

**REPORT**  
OF THE  
**BOARD OF VISITORS**  
TO THE  
**United States Military Academy**

MAY 19, 20, 21, 1921



*To the honorable Secretary of War.*

SIR: Pursuant to an act of Congress approved May 28, 1908, as amended by an act approved August 9, 1912, providing for the appointment of the Board of Visitors to the United States Military Academy, the following members of the Committee on Military Affairs of the House of Representatives were designated by the chairman of that committee to visit West Point in May, 1921:

Representatives John F. Miller, of Washington; John M. Morin, of Pennsylvania; Harry E. Hull, of Iowa; Charles C. Kearns, of Ohio; Richard Wayne Parker, of New Jersey; Percy E. Quin, of Mississippi; and Hubert F. Fisher, of Tennessee.

In accordance with the provisions of the above mentioned acts, the board hereby submits the following report:

The board spent three days at the academy, during which time the following program was carried out:

**Program Board of Visitors United States Military Academy,  
May 19, 20, and 21, 1921.**

*Thursday, May 19.*

Review of Corps of Cadets immediately after arrival.  
Luncheon at officers' mess with officers of garrison 12:30 to 1:30.  
Visit riding sections in riding hall, 1:50 to 2:20.  
Visit drawing sections, 2:20 to 2:50.  
Visit French and Spanish sections in East Academic Building, 2:55 to 3:30.  
Inspection of mounted detachments, 3:30 to 4:10.  
Inspect drill of Corps, 4:10 to 5:15.  
Dine with Superintendent at officers' mess, 6:30.  
Motion pictures, 8:15.

*Friday, May 20.*

Visit gymnasium and cadet room, 9:30 to 10.  
Visit mathematics section, third class, 10:05 to 10:25.  
Visit philosophy sections, 10:30 to 11.  
Visit chemistry sections, 11 to 11:30.  
Visit English and history sections, 11:35 to 12:15.  
Dinner with cadets in mess hall, 12:25 to 1.  
Visit to orderly rooms, cadet barracks, 1:05 to 1:50.  
Organ recital at cadet chapel, 2 to 2:35.  
Visit ordnance laboratories, 2:40 to 3:10.  
Visit practical military engineering sections, 3:15 to 3:40.  
Visit memorial hall and library, 3:40 to 4.  
Inspect drills of corps, 4:10 to 5:15.  
Dine with Superintendent at Superintendent's quarters, 7.  
Band concert at Superintendent's quarters, 8:45 to 10:45.

*Saturday, May 21.*

Visit present construction, including hospital, laundry, and power plant, 9:30 to 11:30.

Attend lecture to entire corps by Prof. David Todd (subject, "Astronomy"), 11:15 to 12:15.

Inspection of Corps of Cadets, 1:25.

Baseball game, Fordham University, 3.

Track meet, Tufts College, 3.

Tennis, Syracuse University, 3.

Lacrosse, New York Lacrosse Club, 4:15.

The immediate mission of the Military Academy, which exists solely as a feeder for the Army, is to prepare officer personnel for the next possible future war. After an extensive investigation of conditions at West Point the board is of the opinion that the Superintendent, the Academic Board, the officers on duty at the academy, and the Corps of Cadets are responding in a splendid spirit in carrying out this mission. For many years there has been an impression in Congress and throughout the country generally that there existed at West Point a system of hazing new cadets which manifested itself in the form of heaping upon them petty annoyances, discomfiting situations, vexations, and, in some instances, treatment that was offensive and defenseless. In the past, Congress has taken cognizance of this fact by making special investigations, and superintendents have from time to time endeavored to break up these practices, but the customs of a century become deeply rooted and are not easily broken up. Congressional investigations and superintendent's orders failed to accomplish their purpose. It took a World War to bring the Academy face to face with the situation and to create the conditions and environments necessary to bring about a real change and stamp out the practice of hazing.

For the first time in our history the country found itself in the World War as a Nation in arms. The Regular Army, so far as the commissioned personnel is concerned, was practically broken up as an organization, and Regular officers were assigned to duty throughout all parts of this Great War Army. This brought Regular officers into immediate contact with and, in many cases, in command of the citizen soldier. The experience of those contacts demonstrated that in meeting the requirements of such assignments an officer is required to have a very broad point of view, tact, and patience in rubbing elbows with men entirely unaccustomed to military discipline and to the peculiar conditions surrounding military life as well as to have a high sense of discipline and of duty and thorough professional training. Gen. MacArthur had unusual opportunities during the war to observe these conditions, and he became impressed with the necessity of providing the means for meeting such requirements. Upon assuming the duties of Superintendent of the Military Academy in 1919, he conceived the idea of putting into the West Point training those things necessary to start the cadet along lines which would make it easy and natural for him as an officer to respond to the requirements of this new method of handling great citizen armies in time of war. While he thoroughly appreciated the primary importance of retaining in the West Point training those characteristics of rigid discipline, thoroughness, and high-character building which had made West Point famous for more than a century of its life, he began an investigation and a study of conditions and methods which have resulted in modifying the cadet's training so that while it retains all of these essential

characteristics it has lost most, perhaps all, of that harsh character which made it the subject of so much criticism before the World War. This has been accomplished by liberalizing the life of the cadet; by bringing him into more immediate and closer contact with the officers who are instructing and training him; by granting him a small money allowance; by granting him authority to receive packages as ordinary mail, without inspection; by granting him 6-hour leaves at week ends; by placing upon him a greater degree of military responsibility similar to that which he must assume as an officer of the Army; by bringing him, during the summer encampment, into association with the enlisted personnel of the Regular Army; by allowing each class to organize by electing a president and other class officers; by opening the First Classmen's Club; by establishing a departure book in each company orderly room, thereby doing away with a great mass of routine permits for privileges of dining on the post; and by introducing into the curriculum a system of supervised athletic training.

The academic course has been modified to accord with the best thought of the scholastic world and some changes have been made in methods of instruction. The old custom of giving a cadet extra instruction only when he asked for it has been developed into a system whereby the cadet whose standing falls below a certain mark is required to receive extra instruction not only in subjects in review but also on the advanced lesson for the following day. This system has the effect not only of giving the cadet additional instruction but also of teaching him how to study, and it has resulted in saving to the academy, and therefore to the Army, many cadets of adequate mental equipment who, under the old system, due to lack of preparation before entering the academy or to proper direction in studying after entering the academy, would have been found deficient and discharged from the academy. It is believed that the development of this system will result in saving to the Army every cadet who has the mental equipment necessary to master the course. A course in public speaking and debating has been introduced, and a number of lessons are given covering aerodynamics and the principles of internal-combustion engines. In order that the Military Academy might derive the maximum results from the instructors on duty at the academy there has been put into effect a practice of having each instructor spend the first year of his West Point detail at a civilian college or university where he can specialize in the particular subject in which he is going to instruct at West Point. This is an excellent policy and is highly commended. Instructors are impressed with the necessity of teaching the cadet rather than simply hearing the recitation. In order to develop a closer relationship and contact with the general progress of instruction, not only at civilian institutions of learning but also in the Army, the practice has been adopted of sending members of the academic board to visit civilian institutions and the general and special service schools in the Army. These visits are proving to be highly beneficial to the academy.

We wish to especially approve the introduction in the course of a new chair for the study of economics, including general outline fundamental principles of economics followed by study of industrial organization and combination and of the financial organization of society.

The method of rating a cadet for final determination of his class standing at graduation has been changed by adopting a rating scale whereby each cadet is given a standing based not only upon scholarship but on military bearing, neatness, and soldierly appearance; leadership and personality; efficiency at drills,

military instruction, athletics, and extra curriculum activities. This rating is also used to determine the appointment of cadet officers and noncommissioned officers in the battalion organization.

One of the outstanding features of the new training at West Point is the system of supervised athletics. The course in physical training at the Military Academy has been extended and developed along sound and progressive lines. This development follows the teachings of the World War.

It is not sufficient that a young officer should be reared under the theory of "a sound mind in a sound body." The hardships of campaign, the necessity of actual physical leadership, and superior endurance on the part of all officers on the field of battle requires that our young officers should be trained to an ideal of athletics and physical leadership. Every officer an athlete is not only a fitting and proper ideal of our officers but is, in fact, an actual necessity.

The fact that one out of every three of the available youth of the country was rejected during the draft for the World War should give all our educational institutions and Congress itself cause for reflection. It is altogether fitting that the Military Academy, under the guidance of Congress, should take the lead in this matter and inaugurate a course in physical development, which may well be taken as a model for other institutions.

The present course at West Point is based on and is in extension of an excellent system of military gymnastics which has been taught the entering classes for many years. During the allotted afternoon period military drill and intramural athletics now alternate for all classes. Every cadet is required to participate in all major sports under the supervision of officer instructors. Not only is good physique developed but the resulting competitions develop and promote the vital soldierly qualities of courage, command, decision, and leadership. The benefits to our young officers are profound and abiding.

The benefits to the service at large will prove far-reaching. Troops in poor physical condition are worthless. Young officers who have been prepared under this system of physical instruction will assume athletic leadership among the troops of their command, fully qualified to instruct the troops in all those various branches of sport and athletic activities which are so important in maintaining physical fitness and high morale. The effect upon the Army at large of an extensive system of competitive sports controlled by competent and well-prepared officers can not be overestimated. As such officers reach the service it is certain that their influence will be felt in a most beneficial manner.

Not the least of the advantages arising from this system of athletics is the mixture on athletic teams of upper classmen and first-year cadets, the so-called "plebes." It is difficult to haze the same lad that one also fosters as a team mate. The result is that the enlarged policy in athletics and physical training not only satisfies the vital requirements of a soldier's training but also offers a splendid counter action to the vicious and un-American institution of hazing. In effect a new, buoyant, cheerful quality is wrought in the cloistered life of the cadet.

The board heartily approves of the development of the course in physical training. Indeed, it feels that the question of conducting a model course in physical training and athletics at this great military school is so vital and so closely allied to the broad question of the betterment of the physical qualifications of the youth of the Nation that it recommends the establishment at the Military Academy of a separate department of physical training. Physical qualities determine the destiny of the intellect. In military life physical leadership is a necessary ideal. It is more than self-evident that if separate branches

of intellectual activity require separate departments, this fundamental and basic branch of training requires a department of its own.

It is the belief of the board that this new department of physical training should be established at the academy coordinate with the academic departments and that at the head of it should be a director of athletics appointed in the same manner and with the same standing on the academic board as the professors of the academic departments.

The board is greatly impressed with and approves the spirit of popularizing this great national institution, and the board is strongly of the opinion that nothing should be done by Congress, the War Department, or the Military Academy itself which would be in the nature of a backward step in this matter. West Point is situated in a more or less isolated spot in the fastnesses of the legendary highlands of the Hudson. This isolation, together with the essentially Spartan character of the school itself, has a tendency to prevent the people of the country from becoming well acquainted with the academy. The history of the academy, the great achievements of its graduates, and the influence it has had on the life of our country, mark it as a priceless institution of our Government.

In 1860 Gen. Winfield Scott said:

"I give it as my fixed opinion that but for our graduated cadets the war between the United States and Mexico might, and probably would, have lasted some four or five years with, in its first half, more defeats than victories falling to our share; whereas, in less than two campaigns, we conquered a great country and a peace without the loss of a single battle or skirmish."

In 1899 Elihu Root said:

"The foregoing considerations naturally bring to mind the Military Academy at West Point. I believe that the great service which it has rendered the country was never more conspicuous than it has been during the past two years. The faithful and efficient service of its graduates since the declaration of the War with Spain have more than repaid the cost of the institution since its foundation. They have been too few in number and most heavily burdened."

In 1902 Theodore Roosevelt said:

"This institution has completed its first hundred years of life. During that century no other educational institution in the land has contributed so many names as West Point has contributed to the honor roll of the Nation's greatest citizens."

It is the opinion of the board that the people of the country have known too little of this institution in the past and it is our belief that the efforts now being made to bring the academy into closer touch with the people of the country and to inform the people of its purpose and its method is a step in the right direction that has been too long delayed. Sending the Corps of Cadets away from West Point for the summer encampment and to New York and New Haven to the football games are most important factors in bringing the academy nearer to the people. The board is of the opinion that not only should the cadets as individuals be allowed to mingle very freely with the people by the extension of leave privileges, but that the corps as a body should be sent from time to time to the Middle West and even to the Pacific coast for the summer encampment or to attend athletic contests. In all this the board is mindful of the fact that there must be nothing done at West Point itself or elsewhere which will in any manner tend to lower the standards of discipline,

thorough training, and character building which have characterized the institution during all of its life and which are primarily responsible for the great accomplishments of its graduates.

Under the theory of national defense which has been followed by this country during all of its history, and which is definitely laid down in law in the Act of June 4, 1920, namely, that the defense of the Nation must rest upon the shoulders of the citizen soldier, it is tremendously important to maintain, in time of peace, a highly trained professional commissioned personnel in the Regular Army as a nucleus about which the great mass of its citizens can and must form in time of war. This group of professional officers must be not only of the highest professional attainments but of the highest character and with the highest ideals of duty and of service, and it is the opinion of the board that not less than 50 per cent of them should be recruited from this great democratic school at West Point. In order to do this the present strength of the academy should under no circumstances be reduced. In fact, it is the opinion of the board that the present authorized strength of the Military Academy is inadequate unless some provision is made whereby the actual strength can be made equal to the authorized strength. The bill to accomplish this purpose which passed the Senate during the last session of Congress, but which failed of passage in the House, should be speedily enacted into law.

The board is greatly impressed with the democracy of the Corps of Cadets. This fact is strongly impressed upon every visitor to the academy. Gathering its students from every congressional district in the United States, and from every walk of life, assembling them together under the same roof, requiring them to wear the same clothes, eat the same food, pass through the same course of study, get up and go to bed at the same hours, receive the same pay and start always without handicap in the same competition, this great democratic school finds that friends, even roommates, remain throughout the four years ignorant of each other's social and financial status in the outside world. At West Point every boy starts from the same mark, standing on his own two feet, with the same opportunity as every other boy to win his place, and whether he wins or loses depends upon his own efforts, his own industry, and his own ability, and not on his status or that of his family or friends outside the institution.

The housing accommodations for both officers and cadets at the Military Academy are entirely inadequate to the requirements of the institution. A building program has been worked out after many years of careful study and the most painstaking investigation of the requirements of the institution, and it is the opinion of the board that the practical benefits to be derived by the Government of the United States from completing this program and thereby providing the necessary housing accommodations for the personnel at the academy are so much greater than the amount of money involved that it is poor policy on the part of Congress to delay the completion of this program any longer. It is urgently recommended that appropriations be made at once sufficient for the construction of the south barracks where the mess hall now stands and for the construction of a new cadet mess hall on the site of the old gymnasium. Present messing facilities for the cadets are wholly inadequate. The present mess hall has been in service more than 50 years. It is old and is falling into decay and is not well adapted to its present use. The completion of the new mess hall and the new barracks will add materially to the safety, comfort, and convenience of the Corps of Cadets. At the present time about 40 officers on duty at the academy and their families are living in rented quarters off the

military reservation, some of them many miles from West Point. Many of the officers on the post are quartered in buildings not only inadequate in size but without any modern conveniences. The construction of a sufficient number of reasonable family quarters for the officer personnel on duty at the academy is urgently recommended, and an appropriation for this purpose should be made without delay.

The mechanical laboratory is installed in a building that was built in 1837. This building is dark and illy adapted for its use. In it is stored much valuable machinery salvaged from the World War. It should be replaced by a modern building, suitable in size and construction, where the highly important work which must be done here can be carried on satisfactorily.

A great deal has been said in the past regarding hotel accommodations at West Point. This subject has been frequently discussed on the floor of the House of Representatives. The total inadequacy of hotel accommodations can be properly appreciated only by a visit to West Point and enforced entertainment at the present hotel. The building which is now used as the hotel was constructed so many years ago that the exact date has been forgotten. It was originally built for use as a warehouse; later it was rearranged, remodeled, worked over, added to, propped up, patched, papered, and painted as succeeding generations came and passed on. It was first made habitable for the purpose of entertaining General Lafayette. It is of composite construction—stone, brick, and wood. It is out of repair; it is a tottering and ramshackle building. In its silence, gloom, and decay it is strangely out of harmony with its surroundings, except that it is in keeping with its friendly neighbors on Trophy Point, where are preserved some of the relics of the early wars of the Republic. It is located on the banks of the Hudson River, commanding one of the most magnificent views in America. It should be torn down at once and a decent, modern hotel should be built in its place. This subject has been so thoroughly discussed that action should be taken by Congress without delay, the necessary appropriation made, and the hotel built.

In concluding this report, the board desires to emphasize its strong approval of the splendid service that Gen. MacArthur and the officers associated with him are rendering to the country by constructing a new West Point founded on the lessons and experience and the sacrifices of the World War and in the spirit of old West Point.

Very respectfully,

JOHN F. MILLER, of Washington.

JOHN M. MORIN, of Pennsylvania.

HARRY E. HULL, of Iowa.

CHARLES C. KEARNS, of Ohio.

RICHARD WAYNE PARKER, of New Jersey.

PERCY E. QUIN, of Mississippi.

HUBERT F. FISHER, of Tennessee.

Extract from the "Congressional Record," March 11, 1922.