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OFFICE OF WAR MOBILIZATION

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 3, 1945

Director of War Mobilization and Reconversion James F. Byrnes has asked Director of Selective Service Lewis B. Hershey to take such action in connection with the administration of the Tydings Amendment as may be necessary to provide to the full extent permitted by law for the reclassification and induction of the men agriculturally deferred in the age group 18 through 25.

This action was taken on authorization of the President after Justice Byrnes had reported to him that calls from the Army and Navy will exhaust the eligibles in the 18 through 25 year age group at an early date and the Army and Navy believe it essential to the effective prosecution of the war to induct more men in this age group.

"The President feels in view of existing conditions, agriculture like our other war industries can, with few exceptions, be carried on by those in the older age groups," Justice Byrnes wrote General Hershey.

There are 364,000 men now deferred because of agricultural occupation. The Secretaries of War and Navy advised Justice Byrnes that if this group is not available for service then it would be necessary to call into service occupationally deferred men in the next age group, most of whom are fathers.

Chairman of War Production Board Krug advised the Director of War Mobilization and Reconversion that the loss of men over 26 in the occupationally deferred group would make it "extremely difficult" to meet critical war demands.

It was further pointed out that these older men would not meet the expressed needs of the Army and Navy. War Food Administrator Jones advised the Director of War Mobilization and Reconversion that in his opinion the loss of production through the induction into the armed services of the physically qualified men in the 18 through 25 years age group who do not clearly fall within the scope of the Tydings Amendment should not result in a critical condition so far as production of food is concerned.

In his letter to General Hershey, Director Byrnes pointed out that the Tydings Amendment to the Selective Service Act does not give the agricultural workers absolute exemption from Selective Service.

"It was not so intended," he said and cited the following statement by Senator Tydings in asking Congress to adopt the amendment:

"All my amendment seeks to do is to provide that whenever a person is employed continuously in good faith in the production of food, and taking him off the farm would leave a large section of land uncultivated, and there is no replacement, he shall be deferred upon those facts until a replacement can be found."

The following is the text of letter:

January 2, 1945

Dear General Hershey:

The Secretaries of War and Navy have advised me jointly that the calls from the Army and Navy to be met in the coming year will exhaust the eligibles in the 18 through 25 year age group at an early date. The Army and Navy believe it essential to the effective prosecution of the war to induct more men in this age group.

You have reported that other than the men becoming 18 years of age the only remaining substantial source in this age group is in the

364,000 men now deferred because of agricultural occupation. You have further advised me that if this group is not available, you must call into the service occupationally deferred men in the next age group, 26 years and older, most of whom are fathers.

The Chairman of the War Production Board, Mr. Krug, advises me that the loss of these men would make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to meet critical war demands. Moreover, these older men would not meet the expressed needs of the Army and Navy.

The War Food Administrator, Mr. Jones, has advised me that although we still need all of the food we can raise, the loss of production through the induction into the Armed services of the physically qualified men in this 18 through 25 year age group who do not clearly fall within the scope of the Tydings Amendment should not result in a critical condition.

The Tydings Amendment to the Selective Service Act does not give the agricultural worker absolute exemption from Selective Service. It was not so intended. In asking Congress to adopt this Amendment Senator Tydings said: "All my amendment seeks to do is to provide that whenever a person is employed continuously in good faith in the production of food, and taking him off the farm would leave a large section of land uncultivated, and there is no replacement, he shall be deferred upon those facts until a replacement can be found." Con. Rec., vol. 88, p.8639 (77th Congress, 2d Sess.)

I have reported these facts to the President. He has found that the further deferment of all men now deferred in the 18 thru 25 age group because of agricultural occupation is not as essential to the best interests of our war effort as is the urgent and more essential need of the Army and Navy for young men. The President feels in view of existing conditions, agriculture, like our other war industries can, with few exceptions, be carried on by those in the older age groups.

The President has authorized me to ask you to take such action in connection with the administration of the Tydings Amendment as may be necessary to provide to the full extent permitted by law for the reclassification and induction of the men agriculturally deferred in the age group 18 through 25.

Sincerely yours,

JAMES F. BYRNES
Director

Major General Lewis B. Hershey,
Director, Selective Service System,
Washington, D. C.