

WE last convened a General Conference in this largest of American cities more than half a century ago, before most of the Delegates here today were even born. The date was March 27, 1917, just a few days before this Nation declared war on Germany and the Central Powers to project us into World War I.

It hardly need be pointed out how much change has taken place since that meeting so many years ago—change in the City in which we are meeting, change in the Nation, change in the National Guard, and a great deal of change in our Association.

Could those Guardsmen who gathered here 53 years ago be with us again today, they might find it difficult, at first, to recognize either the City whose hospitality they enjoyed, or the military force whose affairs they discussed. Most of the towering skyscrapers, the bridges, the huge airports and the other most striking physical characteristics of today's New York City did not yet exist in 1917.

Neither had many of the obvious features of today's National Guard yet been conceived. Our links with the Federal defense structure were still weak and illusory—the Technician structure on which we now rely so heavily did not then exist—there was no retirement program and no Federal involvement in Armory building—and our aviation element was in its infancy, giving no hint of the size and effectiveness it eventually would attain.

As for the National Guard Association of the United States, there were no individual members or dues, no permanent Headquarters, no fulltime staff, no magazine, and no well-defined system for keeping the States apprised of developments in Washington.

The changes that have taken place since that Conference of 53 years ago are extensive. Nevertheless, neither the City of New York, nor the Guard, nor the National Guard Association, have changed very much at all in the significant, lasting characteristics that count the most.

New York City still has a robust vitality and a uniqueness of spirit that transcends such superficial trappings as skyscrapers and bridges.

The National Guard still counts its ideal of service to America, and its unquenchable, "can do" spirit, as its most priceless assets.

And the National Guard Association of the United States is dedicated as firmly as ever to the proposition that our system—the National Guard system—serves the needs of our Nation, and our States, far better than anything that could be put in its place.

#### A Difficult Year

This past year has been difficult and worrisome for the entire Military Establishment, and for the National Guard no less than for the other components.

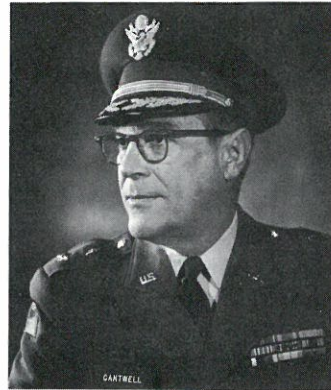
It was a year in which we all were subjected to frequent harassment and harsh criticism. It was a year in which all things military became fair game for the dissenters and gadflies in our society. The accomplishments of our Armed Forces were frequently ignored, their leaders depicted in the most unflattering terms, and their errors magnified out of all proportion to their importance.

Growing opposition to our involvement in the unpopular war in Southeast Asia undoubtedly helped feed the flames of anti-military sentiment.

The immature views of an extremist minority gained a momentum and a credibility which they ill-deserved. Campus radicals and their apologists of the intellectual Left initiated what one wise observer sees as a "tyranny of the minority."

Unable or unwilling to fit themselves into the cultural fabric of this great Nation, renegades of the New Left sought instead to burn, bomb and destroy what they could not understand or appreciate. Universities were

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James F. Cantwell  
President

National Guard Association  
of the United States

## The President's Report

to the 92d General  
Conference, National  
Guard Association of  
the United States



# The National GUARDSMAN

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