

For Release on Delivery  
about 10:30 A.M.,  
Thursday, December 12, 1940

R-1196

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
WAGE AND HOUR DIVISION  
Washington

~~INACTIVE~~

40-HOUR WEEK MOBILIZING MANPOWER, COL. FLEMING TELLS MANUFACTURERS

The 40-hour week is enforcing the employment of America, Col. Philip B. Fleming, Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division, today told the 45th Annual Congress of American Industry, sponsored by the National Association of Manufacturers at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel (New York).

"More important," Col. Fleming said, "the 40-hour week is enforcing widespread training of Americans in productive skills. The most valuable and powerful of our resources is getting into action -- the manpower of our 130 millions."

The 30 cents an hour minimum wage, and industrial wage orders, he said, have added more than \$100,000,000 a year to workers' pay envelopes.

Col. Fleming addressed the manufacturers as a soldier. He emphasized the importance of workers' morale. He referred to a resolution of the National Association of Manufacturers' Employment Relations Committee opposing compulsory arbitration of industrial disputes, and told his audience that the one way to avoid it was to succeed in maintaining good labor relations.

"The enforcement of the 40-hour week, with its penalty for overtime," Col. Fleming said, "is one of the most important assignments a soldier could have in the defense of his country.

"The 40-hour week is working. Reports coming to my office indicate that it is causing plant after plant to go on two and three shift operation; that it is hastening the employment of hundreds in good-sized plants down to the employment of one or two in the very smallest establishments.

"This increased employment is being forced not only in factories and mines, but in wholesaling, transportation and commercial establishments. Anaconda Copper

Company has added 5,000 men to its payroll in the last year. They inform us that 1,300 of them have been put on because of the provisions of the Wage-Hour law. Why right here in New York the personnel manager of the Manufacturers Trust Company told us that they had to put on 300 more employees because of this law -- and because of this law alone."

Indices of employment are rising, Col. Fleming pointed out. The index of factory employment in August was 104; 108 in September, and 110 in October. Social Security Board Records of jobs in private industry show an increase of 3,000,000 over last year.

Col. Fleming said that current protests about the 40-hour week were not coming from manufacturers. He termed them "literary rather than industrial."

"When the 40-hour week pinches, I hear about it," he said. Operators of canneries and wholesale establishments, he said, brought pressure to be relieved of the penalty of time and a half for overtime, but manufacturers had not done so. His offer to debate the 40-hour week on the radio, he said, had been declined by more than a score of public figures.

"The Board assigned to the task of mobilizing American industrial power," Col. Fleming said, "considers the overtime penalty one of its most valuable implements in accomplishing its task. I am referring to the National Defense Commission. When the question of continuing present labor standards was brought before Stettinius, Knudsen, Budd, Hillman, Henderson, Davis and Elliott, they were all of the same mind -- that the present legal standards should be continued."

Col. Fleming told the manufacturers that "labor relations remain with you. Responsibility for this important element of national morale is largely yours -- yours and labor's. Your government has never attempted to conduct labor relations. It has laid down rules for their conduct in the National Labor Relations Act."

Follow those rules. It is good citizenship and good business. Don't make any mistakes about it. You are risking business when you ignore them. Industry's largest customer wants them followed in letter and spirit."

The way to get the maximum production out of the industrial machine, Col. Fleming said, is to put on more shifts of men. He realized, he said, that it means hard work for management to organize another shift, adding that he had had some recent experience in that. He had the problem of getting the maximum production out of one machine -- a machine that cost about a million dollars. The machine was a dredge operating on the upper Mississippi. He used four 40-hour shifts. "After all," he said, "there are 168 hours in the week."

The alertness of the men working short shifts, Col. Fleming said, gave that dredge a hoggish appetite for river bottom.

"We reduced the overhead of that million-dollar machine per mile of dredging to the extent that it more than offset the larger labor cost." The dredge did twelve months work in seven months.

"As a colonel during the war, I had to make a regiment of engineers out of fifteen hundred green men.

"A private in the engineers not only has to know how to handle small arms, but must be skilled in such work as demolition and bridge building. I think many of you are in somewhat the same position as I was then. You have to take a lot of new men and show them how to do your work. You will have to train them yourselves.

"Nobody likes to train men. Training costs money. It would help a lot to be able to hire them already trained. But you will not help your country by returning from Washington with a contract in your pocket and hiring 300 skilled workers away from other factories.

"In the Army it is the non-commissioned officers who count. In manufacturing it must be your plant supervisory personnel. One of your most difficult tasks

will be to increase this personnel. Nothing shakes the morale of men as much as incompetent supervision.

"You will have to make foremen out of your best inspectors. Pick the men who seem to be born leaders. It must be as important in manufacturing as it is to a good military machine.

"Pick them yourself right down the line. Make inspectors of your own tool makers, tool makers of your machinists, machinists of your machine operators. Promote them from within and you also promote morale and loyalty.

"A good officer knows when he has a martinet along the line of command. Don't let zealous foremen spoil your labor relations. The responsibility and the liability are yours.

"Morale prospers best in an environment of good faith. It is a violation of good faith to allow yourself to think you are more patriotic than the men under you.

"Handle grievances promptly. Give them sincere consideration but decide promptly. One violation of good faith, of which all the men become immediately aware, is the stall.

"That in general is what the National Defense Commission wants you to do. That is what your government wants you to do."

Col. Fleming denied that he exempted workers from the benefits and protection of the law. He said that he had waived overtime in the processing of perishable agricultural commodities but had extended the minimum wage to more workers in these operations.

As to the white collar workers he had exempted, most of them had the protection of a \$200 salary requirement and other provisions.

More than \$5,000,000 in restitution of back wages has been paid to employees, he said, mostly as the result of recent compliance drives.