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I WOULD RATHER BE RIGHT THAN PRESIDENT.—HENRY CLAY.

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THE WAR FOR THE UNION. METHOD OF THE OPERATIONS AND BUSINESS OF THE PRO- VOST-MARSHAL'S OFFICE IN THE WESTERN DIST. PA., SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT IN 1863.

PROVOST-MARSHAL'S OFFICE IN THE WESTERN DIST. PA., SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT IN 1863.
OFFICE OF PRO. MAR. 17TH DIST. PA., HOLIDAYSBURG, July 10, 1865.
Gen. James B. Fry, Provost Marshal, Washington, D. C.—General, in compliance with instructions from the office of the A. A. Provost Marshal Western Division of Penna., at Harrisburg, May 1st, 1865, I have the honor to submit for your consideration the following report of the operations and method of business of this office since its establishment.

The Board of Enrollment as originally organized, April 29th, 1863, consisted of D. Campbell, of Huntingdon, Captain Provost Marshal; Abraham M. D., of M'Veytown, Surgeon; M. S. Harr, of Ebensburg, Assessor. The Board first convened at Ebensburg, Blair county, on the 10th of May, 1863, and having organized proceeded at once to the division of the Congressional District into sub-districts of equal population. At subsequent meetings of the Board of Enrollment, suitable persons were selected to be enrolling officers, usually one for each sub-district, and their appointment was approved by the Provost Marshal General. Deputy Provost Marshal and special agents also, to be stationed in each sub-district as provided in the regulations of the Provost Marshal General's Bureau, were in course of time selected by the Board of Enrollment and appointed by the proper department.

The provisions of the Act of March 3d, 1863, had been thus far carried into effect, very little further organization was necessary before commencing the enrollment of that class of persons constituting the "national forces."—The history of the country, and especially the military situation just at that time, demanded that every possible effort be made to strengthen the weakened organization in the field at an early day. The war to the Union arms at Chambersburg, and the threatened invasion and devastation of Maryland and Pennsylvania by the Army of Northern Virginia were most conclusive proofs to the North, not only of the formidable military power, but of the desperate carnage of the enemy.

It became evident, therefore, that the number of men obtained by voluntary means would no longer be sufficient to supply the demands of the Government in emergency, or even to recruit the armies again to their complete and necessary proportions, there remained, as a last resort, that of enforced military conscription.

as it was possible under the circumstances to have it, to the headquarters of the Provost Marshal for his use.

Whenever it was possible by lapse of time between the call for men by the President and the date fixed upon as that on which the draft should take place, the enrollment lists of the District were revised and corrected; so that as little delay as possible should take place by drawing such persons as were manifestly unfit by reason of physical disability, alienage or non-residence, to perform military service. When this had been done, the total enrollment of the Congressional District was then ascertained, and the quota assigned by the Provost Marshal General was distributed among the sub-districts pro rata to their respective enrollments.

In establishing quotas under the call of December 19th, 1864, the process was more lengthy and difficult than it had formerly been, and being less easily comprehended by the people, it was the subject of no little consternation in districts that had contributed few men to fill up the armies. When the excess in years of service was taken into consideration, there was a vast difference in the condition of sub-districts, some being apparently overtaxed that had been always foremost in their efforts to comply with the demands of the Government, and had filled with promptness every requisition made upon them; while others, by this new accession and through chance rather than philosophic foresight, were relieved of their oppressive burdens and vouchsafed security for a long time to come. As a striking instance of the injustice effected in some parts of the District by taking into consideration the number of years' service furnished, I need only cite the case of sub-district number 302, comprising the borough of M'Veytown, Millin county.

In the early part of the war, there was a company of volunteers recruited in this place and the townships surrounding it, nearly all of the men coming from the latter and the officers from the borough. The men with very few exceptions re-enlisted at the expiration of their first term of service, and as their post office address in nearly every case was M'Veytown, it was given on their muster-in-rolls as the place for which they enlisted, thus securing their credits to the borough, which when in reality very few of them were residents of the place, and when they might have received liberal bounties by being credited where they properly belonged.

This accession, while it unjustly oppressed the depleted townships from which these men came, multiplied the credit of the borough to such an enormous extent that it never after furnished a man, and has now at the close of the war an excess over all calls, of *sixty-two years' service*, which is ample credit in a town of its population against a call for a *million men*. I might multiply examples of this kind in which county-seats and small towns were favored at the expense of the rural districts in their vicinity, but the one I have cited is sufficient as an illustration.

In ascertaining the quotas of sub-districts under the call of Dec. 19, 1864, there was no uniform percentage to be applied in all cases as before, not even so much simplicity as an intimate acquaintance with the calculations whence the correct quotas were derived after innumerable additions, subtractions, multiplications, and divisions.

The number of men required from this Congressional District having been announced by the Provost Marshal General, after he had taken into account the credits to which it was entitled by estimating the total number of its years' service by "one," "two" and "three years' men;" and the excess of years' service over the whole number of men furnished,—I equalized this credit by adding it to the quota of the District in gross, and distributing it among the sub-districts according to the number enrolled in each. This gave the quota of the sub-district, increased by the excess in proportion to the number enrolled; but as the number of "one," "two" and "three years' men," respectively, had been furnished without regard to the number enrolled, I subtracted from this gross quota, the actual amount of excess in years' service which the sub-district had furnished, or *added its deficiency*, and the result was the net quota or number of men required under this call.

conscription whose symmetrical proportions and efficiency could not fail to secure the admiration of all.

I believe the principle on which the quotas were arrived at under the call of Dec. 19, 1864, to be the right one, and that which should have been adopted as early as practicable after it became necessary to resort to enforced military service. There is no other, through the operations of which exact justice can be meted out to all parts of the country; and when any measure or policy of a Government, even in its extreme exigencies, savors of oppression or burden to the great masses of the people, to be enduring it must have in its foundation and execution not only the semblance, but the clearest evidences of faultless equity and good intention.

After the establishment and publication of the sub-district quotas, and during the intervening time between this date and the one fixed upon for the draft to begin, nearly all the clerks were usually employed in transcribing from the rolls to blank draft cards or tickets, the names of the persons to be placed in the wheel under the existing call. At this time there was generally great activity in volunteering, the recruits coming in from every portion of the district, influenced in part by a spirit of patriotism, but in much greater degree by that other potent and impelling force—the fear of conscription. The difference in the spirit and energy of volunteering was easily perceptible, too, when the men were permitted to enter new organizations and when they were forwarded at once to some veteran company and regiment in the field.

A day or two prior to the commencement of the draft, a few prominent men of different political faith from the county were invited to be present as a committee of observation, in order that every portion of the district might be satisfied as to the complete fairness and justice of results.

When the day and hour appointed for the drawing to begin had arrived, the Board of Enrollment, committee of observation, and clerks took their respective positions, in such manner as to allow all promiscuous spectators present to be gratified with a view of the *wheel of fortune*.—Two persons were then selected, one to turn the wheel, and the other, blindfolded, to take from it the tickets bearing the names of those who became thereafter soldiers of the United States.

These preliminary arrangements having been completed, the Commissioner of the Bureau, arising from his seat, announced to all present that "the draft will now commence for the Seventeenth Congressional District, sub-district No. 1."

Then, in accordance with instructions from Lt. Col. J. V. Bomford, late A. A. Provost Marshal General of the State, the tickets were taken out of the sealed envelope in which they had been placed as soon as written, each sub-district by itself, counted by the Board of Enrollment and committee of observation in conjunction, and the names of any who had been exempted since the tickets were written, taken out. Those that remained were then placed in the wheel, and it began its significant revolutions and counter-revolutions, upon the result of which hung so many hopes and fears.

After drafting the required number from any enrollment district, the tickets bearing the names of those drawn were carefully sealed up in a small envelope and placed in this condition in a larger envelope, which contained the tickets of said district that had not been drawn. This large envelope was then sealed, having endorsed on it the name and number of the sub-district to which the tickets belonged, and carefully preserved.

Immediately after the draft was concluded, the Board of Enrollment fixed the dates for the reporting and examining of the conscripts from the respective counties comprising the Congressional District.

pointed to carry out the provisions of the Act of March 3rd, 1863. In this connection, I deem it not out of place again to revert for a moment to that subject.

In some of the disloyal portions of the district, it became a matter of necessity to employ members of the Veteran Reserve Corps and other soldiers to serve the notices of draft, as the spirit of resistance to law had more than once manifested itself in open, overt acts. Not unfrequently when notices were given to those for whom they were intended, they were torn in pieces and scattered to the winds, with expressions of utter contempt for the law and its officers. Posters were put up in conspicuous places, directed to persons in the employ of the Government, warning them that if they dared visit certain localities, they did it at the jeopardy of their lives; and stigmatizing them as *hiredlings*, and declaring it to be the intention of *many citizens* to rid the country of all such pests.

On one or two occasions, they even carried out their threats so far as to fire upon and wound the officers, from their concealment, but always in such a manner as to induce the belief that while they thus were guilty of an infraction of the law, they feared the consequences of detection.

While attributing it in part to the degree of foreign element in the population of our mining localities, this spirit of hostility and opposition to the enforcement of the provisions of the Enrollment Act, cannot be regarded as the result of this cause alone. It is to be deplored that some of the leading men in certain portions of the district, by means of counsel given in public and in private, exerted a very valuable influence on their fellow-citizens. Very frequently, I think, this advice was distributed without a second sober thought as to its legitimate tendencies, and then in other cases it was disseminated with the deliberate design of fomenting and poisoning the public mind.

A chafing, restless, perturbed spirit in the people was the natural offspring of such teachings. They imagined themselves oppressed, not because they felt the mailed hand of the law, but for the reason that their more intelligent fellow-citizens were constantly denouncing the tyranny and military despotism under which they lived. It was hence the influence of this mistaken sentiment on the people more than anything else, which appeared as a difficulty to be contended against and overcome in the faithful execution of all provisions in the Enrollment Act.

There was nothing in the statute itself which seemed to the public so odious; it was only when they listened to a parizan interpretation of it that its provisions appeared to justify and legalize the most oppressive exactions; and this, I apprehend, is the real it not the only source whence flowed all the dissatisfaction and imaginary injustice which have been so uniformly referred to and charged upon the conscription law.

In receiving the drafted men when they reported for examination in obedience to notification, the Board of Enrollment endeavored as nearly as possible to have only such number report on each day as could be attended to and disposed of, in connection with the other necessary business of the office. At an early hour in the day, the Board commenced its sessions for the examination of those only whose notice required them to report on that date. The drafted men reporting were admitted into the examining room in small numbers, in the order of sub-districts, and those whose claims for exemption were founded on physical disability, from any cause whatever, were referred to the Surgeon for his decision; while those whose claims were of such a nature as not to require an examination of their person, were attended to by the Commissioner and myself.—When a man had been rejected by the Board as not liable, from any cause, to perform military service, he was given a discharge or certificate of exemption according to the prescribed form, and dismissed without further ceremony. If, however, after careful examination, it was decided to hold him to service, he was taken in charge by a guard, who conducted him to the Quartermaster store-rooms, whence, after signing the clothing rolls and receiving the requisite amount of clothing, he was taken to the barracks at these headquarters, prepared for the accommodation of guards, drafted men, volunteers, and deserters. Here the recruits of every nature were quartered, under the control of a detachment of the Veteran Reserve Corps which was on duty in this district.

As soon as men, either by draft or as volunteers, had been accepted into the service, they were subsisted and lodged in the same manner and under the same contract as those soldiers who were on duty here.

These contracts or agreements are such as are provided for in paragraphs 150 and 156 of Revised Regulations for the Provost Marshal General's Bureau, and executed and approved in strict conformity to the provisions of other paragraphs contained therein. At the close of almost every day's examinations, a sufficient number of recruits were obtained to constitute a detachment for general rendezvous. During the latter part of the day, after examinations had ceased, and on open late

at night, the clerks were busily engaged in making out descriptive rolls of the men who had been accepted into service during the day.

The instructions from the heads of Departments about this time were that business should be transacted "without regard to hours" in receiving, providing for, and disposing of drafted men and volunteers; and without any spirit of presumption or boasting, I indulge the belief from a comparison of results that no other office was more active or continued in labor than that of the 17th district of Penna.

In forwarding a detachment of drafted men to general rendezvous, their descriptive rolls were always made out in *quintuplicate*, and disposed of in the following manner: two copies accompanied the detachment, one of which was returned, with receipt for the men delivered written upon it; another was transmitted direct to the Provost Marshal General; another to the A. A. Provost Marshal Genl. of the State, and one retained on file in the office. The copy which was returned from the general rendezvous with receipt upon it accompanied the *monthly return* or *roll of men* at the end of each month to the Provost Marshal General, in compliance with paragraph 74 of Revised Regulations for the government of his Bureau.

In completing these rolls so that they might furnish the proper data from which the correct credits to the various sub-districts could be ascertained, I have been careful to give in the column of remarks, the name of the sub-district in which the men were drafted and in consequence must be credited. The record or descriptive book of drafted men wherein their names are transcribed from the tickets as they are drawn from the wheel, and in which their descriptions are recorded when held to service, has been uniformly made the book of reference. It has furnished the data or necessary information for all the returns of credits, all reports of the draft and drafted men, and in fact is the original record upon which are based and from which emanate all calculations affecting the status of the different sub-districts.

For some time after my assumption of the duties of this office, the credits of *drafted men* were ascertained by me from the proper record book at these headquarters and forwarded at stated periods to the office of the A. A. Provost Marshal General of the State, at Harrisburg. During the same time credits allowed for volunteers were announced to this office by the A. A. Provost Marshal General of the State, based upon monthly and tri-monthly returns transmitted him by me. Later, however, all credits were calculated at Harrisburg, and announced to this office in exhibits, each embracing a period of ten days.

Proper blank books were furnished me in which to keep an account with each sub-district, so that at a glance its real condition might be seen and its surplus or deficiency at once ascertained. The method at present pursued in calculating and announcing credits is in my opinion the best which has at any time been adopted. It not only combines simplicity and rigid correctness, but it reduces to a uniform operation the process by which all recruits, either by draft or voluntary enlistments, are accredited to their proper sub-districts.

Another anecdote.—A correspondent of a Cincinnati paper tells the following characteristic anecdote of the lamented Lincoln:

A good, and what is better, an authentic, story about Mr. Lincoln came to me the other day from a friend, which may as well be set up in your types now as at any other time. Conversing with the Hon. James A. Briggs, formerly State Agent of Ohio in New York, one day at the White House, the late President said in reference to the rush of office-seekers and their ingenious devices to secure his attention:

"Why Briggs, I believe there is over a system of female brokerage in office here in Washington, for I am constantly beset by women of all sorts, high and low, pretty and ugly, modest and the other way. Here, yesterday, a very handsome young woman called, she would not take a denial, was admitted, and went straight to work soliciting a certain office for somebody supposed to be her husband. She plead her cause dexterously, eloquently, and at times was almost successful by her importunate entreaties. By degree she came closer and closer to me, as I sat in my chair, until really her face came so near my own that I thought she wanted me to kiss her. When my indignation came to my relief, and drawing myself back and straightening myself up, I gave her the proper sort of a look and said: 'Mrs. —, you are very pretty, and it's very tempting; but I won't.'"

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