

The Organization and Administration of the Union Army 1861-1865

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Volume I

GLOUCESTER, MASS.

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1965

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Contents of Volume I

PREFACE	II
THE STATE-RIGHTS PRINCIPLE APPLIED TO THE ARMY .	15
FEEDING AND CLOTHING THE VOLUNTEERS	53
THE PROBLEM OF MUNITIONS	107
THE EVOLUTION OF DISCIPLINE	151
DAILY LIFE OF THE SOLDIER	195
THE COLLAPSE OF STATE RECRUITING	259
THE ENROLLMENT ACT: A THREAT OF NATIONAL FORCE	295

Illustrations, Volume I

ZOUAVES OF 1861	<i>Frontispiece</i>
POPULAR CONCEPTION OF THE CONTRACT SYSTEM AND ITS VICTIMS	67
as illustrated in a contemporary cartoon.	
OFFICIAL UNIFORMS FOR PRIVATES AND NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS	81
as prescribed by the federal government.	
CAMP SCENE, 1861, SHOWING ACTUAL "UNIFORMS" OF PRI- VATES	91
ARMY QUARTERS AT CHATTANOOGA, 1864	205
MILITARY BRIDGE OVER TENNESSEE RIVER AT CHAT- TANOOGA, 1864	237
THE SEMI-OFFICIAL PROFITEER	251

Preface

Histories dealing with the Civil War have, in the past, almost without exception passed over the whole subject of the creation of the armies. Emory Upton in his book, *The Military Policy of the United States* (Washington, 1912), is concerned primarily with the period before the Civil War, and he closes with the year 1862. His chief interest is in military legislation. Frederic Louis Huidekoper, in *The Military Unpreparedness of the United States, A History of American Land Forces from Colonial Times until June 1, 1915* (New York, 1915), summarizes and continues the work of Upton but he devotes only thirty pages to the Civil War exclusive of campaigns, and his work is chiefly propaganda. Some of the problems connected with recruiting and the draft have been considered by William B. Weeden, in *War Government Federal and State in Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, and Indiana* (Boston and New York, 1906). The party and sectional prejudices of Weeden and occasional gross misstatements of facts, as well as a too optimistic view of the activities of the war governors and an uncritical approach, detract much from the value of the book. The present work was completed before the appearance of Edward Channing's sixth volume of his *History of the United States*.

In this work an attempt has been made to show how the Union changed from a peace to a war basis, to

describe the evolution of the military policy and of the army, and to outline the inter-relations of state and national governments in the solution of various problems of recruiting, equipping, supplying, and training the soldiers. Limitations of time and space have made necessary the omission of some topics which might otherwise have been included. Among these are the work of the Surgeon-general's office, the military control of railroads, and the problems of the Signal-officer's bureau.

I am indebted to Professor James A. Woodburn, formerly of Indiana University, for first directing my attention to this field of work, and for help in the early stages of its preparation. Thanks are due to the librarians of Indiana University, the State University of Iowa, the State Historical Society of Iowa, the Iowa State Teachers College, and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin for valuable assistance in the gathering of materials; also to the editors of the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* and the *Journal of Negro History* for permission to use materials from articles first printed in those journals. I am especially obligated to Professor Arthur M. Schlesinger of Harvard University for valuable suggestions and criticisms at every stage in the work and for reading and helping correct the manuscript, and to my wife, Edna Jones, for countless hours of assistance in elimination of errors, proof reading, and preparation of the index.

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MANHATTAN, KANSAS: September, 1927

The State-Rights Principle applied
to the Army

The State-Rights Principle applied to the Army

THE problem of recruiting, equipping, and training the Union army in the Civil War cannot be adequately considered without taking into consideration the influence of the state-rights theory in the North. The powerful impulse of that doctrine was felt no less in the free than in the slave states. Indeed it may well be maintained that, as soon as secession was an accomplished fact, the Confederacy was much the more expeditious of the two sections in abandoning the no longer profitable theory. The state-rights philosophy was not indigenous to or permanently held by any section of the country or of the people. It was merely a tool to be wielded by any group or section that found it the most ready means to an end. Prior to 1860 the North had sought refuge behind the doctrine at least as often as the South and, at the outbreak of the war, except from the extremity of secession, she was as ardently attached to it as at any earlier period of the national existence.

For developing a centralized control of her army the North, at the beginning of the war, was at a positive disadvantage as compared with the South. The latter section was composed wholly of cotton states or states of closely allied interests and traditions. The common dread of northern intervention was enough to dissipate the memory of such inter-state jealousies as existed, and

the early invasion by northern troops helped to weld the southern republic into something very closely resembling a nation. Early national supremacy in the Confederate army was the result. In the North, on the contrary, no such unity existed. Instead of one section there were several, each with a different set of interests and traditions. New England, the trans-Allegheny West, and the border slave states were so widely different in their interests that close coöperation between them was rendered almost impossible. National good was likely to be sacrificed for local prejudices. State-rights sympathies predominated in the federal councils, and as a consequence, the same principle was applied to army organization.

Of the various sections of the North, New England had ever been ready to place her interests above those of the nation. The very doctrine of secession bore the stamp "Made in New England." That product of the Hartford Convention was hastily repudiated by the constituency, once the War of 1812 was ended, but the memory of it lingered on. In later years, when New England became the manufacturing center of the country, her interests became more national. In order to control the markets of the country, she began to advocate a national mercantile system and to favor federal supremacy, so long as it was conducive to that system. Accordingly she denounced nullification, and opposed the annexation of Texas and the Mexican War. She heaped condemnations upon the head of Webster in 1850 and Douglas in 1854, because of their obeisance to popular sovereignty. But thereafter her attitude underwent a change. Popular sovereignty was working out to her interest. Therefore she welcomed the anti-

slavery constitution of California and, by means of Emigrant Aid Societies, helped to achieve a like result in Kansas. So well was popular sovereignty serving her purposes that, when it was blasted by the strongly national pronouncements of the Dred Scott decision, none denounced that document with greater vehemence than did she. Finally in 1860 New England had just about completed the political cycle begun during the second war with Great Britain. There were those in the section who were even ready to advocate secession if John C. Breckinridge won the election. There was nothing in the past of New England that bound her to any strongly national program during the war.

The West represented another sectional group of interests. Relatively poor, decidedly democratic, and definitely dependent upon the East and South for the marketing of her produce, she ever looked longingly westward for opportunities of expansion. Like the cotton states and New England, her attitude toward state rights and centralization was dependent on her own advantage. With this object in mind she had, in the past, been willing to barter her political influence either to the East or the South according to the support for her projects likely to be derived. In order to secure Oregon she joined with the South in a demand for both Oregon and Texas. She was inclined to be benevolent in her attitude toward the Mexican War and cession, since it gave her more excuse for organizing the territory between the Missouri River and Oregon.

As to state rights, the theory found a welcome home in the West. The doctrine of popular sovereignty was from first to last a product of that section. As the doctrine applied to Kansas, the West was passively willing

to surrender that state as a small price to pay for the opportunity of developing the far West. This complacency was rudely interrupted by the Dred Scott decision. There arose an ungrounded fear that legal slave territory would result in slave settlement and that the legitimate field of expansion for the West would be preëmpted by the South. This fear drove the West into the arms of the republican party in spite of the Freeport Doctrine of Douglas. With the outbreak of war the West was ready to take up arms, but for a different reason than that of the East. She would fight, not for the preservation of a mercantile system, but to keep the western territories open for her exploitation and free from negroes. It was in the frontier states of this group that the most enthusiasm was shown.

The motive was less active in the older and more settled states of the section than in the frontier group. In Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio less interest was shown in westward expansion and less interest was felt in the war. Neither abolition, mercantilism, nor freedom of the far West had any strong appeal for them. Regard for the traditions of union was about the only motive left. It was in this section that the Knights of the Golden Circle did their most effective work, not because the people were intrinsically less loyal than elsewhere but because fewer of them had what they felt to be a direct interest in the war. State control of the recruiting and organization of the army was there held to be essential even by ardent advocates of the war.

In the loyal border states the predominant sectional interest was that of slavery. This was especially true in Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri. These were not essentially cotton states. There was not even in them the

same traditional connection with the South that tended to bind Virginia to the Confederacy. Economically their interests were more bound up with the North. It was only in their institution of slavery that they were connected with the South. Their problem was a complex one. If they seceded and the Confederacy endured they would be cut off from their natural economic affinities. They would be aliens in a cotton confederacy; in a hopeless minority; helpless to control their own fate. If they remained in the Union they would be a small slave-holding group in a free republic; an easy prey to the abolitionists. Even if unmolested by them, slavery would become a burden rather than an asset, because of the loss of the southern slave market. The only hope for them was the preservation of the Union and of slavery at the same time. If the Union could not be saved they had to take their choice between their major economic connections and their slaves. Because of the peculiar position in which they were placed, these border states were the only parties in the conflict, in which the slavery issue, as such, was from the beginning predominant. They were almost ruinously divided from the start on the question of secession. Nothing could be expected from them in the way of national control of army organization.

The middle Atlantic states had no distinctive sectional prejudices. It is only for purposes of classification that they can be considered as a section at all. Yet a combination of prejudices, shared with the neighboring sections, reacted as definitely in favor of state supremacy as was the case in any other part of the country. In general the more populous regions around the ports and along the seaboard were dominated by commercial

and industrial pursuits. The back country of New York and Pennsylvania had as much in common with the old Northwest as with the Atlantic seaboard.

The large foreign population in the industrial centers presented the distinctive problem of this section. From the time of the earliest settlement, the Dutch and Quaker colonies had been composed of diverse ethnical elements. This condition had become even more pronounced with the advent of the industrial revolution. The various unassimilated groups were rapidly increasing, especially in New York City and the mining districts of Pennsylvania. The unprecedented Irish immigration into New York before 1860 seemed to be transforming that city into a New Hibernia, leaving a later generation to perform the metamorphosis into the present New Jerusalem. These "Milesians" asked nothing better than a fair chance to make a living, mix in ward politics, and hate Great Britain. They had little interest in the quarrel between North and South so long as it did not interfere with their livelihood. They opposed emancipation of negroes because they feared competition with them in the labor market. Yet, if they could have been led to believe that Great Britain was whole-heartedly friendly with the South they would have been united in their loyalty to the Union.

The problem in the Pennsylvania mining region was largely one of industrial strife. The miners, largely foreign born, were seeking economic independence from their employers but were meeting with little success. The results were perpetual hatred, strikes, and riots. The miners could not consider enemies of their masters in any other light than as friends to themselves. Hence they later assumed the attitude that was branded as treason.

Such were the tendencies operating against centralization of government at the outbreak of the Civil War. Should the war be a "National Crusade" or a coalition of state and class interests, each fighting for union but each for a different reason? Crusades have always been of the latter variety. Unity of interest has ever been the part of the party of the defense, whether it be the Paynim of the East, the Albigeois, the Moors of Spain, or the cotton-state aristocracy of America. Hence comes the powerful tenacity of resistance which they have always shown.

In contrast with the relative unity of interest of the belligerent South, the North presented a motley array of widely differing and sometimes conflicting elements. The abolitionist would fight to free the slaves, the Kentuckian to save the Union so that slavery might be preserved. The capitalist would fight, by proxy, to preserve the southern market and to exclude therefrom the competition of foreign states. The frontier states would fight to keep the far West negroless and open for their settlement. The older settlements west of the Alleghenies and north of the Ohio would fight, when at all, for sentiment or for various of the other mentioned motives. The wage victims of the industrial revolution would fight, if at all, by compulsion or for pay.

Since these various sectional differences could not be represented in the government by sections they were represented by states. One bloc of states represented one interest, another represented another. Each was careful to see that its rights were not impaired either by neighbors or by national encroachment.

How, then, should the armies be recruited, trained and mobilized, and the war conducted? If by the nation, then one section might predominate over another

and subvert the other's men and money to its own interests. State interest, therefore, dictated that the troops should be raised and managed, and that the war policies should be controlled, as far as possible, by the individual states. The representatives and senators in congress were obsessed by the same ideas. But a successful war could not be conducted on such principles. The South, wherein state differences were less pronounced, learned this lesson first and best. Accordingly, for three years she held at bay an army nearly twice the size of her own. The North, by the end of the war, was, as a result of lessons learned from her blunders, being led toward the same solution.

The federal government in the spring of 1861 was in a relatively feeble condition as compared with the more robust state governments. Therefore the states were able to assume that initiative in recruiting which their self interest dictated. Secession had left the federal government tottering at a time when the states, with the exception of the border group, were, as yet, unrent by internal dissension.

The state governments were stable and financially sound. Each had a complete military organization, usually more elaborate than efficient. Several still had fragments of those ebullient militia organizations, so popular for a few years following the Mexican War, but, in recent years, degenerated to gaudy vanguards for parades. Legislatures, however, were ready and prompt to pass military legislation and make grants of money. Banks were eager to make loans on the ample security of the state. Private organizations and individuals were profuse in their donations for purposes of arming and equipping volunteers. The states were fairly bubbling over with vitality.

The vigor of the state governments was shown in the zeal with which they responded to the Union's cause. Some states did not wait for a call for troops but made their preparations for warfare in advance. By April 13, a day before the surrender of Fort Sumter, a war act passed the legislature of Wisconsin and received the signature of the governor. It was designed to anticipate the President's proclamation. It decreed that: "In case a call shall be made by the President of the United States upon this state, to aid in maintaining the union and the supremacy of the laws, or to suppress rebellion or insurrection, or to repel invasion within the United States, the governor is hereby authorized, and it shall be his duty, to take such measures as in his judgment shall provide in the speediest and most efficient manner for responding to such call. . . ." This declaration was rendered effective by a grant of \$100,000 for raising troops.¹

New York was just two days behind Wisconsin in the passage of similar legislation. On April 15 her legislature made a grant of \$3,000,000, secured by a two-mill tax, to cover the cost of recruiting and equipping the militia. Thirty thousand two-year troops were provided for and, to provide for their needs, \$500,000 of the grant was made immediately available.²

Other states, whose legislatures were in session, were quick to follow. Rhode Island, by April 17, appropriated half a million dollars.³ Massachusetts was somewhat slower in her appropriations but was none the less thorough. By two acts passed on May 21, 1861,

¹ *General Laws passed by Legislature of Wisconsin in Year 1861* (Madison, 1861), pp. 266-267.

² *Laws of New York, passed at eighty-fourth session of Legislature, 1861* (Albany, 1861), pp. 634-636.

³ *New York Daily Tribune*, April 18, 1861.

she provided for a maximum fund of \$10,000,000, to be raised by the sale of bonds, for war purposes.⁴

The governors of other states, whose legislatures were not in session, took prompt measures to call the lawmakers together. Governor Andrew Curtin of Pennsylvania issued such a call on April 20.⁵ But none exceeded the speed of New Jersey. Her legislature had adjourned from regular session in March but was in session again by April 30 and within a week was passing military legislation.⁶

Individuals and corporations were equally active in making advances to the states. The banks of Chicago offered Governor Richard Yates \$500,000 for extraordinary expenses. There was very strong competition among moneyed men in Wisconsin to subscribe a \$200,000 loan for that state, the Juneau Bank offering to take it all at par. Two Trenton, New Jersey, banks offered a \$25,000 loan each to raise four regiments for the war.⁷ Hartford, Connecticut, banks offered \$500,000 and Rhode Island banks offered \$235,000. The Cincinnati city council offered the governor of Ohio \$255,000 in cash from the sinking fund.⁸ All these were manifestations of the first week of the war. For weeks afterward offers continued to pour in, from individuals, corporations, and local governmental organizations, of gifts or loans of money to be used in the raising of troops or the relief of the soldiers' families.⁹

But while the states were showing all these symptoms

⁴ *Supplement to General Statutes of Massachusetts* (Boston, 1873), vol. 1 (1860-1872), pp. 81-83.

⁵ *New York Tribune*, April 22, 1861.

⁶ *Acts of eighty-fifth Legislature of New Jersey* (Freehold, 1861), cf. especially pp. 545-553.

⁷ *New York Tribune*, April 19, 1861.

⁸ *Ibid.*, April 18, 1861.

⁹ *Ibid.*, April, May, 1861, *passim*.

of vigorous vitality, the federal government was still at its lowest ebb of authority. President James Buchanan merely adopted a policy of watchful waiting, hoping against an attack but unwilling to adopt coercion. Meanwhile his cabinet was going to pieces on sectional lines. Howell Cobb of Georgia, Secretary of the Treasury; John B. Floyd of Virginia, Secretary of War; and Jacob Thompson of Mississippi, Secretary of the Interior, all went over to the secessionists after doing what little they could to strengthen the Confederacy at the expense of the Union.

The incoming administration not only inherited the perplexities of the old but rapidly acquired a full share of its own. Seven states were in open rebellion and eight more were on the verge. For over a month President Abraham Lincoln merely continued the policy of watchful waiting adopted by Buchanan. He made no more preparation than his predecessor to strengthen the military position of the United States, though he was more ready to adopt coercion in case of attack. Submerged by the pleas of hungry office seekers of a party for the first time in power, the ordinary routine of business was more than enough for his attention. The secession of four more states, following the firing on Fort Sumter and the call for the militia, seemed to herald a still further dissolution of the Union. The riotous attack on the Massachusetts Sixth at Baltimore, on April 19, following as it did on the secession ordinance of Virginia and followed in turn by the cutting off of all communications from Washington, seemed to announce to the world that the federal capital itself was as good as captured.¹⁰

¹⁰ The despondency at Washington is described in W. R. Thayer, *Life and Letters of John Hay* (Boston, 1916), vol. 1, pp. 105-107. An account of

Not only did the federal government have the appearance of weakness, in various respects it was weak. A special evidence of this was the total lack of any military policy. For the maintenance of self respect Maryland, with the enclosed District of Columbia, had to be saved for the Union. A quick military coup was the logical way to attain this end, yet not even decent precautions were taken to provide for the contingency of resistance in Baltimore. For lack of this much foresight the whole administration was for several days hurled into more utter confusion than before, through threatened loss of the capital. Worse than this there was not even at hand any means of really increasing the military force of the country. War had been imminent ever since the inauguration of the new government yet congress was not in session nor even called in session. If a special session had been convened with the rapidity that the crisis demanded the authorization for 500,000 volunteers could have been passed in April instead of July. An army instead of an "armed mob" could have appeared at Bull Run.

The weakest cog in the federal machine was the one that should have been the strongest. Simon Cameron was Secretary of War. He was purely a political appointee, enjoying the confidence neither of the President nor, apparently, of himself. From the beginning he was at a loss how to conduct the office. His sole virtue was that he did not resent assistance from outside his department. Hence for several months Salmon Portland Chase maintained whatever semblance of order was to be found in the Department of War, besides managing his own portfolio of the Treasury and offer-

riots, written by the mayor of the city - G. W. Brown, *Baltimore and Nineteenth of April, 1861* (Baltimore, 1887), *passim*.

ing his advice, whether sought for or not, elsewhere in the government. This interference was not solely officiousness on his own part, but was partly due to the wish of the President, and was at least tolerated by Cameron, whose friendship Chase retained even after Cameron's dismissal the following year. Chase drafted the orders for the enlargement of the regular army and the creation of the volunteer army, May 3, 1861. He advised forcible means of quelling the secession movement in Maryland, he directed the organization of the western troops, and had much to do with the early elevation of George B. McClellan.¹¹ But, in spite of all his marvelous energy, Chase, with his divided responsibilities, could not take the place of an expert devoting his whole attention to the problems of mobilization.

The troops available for service at this crisis consisted of a regular army, well trained, and at least adequate in size for the policing of New York City. On January 1, 1861, the total number of enlisted men and officers barely exceeded 16,000¹² and even this small army was further decimated by the defection of the last four seceding states. Robert E. Lee, slated for the active command of the armies in the field, deserted at the last moment and took with him many able officers of cotton-state sympathies. The remnant of an army still remaining was just sufficient for officering the first half million of a national army, if such a mythical thing had been in existence.

In addition to this potentially invaluable contingent,

¹¹ A. B. Hart, *Salmon Portland Chase* (Boston, 1899), pp. 211-213; Emory Upton, *Military Policy of United States* (Washington, 1912), pp. 233-235.

¹² "Report of Provost-marshal-general [J. B. Fry]," in *House Exec. Doc.*, 39 Cong., 1 sess., appendix to "Report of Secretary of War, 1865," part i, p. 102. This is referred to hereafter as "Fry's Report." The "Report," with

the decadent militia regiments were the sole remaining organized resources. A few of these still retained a fair share of their original numbers and vigor. Of these the most famous, because the first in action, was the Sixth Massachusetts. Four days after the call for 75,000 militia, this regiment achieved distinction through conflict with a secessionist mob at Baltimore. Four of their number were killed and thirty-six were wounded in the engagement.¹³ Several Iowa militia companies had offered their services even before April 12th, the Washington, Iowa, Light Guards having been accepted by the governor on January 17, 1861.¹⁴ But most of the regiments and companies were so short of men and equipment as to be unready for immediate service. The *New York Tribune* complained, on April 19, that Massachusetts and Pennsylvania had already sent regiments to the defense of Washington, whereas New York had not yet sent its first company. The Fifty-fifth New York, a regiment of Frenchmen, beautifully equipped with red pantaloons and caps, had only three hundred fifty enrolled – just enough for its peace-time requirement for parades, marches, and funerals.¹⁵

With all their potential vigor, the states had, in recent years, borne lightly the duty of local self protection. Even in the frontier state of Iowa, on the eve of the Spirit Lake Massacre of 1857, the Committee on

some excisions, is also found in *Official Records*, series iii, vol. 5, *cf. post*, note 21.

¹³ See account in J. F. Rhodes, *History of Civil War 1861-1865* (New York, 1917), pp. 17-19.

¹⁴ J. E. Briggs, "Enlistment of Iowa troops during Civil War," in *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, vol. 15, pp. 333-337; S. H. M. Byers, *Iowa in War Times* (Des Moines, 1888), pp. 39-40.

¹⁵ Regis de Trobriand, *Four Years with Army of Potomac* (Boston, 1889), p. 70.

Military Affairs in the House of Representatives presented a report on the military condition of the state, which was intended merely as a burlesque for the entertainment of the House.¹⁶ It was replete with puns, more or less brilliant, on the infantry, dragoons, and artillery, but was, evidently, no more of a joke than was the military status it affected to describe. A typical western military company was the Waupun, Wisconsin, Light Guard, which had arms for about forty – and these were borrowed from the state with no security of continued possession – and uniforms for twenty.¹⁷ Governor Samuel J. Kirkwood of Iowa estimated that there were in the possession of the entire state, at the outbreak of war, only about 1,500 old muskets, two hundred rifles, and four six-pound guns. These antiquated relics were loaned to militia organizations, on sufficient bond, for special occasions and at other times they worried along without arms.¹⁸ Though the states were capable of displaying great vigor in recruiting they had to start from practically nothing in so doing.

The legal means by which the federal government might increase these miniature forces were almost as inadequate as the forces themselves: two militia acts of ancient vintage – nothing more. The first of these had been adopted February 28, 1795, and empowered the President to call forth the militia of any state or states, whenever the laws of the United States should “be opposed or the operation thereof obstructed in any State, by combinations too powerful to be suppressed

¹⁶ Briggs, *loc. cit.*, pp. 325-328.

¹⁷ J. W. Hinkley, *Narrative of service with Third Wisconsin Infantry* (Madison, 1912), p. 3.

¹⁸ C. B. Upham, “Arms and equipment for Iowa troops in Civil War,” in *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, vol. 16, pp. 5-6.

by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings or by the powers vested in the Marshals by this Act." The militia could continue to be employed "until the expiration of thirty days after the commencement of the then next session of Congress," provided that no militiaman should "be compelled to serve longer than three months, after his arrival at the place of rendezvous, in any one year."¹⁹ The other law, approved March 3, 1803, provided merely for the calling out of the militia for the preservation of law and order in the District of Columbia.²⁰ Since congress was not in session, though there was no valid reason why it could not or should not have been, recourse had to be taken to whatever other means, however feeble, were immediately available. The first care, after determining to provision the garrison at Fort Sumter, was to provide for the safety of the capital in case hostilities ensued. Under authority of the act of 1803 the President issued calls, through the War Department, for ten companies of militia on April 9, five more companies April 13, one company April 15, and eight companies April 16, to be furnished by the District of Columbia.²¹ These three abbreviated regiments represent the first step toward mobilization: a step of such meager dimensions as to cause not even a ripple of comment outside of the Dis-

¹⁹ *U. S. Public Statutes at Large* (Boston, 1845-1846), vol. 1, pp. 424-425. This work, begun in 1845, was continued under various titles and under different editors until it assumed the form in which the volumes since 1873 have appeared. Hereafter in this work it will be referred to as *U. S. Statutes at Large*, those being the key words of the majority of the volumes. For complete title and editor of any volume later cited see the formal bibliography.

²⁰ *Idem*, vol. 2, pp. 215-225.

²¹ *War of the Rebellion: compilation of official records of Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, 1880-1901), series i, vol. 51, part i, pp. 321-325; *idem*, series iii, vol. 1, p. 75. This compilation will be referred to hereafter as *Official Records*.

trict. Here too was exhibited the first opposition to federal control. Many of the men of the first ten companies refused to take the oath at muster for fear that, by so doing, they would be made regular soldiers of the United States. Nor were their fears overcome until they were assured that they were merely "the militia of the District, taken into the United States Service for the protection of the District, and would not be ordered off."²²

In the meantime a state of war had been recognized. Now, if ever, the authority and strength of the residual Union must be shown. The display that ensued was couched in the form of a call, under authority of the act of 1795, for 75,000 three-months militia. Seventy-five thousand raw, green militiamen, who could not be trained for the field by the time their three months' term of service had expired, for the suppression of a rebellion thoroughly organized in seven of the strongest states of the Union and more than incipient in eight more.²³

Because of the unpardonable neglect to call for an immediate session of congress, militia were the only troops available but, even so, seventy-five thousand was an absurdly small request at a time when New York alone was contemplating raising as many as thirty thousand for two years. Governor Oliver P. Morton of Indiana was expecting as many more,²⁴ and Massa-

²² *Idem*, series i, vol. 51, part i, pp. 322-323.

²³ In "Fry's Report," part i, p. 7, the provost-marshal-general states that this call was made "under the 24th section of the act approved March 3, 1803." However text of proclamation is thoroughly in accord with act of February 28, 1795, and nowhere makes any provisions which would fall under act of 1803. Furthermore, the Secretary of War, in his call to states in pursuance of proclamation, *Official Records*, series iii, vol. 1, pp. 68-69, expressly states that he is making call under authority of act of February 28, 1795.

²⁴ *New York Tribune*, April 16, 1861.

chusetts was offering twenty thousand. Three states were willing to furnish more than the total number requested. The *New York Tribune* estimated that Pennsylvania alone would offer more than the number required and that almost the whole number could be supplied from New York City.²⁵

Nor were these estimates greatly exaggerated, as the immediate and subsequent fervor of enlistment was to show. Seventy-five thousand was but a fraction of what the nation was willing to furnish but it was more than enough of the kind of troops called for. A belated call for an extraordinary session of congress accompanied the call for militia, but the date of convening was postponed till July 4²⁶ and it was not until August that the United States was ready to make a serious effort to raise an army.

In the meantime the first flush of recruiting fervor was almost wholly wasted. Bull Run may have been necessary to awaken the administration and congress but the people were ready to act in April. Undoubtedly the people underestimated the size of the task ahead of them but, if the vigor of the government had equalled the enthusiasm of the people, the task itself would indubitably have been smaller. It was the half-hearted military policies of the Union that gave the Confederacy its tremendous advantage during the first year of the war.

Outside of the slave states the replies to the President's call were more than gratifying. Responses poured in from the governors of free states promising troops

²⁵ *Ibid.*, April 15, 1861.

²⁶ J. D. Richardson, ed., *Compilation of Messages and Papers of Presidents 1789-1897* (Washington, 1897), vol. 6, pp. 13-14. See note at end of chapter for dissenting opinion on this subject.

and offering many more than were called for.²⁷ But from none of the slave states was the answer cordial and from most it was hostile. Governor Thomas P. Hicks of Maryland secured a promise that the troops of that state would not be taken across the borders of the state or of the District of Columbia. Governor William Burton of Delaware, in a belated reply, pleaded the constitution of his state in refusal to turn the militia over to the President. Governor Beriah Magoffin of Kentucky stated emphatically, "Kentucky will furnish no troops for the wicked purpose of subduing her sister Southern States." Governors John Ellis and John Letcher of North Carolina and Virginia respectively, professed to doubt the genuineness of the document sent to them, denounced the policy and threatened retaliation. Governor Isham G. Harris of Tennessee was willing to furnish 50,000 men for the Confederacy but not one man for the purpose of coercion. Governor Claiborne F. Jackson declared the demand "illegal, unconstitutional and revolutionary" and the object "inhuman and diabolical." Not one man would Missouri furnish "to carry on any such unholy crusade." Governor Henry M. Rector of Arkansas declared that the call merely added insult to injury. His constituents were "freemen, not slaves" and they would defend themselves to the last extremity "against Northern mendacity and usurpation."²⁸

This opposition was only to be expected. Four of the states seceded shortly afterward and furnished no troops officially throughout the war. In the other four

²⁷ *Official Records*, series iii, vol. 1, pp. 70 *et seq.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, reply of Kentucky, p. 70; North Carolina, p. 72; Virginia, p. 76; Maryland, pp. 79-80; Tennessee, pp. 81, 91-92; Missouri, pp. 82-83; Arkansas, p. 99; Delaware, p. 114.

the loyal governments ultimately prevailed and maintained their quotas throughout the war, although in Missouri and Kentucky a duplicate drain placed an almost equal number of men, at least of volunteers, in the Confederate army. The militia call forced these states to take a stand and thereafter the government knew just about how much support was to be had from them.

In the free states the performance in recruiting was at least equal to the promise. The call, apportioned approximately according to population, was not heavy on any state. Seventeen regiments of 780 men each from New York, fourteen from Pennsylvania, and thirteen from Ohio were the largest contingents, the other states being assessed from one to six regiments each. All officers even to brigadier and major-generals were to be furnished by the states.²⁹ There was plenty of chance for individual initiative, and within a week various quotas were filled, and governors were being embarrassed by offers of more men than they knew what to do with. General Benjamin F. Butler tendered his services with his entire brigade.

Acceptance by the governors of a surplus would only entail an extra expense to the states for the maintenance of those not accepted by the War Department. Accordingly zealous organizations were put off with indefinite promises or tentative acceptances.³⁰ In less than two weeks 35,000 were in Washington or en route thither and nearly 20,000 more were ready for transportation.³¹

At the same time governors were clamoring for the War Department to accept more troops. Governor

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

³⁰ Byers, *op. cit.*, p. 46; *New York Tribune*, April 16, 27, 1861.

³¹ *New York Tribune*, April 28, 1861.

Alexander W. Randall of Wisconsin was, from the first, offended because his state was called upon for only one regiment, while Illinois was allowed to furnish six. As early as April 19 he suggested that 100,000 more men be called. Again on May 6, he acted as spokesman for a recently held conference of western governors. This time he insisted, in a personal letter to the President, that, even though it were positively certain that the rebellion could be suppressed in three weeks, yet, in order to show its authority and properly impress the world, 300,000 more men should be called into the field at once.³² The governors of Indiana, Maine, New Jersey, Connecticut, Michigan, New Hampshire, and Ohio were especially persistent in their requests that many more regiments should be accepted from their states. The attorney-general of New York urged on May 1, that the government accept thirty-eight regiments of two-year militia in place of the seventeen called for. The state had appropriated \$3,500,000 for this purpose and was willing to arm and equip them completely if the government would only accept them and pay and provide for them after reaching the depots.³³

So far, instead of the federal government assuming the initiative in recruiting, the states seemed to be pursuing a hopeless policy in trying to stimulate the federal administration to energetic activity. On the third of May their urgings began to bear fruit. The President, trusting to the approaching congress to legalize his actions, issued a proclamation calling for 42,034 volunteers (the maximum number for forty regiments) and ten regiments of regulars, totaling 22,714. These and

³² *Official Records*, series iii, vol. 1, pp. 91, 169.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 93 *et seq.*, especially pp. 93, 94, 97, 100-102, 143-144.

18,000 additional seamen were to serve for three years unless sooner discharged.³⁴ Thus, for the first time, the President gave dynamic expression of response to the insistent demands for an army.

The total number of volunteers called for was only a third greater than the number New York alone was urging the acceptance of. This is to be explained very largely by the fact that the purpose of the new call was not so much to increase the size of the federal defense, as to make the force already raised more permanent. The term of the militia would have expired before the belated congress could provide for their successors. In this case the North would be wholly at the mercy of the South even if another contingent of militia were called into the field to succeed the first. The thing to do was to continue the terms of those already in the service, and at least partially trained. To secure this continuity the Secretary of War called upon the governors of seventeen states which still had militia regiments mustered into the service of the government but not yet sent forward, to muster them into the service for three years or during the war. If any individuals should refuse to be so mustered the governors were asked to fill their places by others.³⁵

No difficulties were encountered in filling up the quotas under the new calls. Governors were again overwhelmed with applications from volunteer organizations, and they, in turn, besieged the War Department to accept additional regiments and to hasten to assign quotas.³⁶ After nearly two weeks' delay some relief

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 145-146.

³⁵ May 6, 1861. Pacific states and slave states except Delaware were omitted, *ibid.*, p. 161.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 162, 166, 170-173, 179, 181, 185-189, 198-200.

was doled out to the anxious governors. A maximum number of three-years regiments was assigned to each in addition to the three-months regiments, but the sanction was accompanied with the admonition that "It is important to reduce rather than enlarge this number, and in no event to exceed it."³⁷ In other words, the decision was still adhered to to draw as many as possible of the new troops from the earlier militia regiments. As much advantage as possible was taken of the latitude allowed, and few instances were recorded of the anticipated refusal to take the oath on muster. Where such cases occurred the soldiers usually took the matter in hand themselves. Instances are recorded of such non-jurors being stripped of all clothing except underwear and "kicked by all from the Colonel down,"³⁸ and of others being "stripped of their arms, a white feather stuck over each ear and . . . marched out of the Armory grounds [at Albany] with the drums playing the Rogue's March. Crowds of people assembled to see them undergo the degrading penance."³⁹

Just how many volunteers for three years or the war could have been raised in these first months, if the government had been in a position to receive them, cannot be ascertained. The prevailing opinion was that the war would be a short one. A person who enlisted for three years or the war understood that, in reality, he was enlisting for only a short period. Multitudes wished to be in the fight to see the finish: hence the keen competition to secure places in the thin regiments of the early months. As early as May 10 it was estimated

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 203-204. By orders of May 15, 16, 1861.

³⁸ *New York Tribune*, June 2, 1861.

³⁹ *Harper's Weekly*, vol. 5 (June 1, 1861), p. 384.

that at least 300,000 had offered their services.⁴⁰ On the same date the *New York Tribune* declared that "Had the President called – as we fervently wish he had – for Five Hundred Thousand men . . . they would all have been promptly furnished by the Free States alone and every man a glad volunteer. And they would have been armed and equipped too. . . ." ⁴¹ Regardless of the exact degree of exaggeration in these estimates, the fact is glaringly apparent that the spring, rather than the late summer and fall, of 1861, was the time for the federal government to take the initiative in recruiting. The later soldiers had a clearer notion of the task ahead of them, but it is not at all apparent that this made them any abler as soldiers than if they had been mustered earlier and learned the magnitude of the enterprise as it developed.

A very considerable difficulty in ascertaining the exact degree of recruiting fervor in the first months, is due to the fact that many of the regiments offered to the federal government, and upon which the estimates are based, were either incomplete or only in prospect, at the time of the offer. The expedients adopted to complete these regiments were many and varied. Daily advertisements appeared in the newspapers calling for men to complete regiments or companies in process of organization.⁴² Blazing posters "plastered along the city streets and spread broadcast over the countryside, dwelt not only on the generous pay offered by the United States, and its land bounties and pensions, but very frequently on the care that would be taken of those

⁴⁰ *New York Tribune*, May 11, 1861.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, May 10, 1861.

⁴² For example see *ibid.*, April, May, 1861, *passim*.

at home.”⁴³ Almost unlimited capital was made of the mob and subsequent minor disturbances at Baltimore, and hyperbolic boasts were made of how the brave soldiers would handle the Plug Uglies if they were only given the opportunity. For lack of anything more exciting, the newspapers played up the riot and the murder on May 24 of Colonel Ephraim E. Ellsworth, until the news of Bull Run was almost a welcome relief to the readers. Repeated accounts of the departure of “gallant troops” and of the exuberant celebrations that attended such events tended to inspire the emulation of others.⁴⁴

Individual motives for enlistment were varied. Many were inspired by the influences above mentioned. Perhaps a great number were influenced by the same motive as a Wisconsin private who confessed that he was not “very strongly animated by a love for the Union in the abstract” nor did he consider the abolition of slavery worth fighting for but he “felt that the dismemberment of the Union by armed force, submitted to without a struggle, would be a disgrace to the whole north.”⁴⁵ Many enlisted for lack of other employment. The temporary derangement of business, due to seces-

⁴³ C. R. Fish, “Social Relief in Northwest during the Civil War,” in *American Historical Review*, vol. 22, pp. 312-313; Louis Philippe Albert d’Orleans, Comte de Paris, *History of Civil War in America* (Philadelphia, 1875-1888), vol. 1, p. 177.

⁴⁴ See files of *New York Tribune* and *Harper’s Weekly*, vol. 5 (April, May, and June, 1861), *passim*. For murder of Ellsworth see Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln, a History* (New York, 1890), vol. 4, pp. 312-314; “Ellsworth, Ephraim Elmer,” in *American Annual Cyclopaedia*, vol. 1 (1861), pp. 284-285. See also C. A. Ingraham, *Elmer E. Ellsworth and the Zouaves of ’61* (Chicago, 1926).

⁴⁵ Hinkley, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3. His account was written many years after the war, thus accounting for reference to antislavery motive which, in 1861, was confined to seasoned abolitionists.

sion, had created a rather large group of this class. Irishmen enlisted hoping in some way to strike a blow at England, and carried the green flag along with the American colors in their regiments.⁴⁶ But whatever the motive or inducement volunteering went on steadily with little hindrance except from the federal government.

The favorite method of raising a company was by mass meetings and many of these have been described by regimental historians. A typical meeting of this kind was presided over at Galena, Illinois, on April 16 by ex-Captain Ulysses S. Grant and was addressed by his future Chief of Staff and Secretary of War, John A. Rawlins. The meeting was not much of a success and the promoters had to hold subsidiary meetings in neighboring villages to complete one company, whereas two companies had been the goal. At one of these meetings Grant himself made one of the first speeches of his reticent career. Twelve recruits were the result, but the records are silent as to whether Grant's address had anything to do with the paucity of the returns.⁴⁷

A similar but more successful meeting, held in Milwaukee while raising the first three-year men, was attended by the newly appointed captain of the prospective company, who was very anxious to cut a dashing figure and impress the people with his bravery. While the meeting was in progress he "stood apart, the hero of the moment, and with a bright new sword, made cuts at space which offered no resistance."⁴⁸

But the height of the histrionic, in these perform-

⁴⁶ Count of Paris, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 177-178.

⁴⁷ A. L. Chetlain, *Recollections of Seventy Years* (Galena, Illinois, 1899), pp. 69-70.

⁴⁸ E. R. Jones, *Four Years in Army of Potomac* (London, n. d.), pp. 40-41.