

THREE YEARS OF TRANSITION - 1940 - 1943

From Peace to War in a Teachers College

by

Harvey A. Andruss, President

State Teachers College, Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania

Before the passage of the first selective service act in 1940, it was evident that the enrollment in technical and professional curriculums of colleges and universities would be affected. First, by the call to the colors of the National Guard Units, then by the upsurge in manufacturing of heavy equipment for those European nations later to be our Allies.

An increasing wage level and the possibility of war turned the minds of high school graduates away from preparation for peace time activities to that of war. No matter how we abhorred the prospect of conflict the obligation of the American College to meet the challenge for the national defense became real. Those who persisted in doing the same thing as before hoped that "education as usual" would be able to carry on, although it was clear that "business was NOT as usual"—"family life was NOT as usual"—and "America could NOT be as usual in a world gone mad with war."

All these factors and many others resulted in decreased enrollment in colleges. It was futile to try to offset this force. One could not plan for the future when the present task of defending our country was becoming more pressing.

Looking beyond the campus, some college administrators saw that a transition must be made. If changes were made gradually there would be need of less adjustment on the part of the faculty and students; and alumni would have time to understand just what was happening at their Alma Mater.

So, as early as 1939, some colleges began to teach First Aid courses to larger numbers and there was some talk about teaching undergraduates to fly. However, not until September, 1940 was the stirring of change being felt. There were some institutions who looked askance at others who were experimenting with new activities, partly from inertia—disinclination to change—and mostly from the feeling that pointing the colleges toward national defense would in itself influence young people toward war. These institutions today, denuded of civilian students, are seeking ways to aid the war effort but the start of three years on the part of institutions beginning the transition in 1940 is too much to overcome.

Confronted by all these confusing forces, the Bloomsburg State Teachers College, on learning of the Civilian Pilot Training Program, began in June, 1940, to explore the possibilities of reopening the Bloomsburg Airport, then closed, after having been pioneered twelve years before by Harry L. Magee and a number of other farseeing citizens.

On the basis that aviation would be taught in Pennsylvania high schools in the future, as automobile operation had been in times past, this activity was considered an important opportunity for an institution training teachers.

From September, 1940, until July, 1942, over 100 college undergraduate students were taught to fly at the Bloomsburg Airport. Instruction in Civil Air Regulations, Navigation, Meteorology, and related subjects were taught at the college.

Since these courses were a part of the college curriculum for future teachers of Mathematics, Physics, and Geography, little change was necessary in plant, equipment, or instructional personnel.

However, seeing a possible need for more classroom and activity space, the equipping of the Centennial Gymnasium and Navy Hall (then called the Junior High School) was continued with the idea that expansion would be possible if facilities were available. With that thought in mind, Spruce Street was extended and curbs were placed on either side of the road to provide for parking of more cars.

Regular college faculty members formerly teaching Geography, Physical Education, and Social Studies, Mathematics and Science, learned to teach the subjects required in ground school instruction. Due to the early influence of the Bloomsburg Airport, there were still experienced aviators in the community who were able to fill in the gaps which could not be carried by college faculty.

The idea of training teachers of Aeronautics was born in 1941 and the Bloomsburg State Teachers College was designated in April, 1943, as the first college in Pennsylvania (and possibly in the United States) to offer a specialized field for teachers in Aeronautics, leading to a Bachelor's degree.

Although the effect of the oncoming war was reflected in the lessening number of male students in 1941 there were still 100 men living in the town and only 70 in the college dormitory. Plans were made to use a portion of the women's dormitory, not then needed, to house men.

In July, 1942, all aviation instruction was restricted to those who were in the Army and Navy. For the first time uniformed men were housed in college dormitories along with civilian students. Then changes began to come thick and fast. After training 40 Army and Navy Aviation Cadets, Bloomsburg was designated as a Navy Aviation Center, in September, 1942. On November 15, 1942, the Naval Flight Instructor's School was begun to meet the demand for teachers of Aviation in the Navy. Along with five other institutions (Chicago, Georgia, Purdue, Texas Christian University and Arizona) Bloomsburg continued this program for one year.

Building and plant changes were necessary to meet these new requirements. Travel, being curtailed, a larger number of resident students lived in college dormitories. Army and Navy Cadets and Officers had to be housed in quarters formerly occupied by women students. Along with all these new developments attention was ever kept attuned to the expanding needs of a college educating young people to be teachers in the public schools of Pennsylvania.

During the year of 1940-1941 there was provided from the college funds over \$40,000 worth of improvements, such as: Hot Water Tanks for all dormitories; Toilet Rooms for Men in Science Hall, where Engineering, Science and Management Defense Training Courses were taught in the evening; and much new equipment and machinery to handle new courses offered for the first time. An athletic

fence and sidewalk in front of the Centennial Gymnasium was also completed, although the building itself could not be opened since electric current for power and light was not then available. During the year, however, the General State Authority let contracts for over \$60,000, designed to put the Junior High School and Gymnasium into operation. These contracts provided equipment for both buildings; unification of all power and light lines so that a single meter would give control and result in economies of operation; correction of certain construction changes; and additions to the boiler room equipment. The blackouts which were to follow would have required the pulling of seven switches in as many different places if these contracts had not been completed. Thus during the college year of 1940 - 1941, over \$100,000 was added to the college plant and equipment.

The trend of equipping to meet new needs was continued in the college year 1941 with an expenditure of \$25,000. The college spent over \$5,000 on new Fluorescent Lights, furniture, machines and gymnasium floors, while the General State Authority continued with its program to put the new buildings in shape to be operated, spending over \$20,000 as follows: Concrete steps and balustrade for the Centennial Gymnasium, movable equipment for the Junior High School and Gymnasium, and alterations and additions to better meet the needs for which the buildings were designed.

With an expanding program in Navy Aviation, the Bloomsburg State Teachers College filled out and returned a questionnaire to the War Manpower Commission, outlining its available faculty and facilities. Feeling that the college war participation was substantial, no request was made for other war programs for men. Meanwhile the Pennsylvania School Code has been amended so as to permit the cooperation of State Teachers Colleges with national, state, and local agencies in promoting the defense effort until 1945. In April, 1942, certain colleges and universities were notified that they were eligible for inspection for the Navy V - 12 (Officer Candidate) Program. Two State Teachers Colleges were inspected and Bloomsburg was chosen to accommodate a complement of 175 men.

Thus the gradual conversion of housing space from women's dormitories was stepped up to meet the increased need. From a housing capacity of 70 men the space was increased to accommodate 350 men. At the same time care was taken to reserve enough space to house *all* women students, the number of which had increased slightly in 1943 over 1942.

The change of dormitory accommodations from 70 men and 350 women to accommodations for 350 men and 100 women necessitated an expenditure of over \$30,000, including replastering and relighting of North Hall (Men's Dormitory) conversion of Waller Hall through new toilet facilities and faculty apartments; new slate roof for Waller Hall along with new furniture, double deck beds and bedding. In addition, certain major repairs and additions were made by the installation of new coal and ash handling equipment in the boiler house, the exterior painting of all wood work on Science Hall, Waller Hall (including old gymnasium), North Hall, and Carver Hall. Thus bringing the total improvement beyond the \$50,000 mark.

During this period the needs of the college after the war have not been forgotten. All remodeling and renovations of dormitory facilities will give balanced accommodations for men and women. Equipment procured for aviation, science, and nursing courses is adaptable for teacher education courses.

The most recent addition to the cooperative war programs has been in the field of Nursing Education. Instruction in physical, biological and social sciences is given to student nurses of the Bloomsburg Hospital. College credit is awarded for these courses and the outline of the Pennsylvania Nurses Association is followed.

By way of summary, the new developments in curriculum offerings in the period of transition from Peace to War are:

TEACHER EDUCATION DEVELOPMENTS

Field of Speech Correction as a part of the curriculum for the education of Teachers of Mentally Retarded Children.

Field of Aeronautics as a part of the curriculum for the education of Secondary Teachers.

Field of Spanish as an elective for Business Education students and later as an elective field for Secondary Students.

Educational Clinic with Health, Psychological and Speech divisions approved by the State Council of Education.

WAR PROGRAMS

Civilian Pilot Training of one-hundred (100) college students.

Engineering, Science, and Management War Training Courses housed in Science Hall have reached 1,500.

Aviation Cadets for the Army and Navy to the number of 120. July, 1942 to January, 1943, resumed August, 1943.

Naval Flight Instructors (250) from November, 1942 to November, 1943.

Navy V-12 Unit began July 1, 1943. Present complement 175.

Navy Aviation Cadet Program resumed August, 1943, with a complement of 100 men.

Science Instruction for Nurses of the Bloomsburg Hospital (22).

All these changes have made it necessary that the Dining Room be transformed into a cafeteria. Contracts to the amount of \$17,000 have been let to renovate the kitchen and install self-service for 450 persons now being fed at the college.

While the additions to the plant, renovations, and major repairs during the period from 1940 to 1943 have aggregated more than \$200,000, a far greater adjustment has been made by the faculty. Facilities merely make it possible for the faculty to serve new needs. When a musical director and language instructor becomes a mathematics teacher, a dean of men becomes an aviator, a coach learns to teach navigation, a physical education director becomes a drill master and a geography instructor becomes a weather man, we have a campus revolution, while not so obvious as the building changes, it nevertheless is truly revolutionary. If education is an adjustment to changing conditions, then our faculty is continuing to be educated.

Now that a teachers college has made the transition from peace to war there remains the problem of transforming it again to an institution to educate teachers for the new challenges which will come with the return of peace. A faculty committee is studying the problems of planning for post war education as it affects teachers and pupils in the public schools of Pennsylvania.

All these changes in a time of sudden shifts in manpower have been possible only through the vision of the Board of Trustees, the cooperation of the faculty, the confidence of the student-body, and the interest of the public spirited citizens of Bloomsburg, along with the continued support of the 9,000 Alumni.