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Article Summary: Beginning in 1925 a Nebraska representative attended national meetings held to plan a war time draft.

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The Beginnings of Nebraska Selective Service

Born of World War I was a conviction that never again would the United States face the task of raising an army without some pre-arranged mobilization plan. During the 1920s and '30s the War Department worked quietly; surveying, planning, teaching. In a nation whose ears were almost fanatically cocked to Pacificism, these efforts, to say the least, went unsung.

Beginning in 1925, Frank B. O'Connell of Lincoln, a veteran of World War I and a National Guard officer, represented Nebraska at brief annual "schools" held at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, under the auspices of the War Department and under the personal direction of Major Lewis B. Hershey who, oddly enough, was of Quaker stock.

After each school, O'Connell, himself a major in the National Guard, would return to Nebraska and report to the State Staff of the Nebraska Adjutant General. The plan these schools developed concerned not only a war time "draft" but a method for civilian aid to recruiting in peacetime. This dual system was premised upon the reasonable expectation that war might come to the nation before Congress enacted a draft program.

Nebraska men who, through the years, worked to set up a Nebraska mobilization plan in keeping with outlines brought back from the Fort Sheridan school, included Brig. Gen. Guy N. Henninger, Brig. Gen. H. J. Paul, Lt. Col. Jess Faes, Lt. Col. W. E. McConnaughey, Major O'Connell, Maj. H. R. ("Hobb") Turner, Maj. Trev. Gillaspie, Maj. Malcolm Baldrige, Capt. C. L. Clark, Capt. Carroll D. Evans, Capt. Byron Yoder, and Lt. Comdr. P. H. Quinby, a naval reserve officer who frequently met with the staff when it discussed mobilization plans.

Amid considerable surprise in some quarters, Congress in 1940 turned seriously to the business of enacting a peacetime Selective Training and Service Act. So complete and up-to-date were the War Department's plans for mobilization that authors

of the Selective Service Act were able to lift most of them—almost lock, stock and barrel—and write them into the Selective Training and Service Act.

The Selective Training and Service Act became law on September 16, 1940, and plans were immediately made for the first registration of men between the ages of 21 and 35 to be held on October 16, 1940.

The speed with which events were developing was amazing. General Henninger, who had succeeded General Paul as Nebraska Adjutant General, was named State Director for Selective Service, and he and several members of his staff were immediately called to active duty. These officers were confronted with the mountainous job of organizing Nebraska localities to handle the first registration in less than thirty days. Hundreds of thousands of forms had to be printed, others had to be obtained from Washington, volunteer registrars had to be rounded up to serve without pay. Clerical help had to be hired. Meanwhile, the governor (R. L. Cochran) was busy obtaining nominations from all parts of the state for Selective Service Local Board members.

Under Selective Service, 105 local boards were organized over the state—one in each county save Douglas with ten and Lancaster with four.

The first registration placed the names of 145,000 men on Selective Service lists. Almost at once the first national lottery was held to determine induction sequence. On November 21, 1940, the first inductees left Ainsworth in Brown County for the induction station where they were examined for service. During the remaining days of November other counties sent men (most of them volunteers) to Induction Stations at Fort Crook and Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. In all, 123 men were delivered for induction in November.

The burden of inaugurating Selective Service in Nebraska fell largely upon the shoulders of these officers: Henninger, McConnaughey, O'Connell, Quinby, Turner, Gillaspie, Evans and Yoder. As of this writing, these officers are still with Nebraska Selective Service with the exception of Captain Evans and Captain Yoder. O'Connell and Turner are now lieutenant colonels; Quinby, the navy man, a commander. The medical direction of the Nebraska program is under Col. P. H. Bartholo-

mew, former commander of the medical regiment of the 35th Division and former Nebraska state health director. Other members of the state staff include Capt. Jackson B. Chase, legal division, and Capt. John J. Jesse, USMC liaison officer.

Since the first registration, five others have been held, four of them to cover men between the current military liability age of 18 through 44, and the fourth to cover men between 45 and 65 years of age. The registration of the older group was arranged to obtain an inventory of the nation's manpower supply and an occupational breakdown thereof. All in all, Nebraska carries a total of 441,944 men on its Selective Service rolls, 270,607 of them between the ages of 18 and 38.

Classifying these registrants, keeping track of their status and keeping their Selective Service records, is a contingent of some 2,000 persons of whom 1,700 donate their services. Heading the list of volunteer workers are the members of the Local Boards who form the real heart of the system.

Between November 1940 and December 1942 the armed forces received their men from Selective Service and from enlistments, but on December 11, 1942, an executive order halted virtually all enlistments. Subsequent to that date most volunteers were, and still are, processed by Selective Service. The few exceptions are the relatively small number of youths under 18 accepted by the Navy, and a few specialists accepted by the Navy by enlistment.

By May 1, 1944, there were slightly more than 100,000 Nebraskans in the armed forces. During the first World War, about 58,000 Nebraskans served in all branches of the armed forces.