

*Compulsory Military Training  
in Peacetime?*



**NATIONAL OPINION RESEARCH CENTER**  
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## S U M M A R Y

At a time when legislators, educators, and churchmen are debating the pros and cons of compulsory military training after the war, the public definitely favors such a program, according to the findings of the various public opinion polls.

### NORC FINDINGS

#### Compulsory Military Training in the United States?

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79% of the public would favor passage of a law requiring one year's compulsory military training for 18-year-old boys.

#### Effect on Other Countries?

Page 5

71% think that such a requirement would encourage similar legislation in other countries.

#### Effect on Future Peace?

Page 6

79% of adult civilians think compulsory military training would not in itself lead to future wars. The 79% includes:

48% who say "It would make no difference," and

31% who believe compulsory military training would make future wars "Less likely."

### FINDINGS OF OTHER POLLS

#### Gallup

Page 11

63% of the public favor requiring every able-bodied young man to serve one year in the army or navy. Majorities in Australia and Canada agree with opinion in the United States.

#### Fortune

Page 15

61% prefer retaining the draft in peacetime rather than returning to the regular army system of taking volunteers only.

#### Iowa Poll

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70% would favor a program combining basic military training with physical instruction and training in trades and skills for civilian use.

PART I

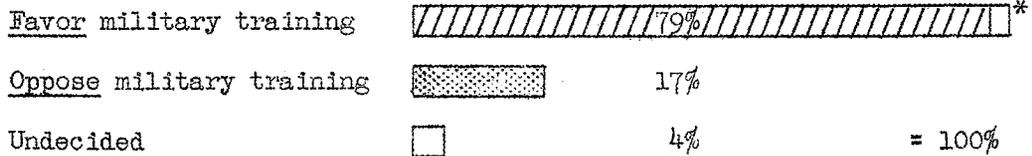
N O R C F I N D I N G S

COMPULSORY MILITARY TRAINING IN THE UNITED STATES?

About four out of five people in the United States definitely favor compulsory military training legislation.

NORC interviewers talked with people in cities, towns, and rural areas in every section of the country -- with farmers, housewives, war workers, truck drivers, business men, clerks, stenographers, professional people, service workers and many others -- making up a representative cross-section of civilians 21 and over. All were asked:

*"Would you be in favor of or would you be against a law that would require boys to take a year's military training after the war when they become 18 years old?"*



Included in the 79 per cent are 3 per cent who would favor compulsory military training "if the boys were allowed to finish school first. ...if the program were like the R.O.T.C. ...if the boys were not needed at home."

Personal interest in such a legislative program appears to have little influence on an individual's feelings. Of parents with sons under 18, who would be affected by compulsory military training, 77 per cent favor the idea, while, of people with neither a son or a brother under 18, 80 per cent reply affirmatively.

\* THREE PER CENT WOULD FAVOR MILITARY TRAINING IF. ...

Slightly more opposed to the proposal than other groups are farmers, women, and residents of the Rocky Mountain and Pacific states. Differences are small, however, and no individual group differs more than 7 or 8 per cent from the total population.

#### IN THEIR OWN WORDS

These comments, selected from the many expressed by the people interviewed, bring out various shades of opinion on the issue and lend flavor and substance to the percentage figures.

#### F a v o r Compulsory Military Training

Persons who mention no particular qualifications in expressing their approval of compulsory military training legislation most often emphasize the character-building advantages of such training:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| "It is good for a young man. It teaches him how to take orders and to obey -- two things few of our parents ever teach us. I know it made a man out of me." | Discharged veteran,<br>World War II, Oklahoma              |
| "It makes boys better citizens."  | Wife of textile inspector,<br>Upper Darby,<br>Pennsylvania |
| "It's a wonderful thing for boys. They are not free to loaf on the streets."  | Pensioner, Phoenix,<br>Arizona                             |
| "A nation is stronger if each young man realizes his duty to his country. Training will make them realize it."  | Wife of public health<br>physician, Connecticut            |

Others mention the need for preparedness:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| "Military training gives boys discipline, and in case of another war they would be prepared." | Wife of mechanical<br>engineer, Connecticut |
| "We should have a good up-to-date Army and Navy."   | Craneman, Lorain, Ohio                      |

"I favor such legislation - and I have two boys. I feel it might be the saving of their lives if we should become involved in another war."

Wife of postal employee,  
Iowa

"So long as foreign countries do it, we should too."

Ice Salesman, Chicago

Still others add:

"The program should be strictly military -- not an educational training -- as Mr. Roosevelt suggested."

Retired businessman,  
Alhambra, California

"Girls should be included, too."

Wife of airplane mechanic,  
New Orleans

Oppose Compulsory Military Training:

Most of the people who oppose compulsory military training do so on the grounds that it is undemocratic:

"I don't believe in forced military training or forced regimentation."

Market gardner, Elmwood,  
Connecticut

"We came to this country to be free, not fighters."

Insurance broker,  
Scranton, Pennsylvania

"Compulsory military training leads to dictatorship."

Refrigeration mechanic  
New York City

"If it were compulsory it would no longer be a democracy. But I would favor optional training."

Wife of Army lieutenant,  
New Orleans

Others fear peacetime conscription would lead to another war:

"When you prepare for war you are sure to have it."

Woman pensioner, Washington state

"I think when you practice certain things you want to make them effective. That's what we fought against in the last war, --German militarism. Compulsory military training would cause another war and we are not a military nation."

Civil engineer, Chicago

Some give still different reasons:

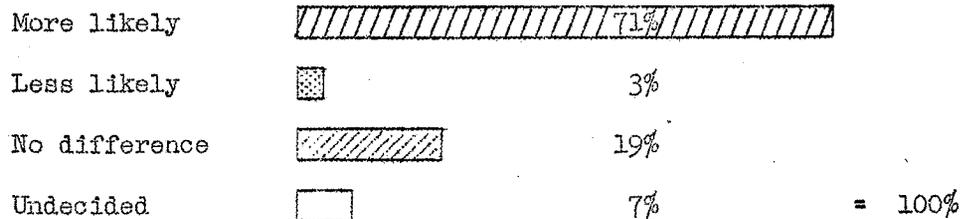
"We need our boys at home."	Carpenter, Virginia
"They are too young to go away from home."	Woman tailor, Covington, Kentucky
"It doesn't take long to train boys. Why go European?"	Owner of hardware store, Ohio
"We don't usually have another war for 20 years, and then it would be unnecessary."	Housewife, Fairbury, Nebraska
"If we keep those other nations disarmed, we wouldn't need to be armed."	Shipyard mechanic, Portland, Oregon

EFFECT ON OTHER COUNTRIES?

Seven out of ten people believe that, if the United States Congress passes legislation to establish a program of compulsory military training in peacetime, other countries will be more likely to establish military training programs for their youth.

The NORC question:

*"If the United States did pass a law that required our boys to take military training, do you think other countries would be more likely or less likely to require military training for their boys?"*



Majorities in all groups agree on this question. Women, adults under 40, and persons with some college training reply "More likely" by somewhat larger percentages than the public as a whole.

Of the 71 per cent who think a compulsory military training program in the United States would encourage other countries to institute similar programs, these reactions are representative: "If we carry a gun, someone else is going to carry one as well. ...If we needed soldiers, they can be made in a few weeks anyway! ...We couldn't stop others if we did it ourselves. ...Most countries have compulsory military training now. That is one reason some people left their own countries and came here to the United States."

An Indianapolis insurance adjuster, one of the small minority who reply, "Less likely," comments: "In view of the marvelous potential of this country, other countries would see themselves unable to cope with us."

A retired New Jersey policeman answers: "It makes no difference because 75 per cent of the other countries have compulsory military training laws anyway."

#### EFFECT ON FUTURE PEACE?

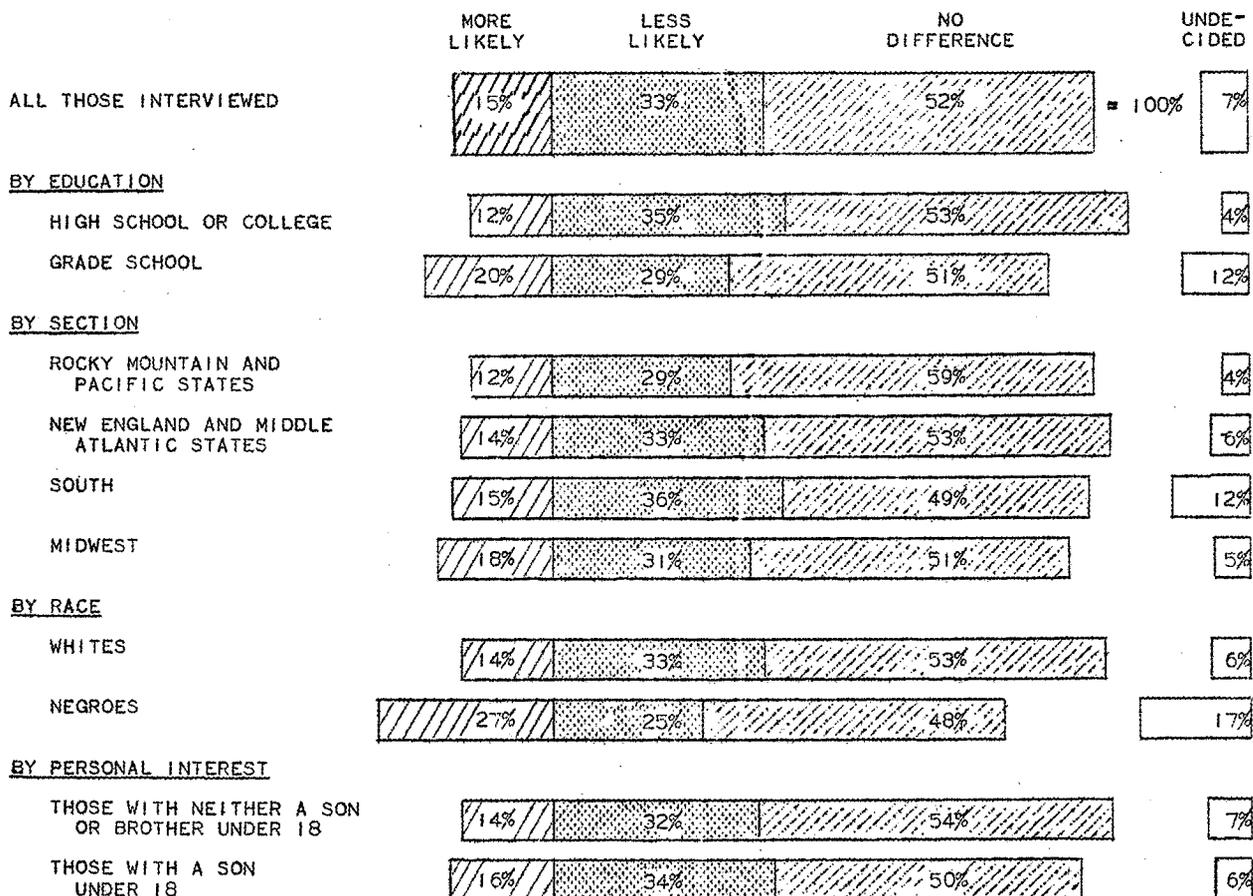
A definite majority -- 79 per cent -- of those interviewed think that compulsory military training in the United States and other countries would not in itself lead to future wars. This 79 per cent includes 48 per cent replying "No difference" and 31 per cent answering "Less likely." It is significant that more than twice as many think peacetime military training would make wars less likely as think it would make them more likely.

NORC interviewers asked people in all walks of life:

*"If the United States and other countries had laws requiring their boys to take military training, do you think it would be more likely or less likely that there would be wars in the future, or wouldn't it make any difference?"*

	All	Those with opinions
Compulsory military training would make future wars <u>more likely</u>	14%	15%
It would make wars <u>less likely</u>	31	33
It would make <u>no difference</u>	48	52
Undecided	7	--
	100%	100%

Outstanding differences of opinion among population groups, sharpened by the exclusion of the "Undecided" responses, are shown graphically below:



### Differences by Population Groups

Persons with sons under 18 and persons with neither sons nor brothers who would be affected by the proposed legislation answer the question almost identically. In every population group interviewed, about one half believe that compulsory military training would make no difference in the prospect of future wars.

Outstanding are residents of the Rocky Mountain and Pacific states, 59 per cent of whom reply "No difference," when only persons with opinions are considered. Negroes are the only group with higher percentages replying "More likely" than replying "Less likely." People with a college or high school background answer "Less likely" approximately three times as often as they answer "More likely." Those with least education are more equally divided.

### IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Persons who believe that compulsory military training in the United States and other countries will make future wars more likely -- 14 per cent of the cross-section -- add comments such as these:

"The more you train for war, the more likely there will be wars."	Retired grocer, Wichita, Kansas
"In Germany military training has led to war."	Dairy farmer, near Phoenix, Arizona
"At any slight difference the countries would turn their guns at each other."	Wife of electrician, Portland, Oregon
"The countries would be building themselves up against each other."	Truck driver, Pembroke, Massachusetts

The 31 per cent who think peacetime military training will make wars

less likely remark:

"The stronger the armies are, the less likelihood of war."	Wife of house painter, Helena, Montana
"When Americans have training they are the best in the world, and other countries would be leery of starting anything."	Ordnance plant employee, Tooele, Utah
"We would be prepared and would have any other nation stopped before they started."	Wife of newspaper manager, Pennsylvania
"Other countries would be afraid to fight us then."	Housewife, Marshall, Indiana
"Less likely -- if a good international police force is maintained."	Saleslady, southern California

A wide variety of comments come from the 48 per cent who believe that compulsory military training makes no difference in the likelihood of future wars:

"If there is going to be a war, nothing will stop it."	Engineer's wife, Baltimore
"If they are going to fight, they will anyway."	Carpenter, Blacksburg, Virginia
"You ain't hurt if you get the training. According to the Bible, you'll have wars anyway."	Farmer, near Laurin- bury, North Carolina
"It isn't this militarism that causes wars; it's the politicians."	Instrument maker, Washington, D. C.
"It isn't the boys that make the wars. They just fight for the old timers."	Carpenter, Englewood, Colorado
"The old country will fight anyway."	Woman pensioner, Spokane, Washington
"We thought that if we didn't have an army we wouldn't have a war. That didn't work. As long as we are in the ascendancy and behave ourselves, they won't attack us."	Furnace manufacturer, Portland, Oregon

## COMPARISONS

It is of interest to compare opinions on compulsory military training with opinions on related issues. Areas where differences are small are just as significant in their own way as are areas where differences are large. For convenience, only those with opinions are considered.

### Of persons who FAVOR compulsory military training in the United States:

- 9% think compulsory military training in the United States and other countries will make future wars more likely.
- 39% think it will make future wars less likely.
- 52% think it will make no difference. = 100% \*
- 68% believe the United States will fight another war in 50 years.
- 72% would like to see the United States join a post-war world organization.
- 62% think such an organization will be run chiefly by Great Britain, Russia, and the United States.
- 56% believe Russia's kind of government will affect other countries.
- 82% think that before Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt tried to keep the United States out of the war.
- 90% think that before Pearl Harbor the President should have tried to keep the country out of war.

### Of persons who OPPOSE compulsory military training in the United States:

- 43% think it will make future wars more likely.
- 8% think it will make wars less likely.
- 49% think it will make no difference. = 100% \*
- 75% believe the United States will fight another war in 50 years.
- 63% would like to see the United States join a post-war world organization.
- 65% think such an organization will be run by "the big three."
- 55% believe Russia's kind of government will influence other countries.
- 59% think FDR tried to keep the United States out of the war.
- 89% think FDR should have tried to keep out.

\* BECAUSE THE FIRST THREE COMPARISONS ARE BASED ON THE SAME QUESTION, THE PERCENTAGES ADD TO 100 VERTICALLY. EACH OF THE REMAINING COMPARISONS IS BASED ON A DIFFERENT QUESTION, NOT INTER-RELATED VERTICALLY.

PART II

FINDINGS OF OTHER POLLS

GALLUP

Since 1938 the American Institute of Public Opinion (Gallup Poll) has used a number of survey questions to measure public opinion regarding compulsory military training.

Before Pearl Harbor

The Selective Service Act was signed by President Roosevelt on September 16, 1940, and registration took place one month later. Between December, 1938, when Gallup first measured opinion on compulsory military training and August, 1940, public opinion on the issue completely reversed itself. During the first year and a half covered by the Gallup trend the proportion of persons with opinions endorsing conscription increased from one-third to one-half the population. During June, 1940, approving opinion jumped to nearly two-thirds, where it remained until Congress took action.

Gallup asked:

*"Do you think every able-bodied young man 20 years old should be made to serve in the Army or Navy for one year?"*

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>		<u>Undecided</u>
<u>1938</u> , December	37%	63%	= 100%	*
<u>1939</u> , October	39	61		*
<u>1940</u> , June 2	50	50		7
June 23	64	36		6
July 28	67	33		7
August 11	66	34		8

\* NOT REPORTED

Women and people in their twenties favored the proposal by somewhat smaller majorities than did the population as a whole. \*

In October, 1940, after the passage of the Selective Service Act, Gallup asked:

*"Are you in favor of the selective draft in principle?"*

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	
United States	84%	10%	6%	= 100%
New York City only	90	4	6	
Midwest only	78	15	7	

A f t e r Pearl Harbor

Nearly two years after the United States entered the war, the American Institute of Public Opinion began the measurement of public opinion on the issue of peacetime military training. Results indicate that attitudes on the question are becoming stabilized:

*"After this war is over, do you think every able-bodied young man should be required to serve one year in the Army or Navy?"*

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Undecided</u>		<u>Yes</u> (Opinions Only)
<u>1943</u> , July	66%	27%	7%	= 100%	71%
November	63	29	8		68
<u>1944</u> , September	63	23	14		73

Gallup finds men slightly more in favor of the measure than women, persons in the 30 - 49 age group more in favor than those either younger or older, and Democrats giving more "Yes" replies than Republicans. A representative reaction: "Maybe the Japs would not be so quick to stab us in the back then."

\* ANOTHER GALLUP QUESTION, ASKED IN AUGUST '44, INDICATED THAT 71% OF PERSONS WITH OPINIONS WOULD FAVOR INCREASING THE SIZE OF OUR ARMY AND NAVY BY DRAFTING MEN BETWEEN THE AGES OF 18 AND 32 TO SERVE IN THE ARMED FORCES FOR ONE YEAR."

COMPARISONS

Questions on peacetime military training have been asked by Gallup Polls

in four English-speaking nations. During 1943, opinion compared as follows:

PERCENTAGES APPROVING COMPULSORY MILITARY TRAINING:	<u>Great Britain</u>	<u>Canada</u>	<u>United States</u>	<u>Australia</u>
All those interviewed	48%	56%	66%	79%
Persons with opinions	58	62	72	92

Great Britain

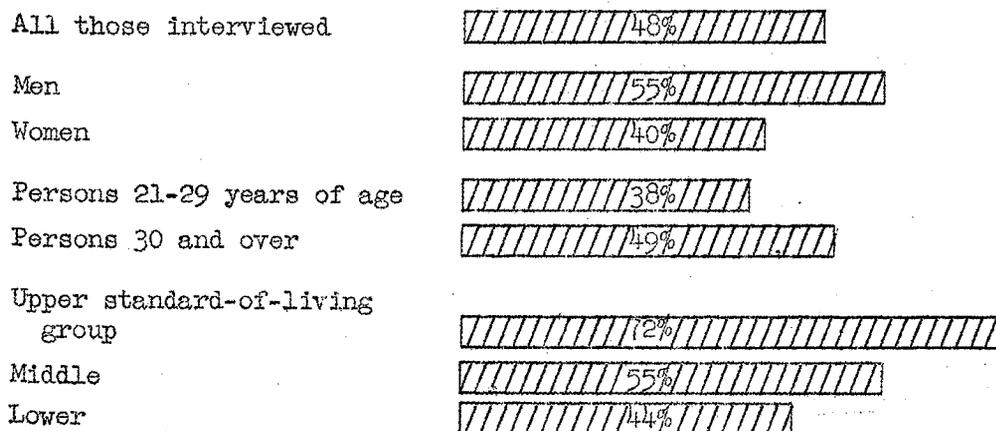
In March 1943, the British Institute of Public Opinion asked:

*"Would you approve or disapprove if military conscription were continued after the war?"*

Approve 48%      Disapprove 35%      Undecided 17%      = 100%

Opinion in Great Britain varied widely among population groups, as is shown by the chart below:

PERCENTAGES APPROVING PEACETIME CONSCRIPTION



C a n a d a

When the Canadian Institute of Public Opinion repeated the question in November, 1944, an increased percentage desired compulsory military training after the war, and the "Undecided" percentage had decreased slightly. The CIPO question was worded:

*"After the war is over, do you think every able-bodied young man should be required to serve one year in the Army, Navy, or Air Force?"*

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	
<u>1943</u> , March	56%	34%	10%	= 100%
<u>1944</u> , November	60	32	8	

A u s t r a l i a

Also in 1943, the Australian Public Opinion Poll asked a commonwealth cross-section:

*"Should compulsory military training for young men continue after the war?"*

Continue 79%      Stop 14%      Undecided 7%      = 100%

"Men and women held almost identical opinions. Even among people on the lowest incomes (who usually give the highest vote against any form of compulsion), the 'No' vote was only 20 per cent." Typical comments were: "Yes, a country caught napping goes to the wall," and "No, this war should be the last."

When the 79 per cent in favor of peacetime military training were asked: "Which would you prefer - a year's continuous training at about 18 - or, say three years' spare-time training with short annual camps?" two out of every three persons replying favored spare-time training, because "it would give boys a chance to learn a trade."

FORTUNE

Fortune \* has reported public opinion regarding several aspects of the problem. The three key questions:

*"After the war do you think the United States should draft all young men for a certain amount of Army training during peacetime?"*

Yes 69%      No 21%      Undecided 10% = 100%

*"After the war do you think the United States should draft all young men for a certain amount of Army training during peacetime or should we go back to the regular Army system of taking volunteers only?"*

Draft 62%    Volunteers 29%    Undecided 9% = 100%

*"After the war do you think the United States could have an army large enough for the country's needs by taking volunteers only?"*

Yes 42%      No 42%      Undecided 16% = 100%

Almost half of the public, Fortune finds, would suggest one year as the length of such training, with only 29 per cent advocating a training period of two years or longer. Three out of four (76%) would start the program for young men at or before the age of 18.

"In other words," Fortune comments, "the Army would await a boy at the high school gate and give him his first brush with the outside world before he took a job or went to college."

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\* JULY, 1944

## IOWA POLL

The Iowa Poll, sponsored by the Des Moines Sunday Register, recently reported opinion in the "tall corn state" regarding several aspects of compulsory military training. The salient points revealed are:

- 71% of Iowans would consider a "good idea" Congressional passage of "a law requiring a year of compulsory military service for 18-year-old boys after the war is over."
- 45% think such a law "should be passed now before the fighting ends," while 41 per cent think "we should wait to see what happens after peace comes."
- 70% of the Iowa cross-section would favor a program combining basic military training with physical instruction and training in trades and skills of civilian use. (19% prefer one year of straight military training and 4% a combination of military and CCC work.)
- 55% think that road-building or forestry work under the program should be paid what the work is worth. (35% favor \$50 a month basic military pay for such service.)
- 59% of Iowans think compulsory military training would make no difference in the United States' "traditional policy of peaceful living," 25 per cent think it would make "some difference," and 16 per cent think it would definitely "lead to aggression."

This report is based on a nation-wide survey by the National Opinion Research Center, University of Denver. The scientifically determined cross-section consisted of a typical miniature of the population of the United States with the proper proportion -- in each geographical section -- of men and women, young and old, rich and poor, various minority groups, and residents of urban, town, and rural areas. This survey included 2,549 personal interviews. Statistically these are sufficient to be within 3 per cent correct 997 times in 1,000. It is understood that the Gallup and Fortune surveys are based on similar cross-sections. The Iowa Poll, including from 1,000 to 1,500 cases, should be within 5 per cent correct 997 times in 1,000.

PUBLICATIONS

Publications of the National Opinion Research Center include:

REPORTS

4. <u>Anti-Inflation Measures.</u> June, 1942	\$ .10
8. <u>War and Peace -- 1943 Edition.</u> March, 1943	.25
9. <u>The Reconversion Period from War to Peace.</u> June, 1943	.15
10. <u>Should the Churches Plan for Peace?</u> July, 1943*	.10
11. <u>Lend-Lease to England: What Are We Getting? What Should We Get?</u> August, 1943	.10
12. <u>Attitudes toward the Axis Peoples.</u> August, 1943	.10
15. <u>Public Opinion on Gasoline Rationing.</u> October, 1943	.10
16. <u>Are Wars Inevitable?</u> December, 1943	.10
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20. <u>The Public Looks at Politics and Politicians.</u> March, 1944*	.10
21. <u>The Public Looks at Education.</u> August, 1944	.25
22. <u>Do Negroes Have Equal Economic Opportunities?</u> April, 1944*	.10
23. <u>Compulsory Military Training in Peacetime?</u> December, 1944	.15
24. <u>Germany and the Post-War World.</u> January, 1945	.50

\*MIMEOGRAPHED

SPECIAL REPORTS

<u>What Do the American People Think About Federal Health Insurance?</u> Nov., 1944	.50
<u>The Non-Voter -- Who He Is, What He Thinks.</u> (Reprint) June, 1944	.15

DISTORTED MAPS

D. <u>Distribution of Population, 21 Years of Age and Over, States and Metropolitan Districts.</u> In two colors, 11 by 15 inches	.15
E. <u>Distribution of World Population.</u> 11 by 15 inches	.25
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