

EMPLOYERS HAVE DUTY

SHOULD HELP IN WORK OF
CLASSIFYING THE NEW
REGISTRANTS.

Pointing out the duty of employers of labor in assuming a proper share of responsibility for the classification of new registrants under the selective service act, a communication from Provost Marshal General Crowder has been made public. The points emphasized are as follows:

I have noticed, in the general expressions of the public attitude which reach this office, two frequent features which lead me to the present comments. One of these features is the belief that the process of awarding deferred classification to a registrant requires merely the filling out of the questionnaire, and that the selective service boards will perceive the propriety of making the deferment, without the assistance furnished by the registrant's formal claim indicating the deferment desired. The other feature is the employer's failure to realize his responsibility to intervene in aiding the board's determination, and therefore to inform himself fully on all the considerations which should affect the decision as to deferment.

1. As to the first mentioned belief, it must be pointed out that if it were universally acted upon, the process of classification would be seriously hampered and delayed. Someone must indicate that the individual case is one which should arrest the special attention of the boards in respect to the registrant's occupational status. The boards do not possess a superhuman omniscience.

Boards Will Make Examination.

The boards will do all that they possibly can, on their own initiative, to reach a just decision by a complete examination of the questionnaire, even where no claim is expressly made. A registrant is therefore at liberty, if he sees fit, to trust to the scrutiny of the boards to discover the necessity for his deferment.

Nevertheless, the boards will welcome and will need all the aid that can be furnished by the indication of a claim made for deferment.

2. Why should the employer, or other third person, in such cases, make the claim? Because the employer in this situation represents the nation, because (in the statutory phrase) "the maintenance of the military establishment or of national interest during the emergency" requires that some well-advised third person should look after that national interest, which the registrant himself may not have sufficiently considered.

It is often forgotten that the selective draft is only one element in the depletion of a particular industry's man-power. A second and large element is found in the voluntary withdrawals for enlistment; how large this is may be seen from the circumstance that the total inductions by draft have reached some 2,000,000, while the total enlistments in army and navy amount to some 1,400,000—nearly three-quarters as many. A third element, very large, but unknown as to its precise extent, has been the transfer of labor power from one industry to another, namely, into the distinctively war industries offering the inducements of higher wages. How relatively small, in actual effect, has been the effect of the selective draft is seen in the fact that, for all the occupations represented in the 8,700,000 classified registrants of January, 1918, the percentage of the entire industrial population represented by the class 1 registrants amounted to only 6 per cent. It ran as low as 3 per cent for some occupations, and correspondingly higher for some other occupations; but the national average was only 6 per cent. Any notably larger depletion in particular industries must therefore have been due, partly to enlistments, and in probably greater degree, to voluntary transfers into other industries.

Must Remember Nation's Needs.

These other influences are therefore to be kept in mind by employers and others, in weighing the question whether or the best solution, in the national interest, is to ask for the deferment of individuals or groups of men. Such deferments may assist the immediate situation in the particular establishment; but they merely force the army and the navy to seek elsewhere for the same number of men thus deferred. The quantitative needs of the military forces are known and imperative; and any given quantity of deferments will ultimately have to be made up by the depletion of some other occupation. Thus it becomes the employer's duty to consider these aspects of deferment, in seeking that solution of his own problem which best comports with the national interest.

The keynote of purpose for all of us ought to be, and I am sure will be, that wise and profoundly significant phrase in the act of congress under which we operate, "the maintenance of the military establishment or the effective operation of the military forces or the maintenance of national interest during the emergency."

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