the nation, needs a new kind and quality of leadership. It needs proper integration with other youth-serving agencies, such as the high schools, the National Youth Administration, the counseling and employment agencies, State and community organizations. This

will make possible a better placement service and better follow-up after the boys leave camp.

The place of education in camp life should be clarified. It is only recently that a school-house has been provided in each camp. The right of these boys to further educational opportunity in daylight hours should be recognized, even by shortening their working day.

Every camp superintendent, engineer, foreman, every camp commander and subaltern should be chosen quite as much for his influence on the boys as for his technical competence — foremen in particular. What the foreman thinks and says and what he is will affect many of these boys to the end of their days.

Last — and most important — standing at the head of the Corps as Director should be a man experienced and wise in dealing with youth. He must know how to elicit the best thinking of educators, parents, social workers, employers, labor leaders — all who are concerned with the problems of youth — drawn together in an advisory council.

William James wrote a notable essay on the "moral equivalent of war." Military service does foster bravery, contempt of softness, service to the state, surrender of private interest, obedience to command. James was for conscripting the whole youthful population against nature in such projects as the building of roads. This would knock the childishness out of youth, he said, would give toughness without callousness, painful labor without degradation; would enable each to pay his blood tax.

The CCC is our closest approach to his idea. Fighting forest fires, battling floods, succoring the victims of tornadoes, hunting the lost in the mountains, the CCC enrollees have proved their heroism. And, instead of the crop of tombstones and cripples which war exacts for its disciplines, roads blasted out of mountainsides, trails down into canyons, telephone wires into vast forests, acres saved to man's use, innumerable bridges are the monuments, and healthy boys the principal product of this moral equivalent of war.

Because of its great value to American youth and to the country, the CCC should be removed from its emergency and somewhat haphazard status and established as an integral part of the American educational process. It is important enough to be worth the best that educational and administrative brains can give it.

# The Artist's Point of View

**Bill Gropper: His First Twenty Years as Cartoonist and Painter**

**B**ILL GROPPER's fellow artists, together with hosts of his personal and newspaper friends, have just celebrated twenty years of Gropper the cartoonist by a monster rally in Mecca Temple. Gropper the artist has also been celebrated, much more quietly, by an exhibition done within the past two years at the A.C.A. Gallery in New York City. Both these events measure the impressive success of Bill as artist and man.

"As a cartoonist," says *Time*, "Bill Gropper has been busy as a beaver for twenty years trying to gnaw down the capitalist system."

Gropper will not deny that charge. Unlike Benton, who prides himself on not taking sides, he is definitely for the workers and against that system. But the most weighty reason for Gropper's importance is that he does not forget art when he becomes avenger or prophet. His propaganda is always art; his art is sometimes propaganda. It is not that Gropper has limited his pictorial punches to the field of economics and politics. He has attacked tyranny, greed, sham, wherever he found them, with cutting satire; he has painted the tragedies of dust bowl and share cropper, of war, refugees, and "civilization." He has laughed at the aesthetic frailties of affluent Art Patrons, at Museum of Modern Art Openings, at Political Speakers. He has let his healthy sense of humor play with Grandmothers, Wrestlers, Hoboes, Brenda in a Tantrum, and his own son (in the painting *Halloween*).

It is easy to call Gropper the Daumier of today because he *is* our Daumier. He is both cartoonist and painter, as Daumier was. He is definitely influenced by both the Daumier ideology and the Daumier style. He dramatizes his conceptions as forcefully, if not with the same finesse. His characterizations are as

caustic (or more so), if not perhaps as mature. He knows and uses color-space harmonics as Daumier did. But, notwithstanding the obvious influence, Gropper is an original artist because he assimilates the influence and uses it in his own way. Never, in the specific concept or design, does he copy.

The painting, *Meeting*, illustrated below, shows Gropper the artist, concerned with life and human beings. No propaganda here discredits one kind of meeting in favor of another. These are just people listening — the few intense souls who have stayed on after others have gone, the disorderly chairs eloquently



telling that event. There is powerful and differentiated characterization in every face and body. There is effective, functional design — note how chair motifs play against human motifs and against the one vertical bench motif; there is not one distracting element in either subject or design. There is economy of effort and concentration of interest — perfect stage management. And the color is a harmony of varied grays in keeping with the theme.

A work of art, this, which does credit to our time.

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