

AS WE SEE IT . . .



THEORY vs PRACTICE

IT'S one thing to dream-up a theoretical plan; it's quite another to make it work.

That's the way it goes with various plans that have been advanced from time to time with the idea of lifting the Guard's level of training.

In some Pentagon circles, it has been thought that the National Guard would leap at the opportunity to have Congress pass a law requiring that everyone who joins the Guard go off immediately to six months' training at an Active Army camp, then come back to their units. "Why, just think how much sooner you'd be ready for combat," is the reasoning.

The plan is advocated by those who never have been confronted with the problem of "selling" young men on joining the Guard, attending drills every week, attending extra drills (often on a non-pay basis), attending 15 days' field training—and, in many cases, taking off weeks or months to attend Army schools. They don't have the first-hand "feel" of the family problems, the job problems, the educational problems, that have to be resolved and overcome in order for the National Guard not only to meet minimum strength requirements but to constantly increase its strength.

Present law does not require anyone to join the National Guard, or any other Civilian Component, for that matter (except for the service obligation on men who already have had active service). And the chances of Congress drafting men into the Guard appear remote, indeed. That means that the National Guard must continue to do as it has been doing for more than 300 years: persuade men to sign-up and participate of their own free will.

Through the exercise of leadership, many things that seem impossible not only become possible, but become accepted as a matter of course. That applies especially to training.

It takes only a brief look at history to show the enormous strides that have been made, training-wise, over a period of time. A 19th Century Guardsman would be amazed if he dropped in at an armory on Drill Night, 1955. In his day, drill attendance was likely to be spotty. There was no pay, no strong compulsion to attend (maybe a system of small-change fines which might or might not be invoked). If he did attend, he found the training elementary with heavy emphasis on dismounted drill and manual of arms, sketchy classes in weapons, tent-pitching, and a few other subjects. And they had to be entirely self-taught from a scanty library of training literature.

It wasn't until the '80's that the Regular Army's Service School program really got under way, and years later before National Guardsmen were given op-

portunities to participate. They jumped to it. Today, many thousands of Guardsmen attend basic, advanced, technical and specialized courses. They learn the intricacies of tactics, employment of weapons, machines, communications, electronics, that would have floored the old-timer who was proud to have mastered close- and extended-order drill and the manipulation of a single-shot musket or a muzzle-loading field piece.

We accept regular drill attendance as a matter of course, the planning and conduct of a 300-mile divisional motor movement to and from field training as routine. We fly 600mph jet planes, man and maintain heavy tanks, 8" self-propelled howitzers, 120mm antiaircraft guns, incredibly complex radars.

Our Air National Guard has taken a giant stride by sending thousands of men to basic training at Active Air Force bases. In the past month, within weeks of gaining Army concurrence in a similar plan, the Army National Guard over-subscribed its first monthly quota of Army Guard recruits for an eight-weeks basic training course.

The important point—one that the theorists miss—is that these tremendous advances have been (1) worked-out in large part through the Guard's own initiative (and often against stubborn opposition); (2) on a *voluntary* rather than compulsory basis; (3) over a period of time and not overnight.

There is a great deal of moaning in some circles about the "deplorable" state of the Civilian Components. The deploring is done by the very people who are directly responsible for the purely Federal Reserve Components. Occasionally, they except the National Guard from their indictment, and even acknowledge that the Guard is the most ready of all. That the Guard's participation in training is high above that of any of the other Components. That it provides organized, T/O *combat-type* units—not a hodgepodge of weird and wonderful M-plus-365-days "elk" outfits and an aggregation of card-indexed but non-participating MOSs and filler replacements.

It is strange, then, that these hand-wringers can't seem to grasp the simple fact that the methods by which the Guard has raised itself by its own bootstraps, and often against stubborn opposition, to its present high stature, must be good. Inexperienced as they are in the practical versus the theoretical business of citizen-soldiering, it is odd that they would want to try to trade a drastic, compulsory system of extremely doubtful practicality, for the evolutionary, voluntary, time-tested methods that have proved so successful for the National Guard.

Definitely, unmistakably, we want to increase our combat readiness. Let's do it our own way.

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dear guardsmen:

Among the youngest in point of service on the NGAUS Hq Staff is personable, Texas-born Mrs Martha M Patton. Wife of a Marine Corps electronics technician, at the Quantico, Va, Base, Martha came to THE NATIONAL GUARDSMAN 1 Apr to help take care of the steadily expanding work of our Circulation Department. As Circulation Statistician, Martha's kept busy with subscription records, both individual and unit, to make certain that no one misses his magazine, that addresses are up-to-date, and that all subscribers receive their copies regularly and on time.



Time was when Mrs Patton had visions of some day teaching in the "Lone Star State's" elementary schools. A graduate of Reagan High School, in Houston, she had completed her second year at Sam Houston State Teachers College when she met Mr Patton. Now very much "at home" in Virginia, from where she commutes to work, Martha likes her new life and she and her husband have plans to settle permanently along the Potomac.

As to hobbies, Martha is enthusiastic about the outdoors. Fishing heads the list, and whenever time permits she's off with line and rod. She's a spectator fan, too, of all forms of athletics, particularly basketball. And she's developing a lively interest in tinkering with some of her husband's own electrical gadgets.

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JOAN KELLY	Inside Back Cover

our cover

The 105mm How crew, ready for a fire mission, could be any National Guard outfit in field training anywhere this Summer. The work is by Bob Means, recently of the Maryland National Guard, whose art has appeared previously in THE NATIONAL GUARDSMAN.