

Hugh S. Johnson and the Draft, 1917-18

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On June 16, 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed Gen. Hugh S. Johnson, a retired army officer, to head the newly established National Recovery Administration. "Looking rather like Captain Flagg in *What Price Glory*, 'gruff and tough,' . . . tireless, rabid in his devotion to his job," Johnson "dramatized the New Deal as no one else could."¹ Four days after his appointment the "fiery general" had a permanent organization functioning. Invoking the war spirit of 1917 and calling upon the great store of knowledge about the workings of the American economy he had gained as a member of the War Industries Board, an executive in the farm implement industry, and as economic adviser to Bernard M. Baruch, he speedily launched an ambitious industrial recovery program to spur employment. Johnson directed the formulation of fair-trade codes for more than five hundred industries, "helped establish maximum hours and minimum wages as national policy, and made the 'Blue Eagle' symbol of the NRA a household emblem."² Yet for all of his ability and energy, Johnson

was an "emotional, pungent, truculent figure" who was drawn by temperament to excesses of scorn, language, and drink. When Bernard M. Baruch, Johnson's closest friend and business associate, heard of Roosevelt's decision to appoint Johnson head of the NRA, he informed Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins that Johnson was "a good number-three man, maybe a number-two man, but . . . not a number-one man." Johnson, he cautioned, was dangerous and unstable and needed a firm hand.³ In this assessment Baruch clearly knew his man, inasmuch as Johnson's administration of the draft during World War I had already revealed these very strengths and weaknesses.

Born in Kansas and reared in Oklahoma, Johnson was graduated from West Point in 1903. From 1903 to 1914 Johnson served in the cavalry at several posts, from the Mexican border to the Philippines. He earned an outstanding efficiency record, and in 1914 the judge advocate general, Brig. Gen. Enoch H. Crowder, picked him to attend the University of California Law School to prepare for appointment to a vacant majority in the army's legal office. After a brief stint as acting judge advocate for the Punitive Expedition to Mexico, Johnson was summoned to Washington in October 1916.

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¹ *Current Biography*, 1940, s.v. Johnson, Hugh Samuel, p. 432.

² *Dictionary of American Biography*, s.v. Johnson, Hugh Samuel.

³ Frances Perkins, *The Roosevelt I Knew* (New York, 1946), pp. 200-201.



Citizens of New York queue up to register for the draft. © Copyright Underwood & Underwood.

Boys of New York between sixteen and eighteen years of age register for military training.



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First parade in the United States of men conscripted to fight in World War I marches in Chicago.

Crowder, as a student of conscription, was cognizant of the Civil War experience and had already decided that conscription would be palatable to the public only if it was controlled by civilians. The judge advocate general's thinking was based on the 1866 report of Bvt. Brig. Gen. James Oakes, acting assistant provost marshal general for Illinois during the Civil War, and he had made Oakes's report required reading for all incoming judge advocates.⁸ Crowder probably had Johnson in mind for several weeks as the person to prepare just such a plan because he had begun priming his energetic assistant on the background of conscription early in February. Crowder made an exhaustive review of Oakes's report and a comparative analysis of the Enrollment Act of 1863, the national army plan of the War College Divi-

sion, and the universal military training plan developed by the Senate Military Affairs Committee in the winter of 1916.⁹

With the aid of Capt. Cassius M. Dowell, Johnson was able to complete the new plan in a week. In drawing it up he scrupulously avoided the methods that had made the Civil War draft so controversial and generally followed the recommendations in Oakes's report.¹⁰ This was most evident in the all-important administrative and enforcement features of the plan. Unlike the Civil War draft, which had been administered by a superimposed federal structure, Johnson cast the whole "execution of the draft back on local communities . . . made the governors of the states responsible

⁸ Memo, Johnson to Crowder, n.d., box 22, Crowder Papers, Western Historical Manuscript Collection, University of Missouri.

¹⁰ Memo, Johnson to Mrs. Rogers, June 4, 1918, box 6, office file, RG 163, NA.

⁸ Johnson to Pershing, May 29, 1925, box 108, Pershing Papers.

and utilized to the fullest extent the existing institutions of state, county, and municipal government."¹¹ At the head of the administrative structure, Johnson set a small federal agency, the Office of the Provost Marshal General, whose primary functions were policymaking and supervision. Its responsibilities included promulgating regulations, assigning quotas, and transporting draftees to training camps.¹² Day-to-day administration of the draft, especially the distasteful responsibility for selecting and inducting men, was left to state and local officials. As far as enforcement was concerned, Johnson "eschewed all use of military force." The Civil War draft, by relying on the provost marshal general to enforce it, had "bristled with bayonets." Johnson adhered to Oakes's suggestion that the army should not be charged with enforcing the draft and recommended that this task also be left to local officials and to the Justice Department.¹³

Johnson experienced considerable difficulty in persuading his colleagues in the judge advocate corps of the soundness of his plan. Maj. J. Reuben Clark, for one, advised Crowder that state agencies could not constitutionally be used to administer a federal draft. Johnson overcame this objection only by resorting to strong language, persuading Crowder and Dowell that failure to overrule Clark would signify a weakening commitment to civilian control over conscription. Johnson also had to counter criticism that his plan had nothing behind it except the force of public opinion. He readily agreed with this observation, but where others claimed that reliance on public opinion was a fatal weakness, Johnson saw it as the plan's principal strength. To Johnson the force of public opinion would be sufficient; if the public would not accept conscription, no amount of coercive force could make it function effectively.¹⁴ In the end, Johnson's arguments prevailed. Crowder forwarded the plan to Baker with a minimum of changes, although to Johnson's chagrin the judge advocate general put his own initials on the memorandum accompanying the plan, prompting the sensi-

tive Johnson to complain bitterly to Dowell and Maj. James S. Easby-Smith that he was being denied just credit.¹⁵

Johnson's plan meshed perfectly with the secretary's predisposition to local control, and he approved it on April 10 with little hesitancy. Two weeks later the state governors were informed of the plan, and with some congressional amendments it was the plan eventually adopted to carry out the draft.¹⁶ The most significant change made by Congress gave local governments the responsibility for registering and selecting draftees. Johnson's plan also provided that oversight of registration and actual selection of draftees would be entrusted to permanent county boards chosen by the state governors. But in the Selective Service Act, Congress separated selection from registration and stipulated that members of selection boards must be appointed by the president.¹⁷ In this way Congress hoped to prevent the appointment of persons who would make political hash out of serious business.¹⁸

In the meantime Crowder had already begun preparations for the first draft. While several assistants were spelling out the regulations, Johnson and Dowell began work on plans for the registering of millions of potential draftees. Johnson rejected the registration scheme outlined by the War College Division as part of its national army plan. The division, which based its planning on the premise that registration must be "strictly under Federal control," had recommended that it be carried out by the Post Office Department.¹⁹ Johnson, in contrast, believed that the Post Office lacked the personnel to register large numbers of men and that the War College Division scheme, which required twenty days to complete, was too protracted. Following the suggestion of Maj. Burnett M. Chipfield, he mapped out a plan for registration based on voting precincts. Thousands of precincts throughout the nation already possessed the necessary personnel and equipment, and each was small enough so that

¹¹ Johnson to Crowder, Nov. 29, 1921, box 8, Crowder Papers.

¹² *Report of the Provost Marshal General, 1917*, pp. 7-9.

¹³ Johnson to Representative Carl Hayden, June 4, 1918, Crowder Papers.

¹⁴ Seward W. Livermore, *Politics Is Adjourned: Woodrow Wilson and the War Congress, 1916-1918* (Middletown, Conn., 1966), pp. 40, 41, 44; Beaver, *Newton D. Baker*, pp. 34-36.

¹⁵ Memo, Kuhn to chief of staff, Apr. 5, 1917, box 394, War College Division records, RG 165, NA; memo, Kuhn to chief of staff, Apr. 19, 1917, box 7, general file, RG 163, NA.

¹¹ Johnson, *The Blue Eagle*, p. 75.

¹² *Report of the Provost Marshal General, 1917*, p. 11.

¹³ Johnson, "Selective Service," Army War College lecture, Oct. 20, 1939, U. S. Army Military History Research Collection, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

¹⁴ U. S. Congress, House, Committee on Military Affairs, *Taking the Profits Out of War*, Hearings, 74 Cong., 1 sess., 1935, p. 111; Johnson, *The Blue Eagle*, p. 75.

it would be possible to register all eligible men within the precinct in one day and without the taint of federal control.²⁰

Johnson passed his registration plan to Crowder at the end of the third week of April but with little enthusiasm. Since beginning work on the registration plan a week before, he had come to see registration in a new light. Crowder and the other architects of the draft perceived registration simply as the first step in raising men for the army. Johnson, however, now began to see registration as an indispensable tool for mobilizing the entire nation for war. Rather than register only the age groups immediately subject to the draft, Johnson urged the registration of all men between the ages of nineteen and forty-five. This action, he contended, would provide the statistics so necessary for "mobilizing our industrial resources . . . guarding against insidious activity, and . . . casting up the strength of our available resources of men."²¹ This time Johnson's arguments and forcefulness were not sufficient to carry his proposal. The nation was not yet reconciled to the far-reaching demands the war effort might make, and Crowder vetoed the proposal.

Johnson's registration plan was practical except for a gross miscalculation of the time needed to implement it. He thought registration could be accomplished within two weeks after congressional approval of selective service. But after discussions with Cornelius Ford, the public printer, Johnson learned that printing and distributing thirty million registration forms could not be accomplished in less than six weeks, not the two weeks he originally proposed. Johnson considered this delay intolerable, and he thought it would reaffirm Germany's notion that American was militarily impotent.²² After thinking the matter over and being encouraged by Dowell and Ford, he resolved to have the forms printed without waiting for congressional approval or Crowder's authorization, even though such a step was clearly illegal.²³

Johnson intended to store the bales of printed forms in the Government Printing Office. But

neither Johnson nor Ford had correctly calculated their bulk and before long the hallways of Ford's department were inundated with mountainous stacks of bales. On the advice of the Washington postmaster, Johnson then went ahead with addressing packages of forms and storing them in surplus mail sacks in the Washington Post Office. This scheme too broke down because before the printing was half completed, the supply of mail sacks ran out. Johnson decided his only recourse was to mail the forms immediately to the thousands of precincts and pray that local officials would accept them but keep their distribution secret.²⁴ Fortunately they cooperated, and thanks to Johnson's audacity the forms were in the hands of local officials by the time Congress approved the Selective Service Act, awaiting only the announcement of the registration day.

During the first week of May Johnson prepared the presidential proclamation announcing registration. He was caught off guard when Crowder asked him to compose it; it was common knowledge that Wilson usually insisted on writing such statements himself. Since the proclamation had to convey both the president's prestige and personality, he took two days to familiarize himself with Wilson's literary style. He finished the statement on May 12 and was surprised when Wilson accepted the document unchanged.²⁵ Issued May 18 and declaring June 5, 1917, as registration day, the proclamation explained the reasons for the draft, presenting it as "selection from a nation which has volunteered in mass," and styling registration day as "a great day of patriotic devotion and obligation . . . every male person of the designated ages is written on these lists of honor."²⁶

When the Office of the Provost Marshal General was established May 22 with Crowder at its helm, Johnson became executive officer in charge of administration—in effect, ratifying his de facto position as the number-two man. Crowder's decision to name Johnson to the position was an outgrowth of the warm friendship the two had felt since Johnson's arrival in

²⁰ "A Plan for Execution of a Draft," box 314, historical file, RG 163, NA.

²¹ Memo, Johnson to Crowder, n.d., box 45, Crowder Papers.

²² William H. Crawford, "He Risked Disgrace To Speed the Draft," *New York Times*, June 9, 1918; Johnson, *The Blue Eagle*, pp. 76-77.

²³ Lockmiller, *Enoch H. Crowder*, p. 165.

²⁴ Johnson to Capt. George Carr Henry, director of military census for New York, Apr. 28, 1917, box 1, general file, RG 163, NA.

²⁵ Memo, Crowder to Johnson, May 12, 1917, box 6, office file, RG 163, NA; Johnson, *The Blue Eagle*, pp. 78-79.

²⁶ Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd, eds., *The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 6 vols. (New York, 1925-27), 3:39.



Mr. M. Rosenberg and his son register for selective service. © Copyright Underwood & Underwood.

Washington the previous October. Similar backgrounds and personalities drew them together from the first. Both men had begun their military careers in the cavalry and later switched to the judge advocate corps. Both were also short-tempered and prone to take offense at minor slights. By the spring of 1917 Crowder regarded Johnson as his protégé.²⁷ When his original estimate of Johnson's ability was verified in the early planning for the draft, Johnson became the logical choice for the number-two slot. In June the registration of over nine million men was carried out without hitch; in July the first great lottery was held. By September the initial "dribble" of the 687,000 men selected in the first draft began reporting to training camps.

Johnson had proved to be the handyman in planning and organizing the draft, and in mid-August Crowder wrote Gen. John J. Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, that Johnson had "done a most remarkable piece of work" and that he had "come to regard him as a man capable of carrying any kind of professional burden."²⁸

Johnson, however, hoped that with the draft now under way he might join the AEF staff in France. In April 1917, Pershing had informed Johnson of his intention to appoint him judge advocate for the AEF. But Johnson's exhilaration for this "peach of an assignment" was abruptly dashed when Crowder persuaded Pershing to table his request for Johnson until registration was completed. In the interim another officer was appointed judge advocate for the AEF, and only Crowder's promise to release him when Pershing again requested his services soothed Johnson's anger and disappointment.²⁹

As July faded into August and Pershing's call did not come, Johnson grew increasingly impatient. He began to fear that Pershing had forgotten him and badgered Crowder to ask Pershing to find a place for him on his staff. As it developed, Crowder's intervention was unnecessary. On August 23 Pershing's request finally arrived. Crowder sympathized with Johnson's desire to go to France; he likewise longed for duty in France and realized that Johnson's opportunities were limited in

²⁷ Lockmiller, *Enoch H. Crowder*, pp. 160, 165.

²⁸ Crowder to Pershing, Aug. 16, 1917, Pershing Papers.

²⁹ Memo, Crowder to chief of staff, Oct. 3, 1917, box 10, office file, RG 163, NA; Johnson, *The Blue Eagle*, p. 88.

his office. But the provost marshal general was not prepared for the immediacy of Johnson's transfer. Johnson was his strong right arm, and he deferred any transfer until the draft was firmly established.³⁰

Crowder, at Johnson's urging, had by now decided that a new selection process was required. Under the existing process each local board had to "call men for examination and keep on calling them until the culling out of the physically unfit and those with claims to exemption had yielded the requisite number."³¹ To compose the selection list for the first draft, the local boards had had to examine 2,510,706 men and with the district appeal boards adjudicate 1,560,570 exemption claims.³² This long, indefinite process worked against rapid buildup of the army by generating a large amount of wasted preliminary work on men who would probably be deferred because of employment or dependency reasons. Johnson had discerned this flaw in the draft as early as July and had suggested that enough men be examined and classified to create a reservoir of a million men who would be readily available for draft calls. At that time, though, the Wilson administration was hesitant to accept the implication in Johnson's suggestion that the war effort would cut that deeply into the nation's manpower. Not until Allied fortunes were visibly ebbing in September did Baker consent to Johnson's suggestion as the cornerstone of a complete overhauling of the selection process.³³ It was clear that larger numbers of men would be required in 1918 than had originally been imagined, and over a shorter period of time. The logic of Johnson's suggestion now seemed clearer.

At Crowder's direction Johnson began work on new regulations for selecting men. As his first step he queried local and district boards for suggestions, and to enhance local participation in the draft some of their members were called to Washington for a series of well-publicized conferences. Before long, Johnson, with two of his colleagues, in characteristic fashion "retired to a secret hideout" to put

the regulations in final form. The core of the new selection process was a "self-conducted" survey of the nine and one-half million registrants. On the basis of information provided by the registrants, local boards would place each man in one of five broad classifications, ranging from those immediately available to those ineligible for service. Exemption claims would be ruled on promptly, and thus under the new process only those immediately available would have to be examined.³⁴ The formation of legal advisory boards in each community was prescribed to aid registrants in completing the appropriate questionnaires. Medical boards also advised on disputed medical claims for exemption.

Johnson designed this process primarily to create a reservoir of "fully qualified availables," ready to be tapped in expectation of greatly increased draft calls in 1918. But equally important, all registrants now would be classified by occupation. This would be invaluable should the demand for technicians become more pressing than that for infantrymen. In Johnson's mind the classification system was so planned that it would be possible on short notice to honor a call for "one hundred one-eyed pigeons [sic] with wooden legs."³⁵ Most of the 137 draft calls during the war were specified "run of the draft." Nevertheless, the classification system proved its worth, and calls for specialists were not unknown.³⁶

The new selection process went into effect December 15, 1917, when the War Department decreed that voluntary enlistments in the age group immediately subject to the draft would be terminated. In successive steps volunteerism was eliminated for all age groups and services, so that by August 31, 1918, volunteer enlistments were no longer possible. Now that the nation was gearing up for a total effort, it could not afford the luxury of accepting volunteers who were more critically needed in factories than in trenches. Manpower had to be mobilized on a rational basis, rather than relying on patriotic sentiment, if the threat of economic disruption from increased draft

³⁰ Memo, Crowder to chief of staff, Sept. 1, 1917, box 1, office file, RG 163, NA.

³¹ Johnson, *The Blue Eagle*, p. 81.

³² Marvin A. Kreidberg and G. Merton Henry, *History of Military Mobilization in the United States Army, 1773-1945* (Washington, 1935), p. 266.

³³ Memo, Crowder to secretary of war, Sept. 12, 1917, box 12, general file, RG 163, NA.

³⁴ John Dickinson, *The Building of an Army: A Detailed Account of Regulation, Administration and Opinion in the United States, 1915-1920* (New York, 1922), p. 147.

³⁵ Johnson, *The Blue Eagle*, p. 84.

³⁶ Kreidberg and Henry, *History of Military Mobilization*, p. 278.



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calls was to be minimized. The voluntary method, the mainstay of earlier mobilizations, had become a war casualty.

The selection process that Johnson and his colleagues devised was able to satisfy the large draft calls of 1918. In the first eleven months after the draft's inception in May 1917, less than one million men were inducted. Yet in the next three months one million seventy-five thousand men were inducted, three hundred seventy-three thousand in May 1918, alone; and by the war's end in November, the draft had furnished nearly 67 percent of the four million men mobilized. If the war had dragged on into 1919, these large calls would have exhausted the reservoir of "fully qualified availables," necessitating the call-up of deferred classes and the risk of economic disruption. As it was, the necessity for this was postponed until 1919 only by registering all men who had turned twenty-one years of age since the first registration and the extension in

the summer of 1918 of draft age limits from eighteen to forty-five.³⁷

Another factor in the attempt to minimize labor shortages was a concerted drive early in 1918 to remove "idlers" from the streets. These were eligibles with high order numbers who preferred to loaf rather than work while awaiting their draft calls or persons exempted on grounds of dependency who were engaged in nonessential work. The presence of the idlers was galling to the families of men already in the service, and they obviously "served no economic war purpose whatsoever." The drive to remove them from the streets was spearheaded by Crowder, who in March 1918, commanded Johnson, now deputy provost marshal general, to prepare a memorandum dealing with both idleness and the need for more workers in essential industries.³⁸

³⁷ E. H. Crowder, *The Spirit of Selective Service* (New York, 1920), p. 159.

³⁸ Memo, Crowder to Johnson, Mar. 8, 1918, box 1, office

Sweethearts and friends bid a fond goodbye to the Fighting 69th Infantry leaving New York City for camp before sailing for France.



In the resulting memorandum, entitled "Selective Draft and Adjustment of Industrial Man Power," Johnson began with a stinging attack on those "who stood in saloons and pool rooms watching their contemporaries marching away to war" and postulated that "every man must serve, either under the battle flag or in the army of those usefully employed behind them." That the saloon and poolroom might be the poor man's social club was "palpable bunk" to Johnson. He dealt with the problem of idleness in two ways. First, he proposed that "the deferred classification or the deferment due to the order number . . . be withdrawn from any man upon a showing that he is not usefully engaged." Second, Johnson returned to his proposal of April 1917, for legislation requiring registration of all men between the ages of nineteen and forty-five. He now proposed that men between the ages of eighteen and fifty be registered and that for those outside the designated military ages "their age alone will be their exemption, except that, those idle or not usefully engaged must either enter useful employments or become subject to draft."³⁹

The Wilson administration was averse to Johnson's proposals because of the opposition of labor leaders. They refused to admit that there was a labor shortage and feared that Johnson's proposals would become the first steps toward industrial conscription. After two months of temporizing, however, Wilson agreed to a modified version of Johnson's proposals, and on May 23, 1918, Baker permitted Crowder to issue a "work or fight" order. It warned deferred men who were either idle or engaged in nonessential work that they risked reclassification and induction if they did not find work in essential industries. The "work or fight" order did not produce many men for the army. But as Johnson later boasted, it did put 137,255 "bartender[s], private chauffeurs, men hair dressers, and the like that are pansies" into essential war work, and it had a beneficial psychological effect.⁴⁰ The one drawback to "work or fight" was its inability to sup-

ply labor to particular industries in proportion to need.⁴¹

By March 1918, Crowder was ready to release Johnson. The new regulations would apparently supply enough men for the large calls of 1918; at the same time it was becoming clear that Johnson had outlasted his usefulness. His volatile personality had led to many moments of acute stress for his colleagues. When differences in policy arose, Johnson, as was the case with the constitutional question of using state institutions and officials to administer the draft, had often resorted to intemperate tirades to reinforce his arguments. And when he felt that he was being denied just credit, his reaction, whether in the form of a sullen withdrawal or a verbal tempest, had been highly visible and had impeded his work until fully vented. Moreover, he had openly feuded with Maj. John H. Wigmore, a noted Northwestern University law professor on temporary duty with the army and Crowder's "father confessor."⁴² Perhaps Johnson had a personality clash with Wigmore, or perhaps he resented Wigmore's closer relationship with Crowder. Whatever the origin, Johnson's hostility toward Wigmore manifested itself in several bitter fights over the credit each should receive for his work with the draft.⁴³

Notwithstanding his friendship for Johnson, Crowder had recognized early that Johnson needed close watching; and after Johnson's audacious actions in having the registration forms printed and distributed without waiting for congressional authorization, he had maintained a tight rein on his brash deputy. But at the same time Crowder's friendship for Johnson led him to tolerate his outbursts. He believed that they could be explained, in great degree, by the fatiguing conditions under which Johnson worked and a natural tendency to "blow off steam." Johnson's aggressive personality and outbursts continued to disrupt the harmony of Crowder's office. Prudence dictated that he mute his emotional tirades and differences with Wigmore. That, however, was impossible for the high-strung Johnson.

Even though he was aware that his temperament had sparked conflict, Johnson was

file, RG 163, NA.

³⁹ Resolution of the War Council, Mar. 20, 1918, box 67, general file, *ibid.*; Grenville Clark to Johnson, Mar. 23, 1918, *ibid.*; Johnson, *The Blue Eagle*, p. 84.

⁴⁰ Johnson, "Selective Service," p. 8; *Second Report of the Provost Marshal General, 1918*, p. 80.

⁴¹ Dickinson, *The Building of an Army*, p. 165.

⁴² Lockmiller, *Enoch H. Crowder*, p. 181.

⁴³ Johnson to Crowder, Nov. 29, 1921, box 8, Crowder Papers.

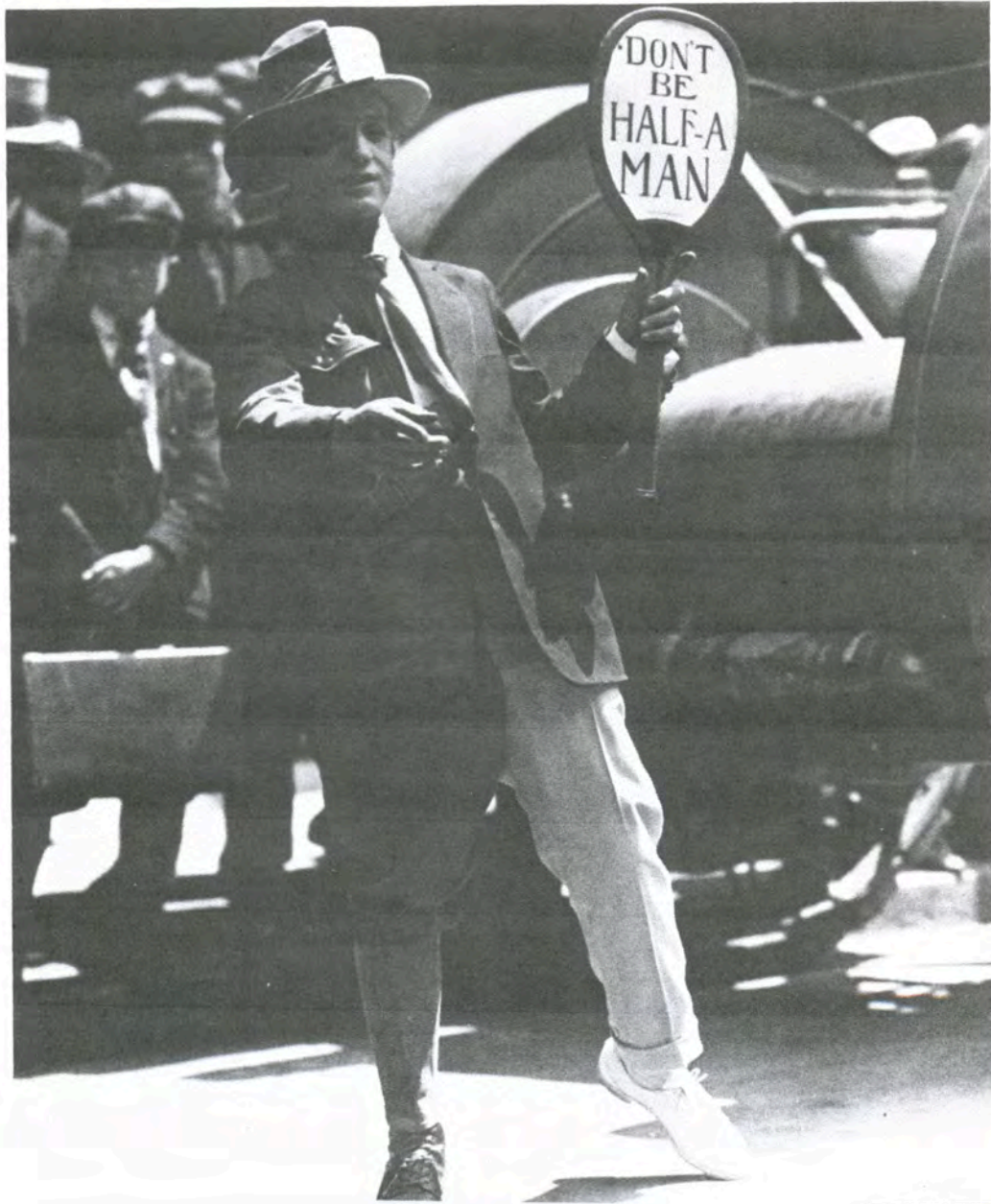
blind to the intensifying disenchantment with him that was surfacing in 1918. His friendship with Crowder was unimpaired, and in January 1918, he again focused his attention on France in expectation that Pershing would soon renew his call.⁴⁴ This time he was buoyant, as Crowder promised to release him no later than mid-April. Pershing, however, cabled in March that

⁴⁴ Pershing to chief of staff, Oct. 2, 1917, cablegram 198-S, box 6, Gen. John J. Pershing Collection, National Archives Gift Collection, RG 200, NA; memo, Johnson to Crowder, Jan. 25, 1918, box 3, Crowder Papers.

Johnson's acceptance of a promotion to colonel in the national army made him ineligible for duty with his staff in France. The commander of the AEF was concerned that officers in France were being passed over for promotion by staff officers in Washington, and he refused to accept Johnson until his own staff officers were promoted.⁴⁵ Pershing's decision

⁴⁵ Pershing to secretary of war and chief of staff, Mar. 4, 1918, cablegram 680-S, and Pershing to judge advocate general, Mar. 24, 1918, cablegram 779-S, box 6, RG 200, NA; memo, Col. W. D. Ketcham, acting director of the War Plans Division, to chief of staff, Apr. 12, 1918, War College Divi-

Roger Pierrott dressed half as a flaneur and half as a soldier; this was one of a number of ideas used to shame slackers into signing up for the army.



disappointed Johnson, but he had little time to brood. Upon reviewing the operations of the War Department, the incoming chief of staff, Gen. Peyton C. March, had "observed the work of Colonel Johnson in the Provost Marshal General's office as being very high grade" and judged that his talents would be valuable in reinvigorating the languishing army supply effort. On March 25, 1918, he relieved Johnson from duty with Crowder's office and assigned him to the general staff.⁴⁶ It was not the combat field that Johnson had yearned for, even intrigued to get. Yet the transfer did bring about his rapid promotion to brigadier general and provided another arena in which he could play a major role in making things move.⁴⁷

Johnson's experience with the draft showed that with close watching he was a capable number-two man. Crowder's ideas and direction gave form to the draft, but Johnson, more than anyone else, translated these into policy. Under Crowder's supervision he penned the original plan for executing the draft, the registration plan, the revised selection regulations, and the rationale for the "work or fight" order. Each marked a major step in the development of the draft, and collectively they helped insure a fair and effective system. In addition, as executive officer in charge of administration and later as deputy provost marshal general, John-

sion, RG 165, NA.

⁴⁶ Peyton C. March, *The Nation at War* (Garden City, 1932), pp. 239-240. For other estimates of Johnson's faculty for staff work, see Crowder to chief of staff, Nov. 15, 1917, box 1, office file, RG 163, NA; memo, John Biddle, acting chief of staff, to adjutant general, Feb. 5, 1918, box 504, War College Division, RG 165, NA; and memo, Col. P. P. Bishop to chief of staff, Apr. 5, 1918, box 68, chief of staff correspondence file, 1917-21, *ibid.*

⁴⁷ John Kennedy Ohl, "General Hugh S. Johnson and the War Industries Board," *Military Review*, May 1975, pp. 35-48.

son oversaw much of the daily business of Crowder's office, leading the provost marshal general to write in his first annual report that "such commendation as the administration of the office merits . . . will be found due, in a great measure, to Lieut. Col. Johnson."⁴⁸ However, for all of his flair for organization and in spite of Crowder's close watching, Johnson's emotionalism and inability to work harmoniously with other staff members limited his usefulness; and one knowledgeable observer later surmised that if Johnson had remained as the number-two man administering the draft, his temperament would have seriously hindered the "tremendous and strenuous" day-to-day work required to fill the 1918 calls.⁴⁹

Johnson displayed the same strengths and weaknesses when he became head of the NRA. He was at his best organizing and selling the NRA to the nation and overseeing the drafting and adopting of the fair-trade codes. But his zeal led him into excesses; and as number-one man in NRA and with no one to steady him, his weaknesses became even more pronounced. Just as he had feuded with Major Wigmore during the war, he was now feuding with Donald Richberg, his principal associate in the NRA, and countless businessmen, labor leaders, cabinet officers, and senators. His feuds embarrassed the Roosevelt administration, undermined the recovery program, and finally persuaded Roosevelt in October 1934, as Crowder before him, that Johnson's usefulness was at an end.⁵⁰ □

⁴⁸ *Report of the Provost Marshal General, 1917*, p. 10.

⁴⁹ W. G. Murdock to Crowder, Aug. 23, 1920, box 8, Crowder Papers.

⁵⁰ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Coming of the New Deal*, (Boston, 1959), pp. 103-157.