

MILITARY SCIENCE

Young Women Wanted As Civilian Airplane "Plotters"

For First Time, Girls Will Be Enrolled in America For Defense Duty Similar to That at Battle Front

FOR America's new air raid defense plan, thousands of alert and adaptable young women will be particularly needed to "man" information centers, as soon as Uncle Sam starts enrolling eager volunteers now clamoring to help their country.

Alertness and youth are prime assets for tense, emergency-type work in these centers, said Major Gordon P. Saville, of the Air Defense Command, at Mitchel Field, in an interview.

American women will be counted on to do much of this important and skilful work, he explained, because the Army believes that they can, and because more of them have time to give. As a peacetime preparedness measure, America's new air raid mobilization of half a million civilians is on a strictly non-pay, volunteer basis.

When the Army gives the go signal for enrolling, it will mean that for the first time in America's military history young women by the thousand will be wanted for defense duty very similar to headquarters work at a battle front. Whole countries are the "front" now, but this is especially vital work close-linked with war operations.

This line of work has no counterpart in civil life.

It is so new that it is an American preparedness invention, in process now of being evolved. Some ideas have been borrowed from British air raid defense, some from Germany. An experimental program for America has been tested in New England, but it was experimental, and on a comparatively small scale. For a land so broad as the United States, a new pattern of air defense must be created, and put in smooth working order—in case.

Major Saville emphasized the fact that two distinct groups of civilian volunteers will be enrolled for America's air defense. Dotted all over the country must be watchers and listeners by the thousands; they are the observation corps volunteers, who will be of varied ages and types. Then, in information centers, the warnings must be handled just as messages are dispatched to a brain for

interpretation and action. It is in these information centers that young men and women, several hundred to each center, will be particularly needed.

Plotters and tellers, the workers in these centers are called. We shall be using these words casually, it seems. Plotters listen, receive to ear, and the instant a signal comes, they quickly translate the sound warning message to visual signs, and plot them on a board. Tellers then relay the messages from the board, sending out the vital information that enables interceptor commands to rush fighting planes to a scene of air attack.

For this work quick coordination of muscle and eye, hand and brain, is essential. That is why the Army counts on young America's help—but not too young, Major Saville adds quickly. Volunteers for this duty must be adults and with a developed sense of dependability.

If a young volunteer has manual skill of some sort, or a gift for such skill, that will be an asset. But the Army figures on training volunteers in the special duty to which they are assigned, such as operating telephone, teletype, radio, or technical radio equipment.

Air raid information centers will dot the country, say in several hundred important cities. For thorough-going preparedness, observation posts will have to be counted by thousands, with some half million volunteers trained to the twentieth century Paul Revere job of warning America.

Qualifications for observers are not very specific, at present at least. Probably many types of Americans could stand guard on farm walls and city roofs. In some remote areas, there may be only a handful of people, and from these one or two may volunteer. Probably a volunteer in such circumstances would do, whoever it was.

That blind persons can render valuable aid by detecting the sound of planes at a greater distance than seeing persons can hear a plane, has been suggested. The Army is receptive to such ideas. Whether blind persons with keen hearing can be organized for such work,

however, is one of the numerous possibilities and problems that remain to be worked out. Observers, after all, must be used wherever they live.

Science News Letter, May 3, 1941

BIOLOGY

Chemicals Do Not Affect "Heredity" of Viruses

SINCE the virus that causes mosaic disease of tobacco has been prepared in crystalline form, making a better knowledge of its chemical makeup possible, it has become feasible to attach other chemical compounds to various points on the surface of its enormous molecules, Dr. W. M. Stanley of the Princeton laboratories of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research reported to the American Philosophical Society.

Such attachment of formaldehyde and other chemicals causes a loss of virus activity on the part of the molecules treated, Dr. Stanley stated. The chemically treated molecules, however, are still able to reproduce themselves, and their offspring - molecules show no changes in their basic reactions.

Science News Letter, May 3, 1941

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