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A 'HARD-BOILED ORDER': THE REEDUCATION OF DISABLED WWI VETERANS IN NEW YORK CITY

By Scott Gelber

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Upon discharge, most veterans of the American Expeditionary Force received \$60, a new suit of clothes, a train ticket home, and the opportunity to purchase a modest life insurance policy. Unless they had been wounded, women serving as nurses and assistants in World War I more often than not received nothing.¹ The United States government, however, intended to repay its debt to soldiers disabled during the war by providing free vocational reeducation.

As a group, veterans have been able to make effective claims on the resources of the federal government. Indeed, the pensions granted to veterans of the Union army and their dependents after the Civil War represent the first major form of federal public assistance in the United States.² The claims of disabled veterans have been even more powerful. After the Civil War, for example, the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NHDVS) garnered even more political support than popular pension legislation providing benefits to all veterans. As Jennifer Keene has demonstrated, the process of conscription during the First World War further encouraged soldiers to view their military service as a mutually-binding covenant with the state. During the war and its aftermath, able-bodied and wounded soldiers alike demanded that military officials respect their input in matters of training, discipline, and demobilization. Because of this sense of political entitlement, Keene refers to the Doughboys of World War One as "citizen soldiers."³

The expectations of these self-styled patriots, however, clashed with a countervailing definition of patriotic duty. As Cynthia O'Leary has argued, the meaning of patriotism has been hotly contested during periods of warfare and memorializing in the United States. Employed by a wide range of interest groups, patriotic appeals have alternatively emphasized either the fulfillment of one's duty to the nation or for the respect for the nation's democratic and egalitarian ideals. According to O'Leary, World War I marked the first time that the United States government actively intervened in this debate and articulated a duty-oriented version of patriotism.⁴ Many federal policymakers, for example, expected that veterans should continue to put national interests ahead of their own preferences by accepting the first available job in whichever industry was experiencing the greatest shortage of labor.

Thus, as large numbers of wounded soldiers began to return from Europe in 1918, the stage was set for a conflict both within the federal government and between the government and veterans. Making matters more complicated, the federal government made an unprecedented commitment to retraining wounded soldiers for the labor market; rather than simply increasing the amount of pensions for disabled soldiers or providing permanent national veteran accommodations as it had after the Civil War. Throughout the period of postwar reconstruction, the Federal Board of Vocational Education (FBVE) promised to enable wounded veterans to return to their prewar occupations or to qualify

for new jobs. By and large, wounded veterans approved of this change in policy. As David Gerber has stated, wounded veterans foreshadowed the direction of the modern disability rights movement by advocating for policies of inclusion and self-sufficiency.⁵ Though Gerber focuses on veterans disabled during WWII, he indicates that this support for self-determination dates back to the interwar period. This essay explores that transitional moment. Focusing on the failure of reeducation in New York City, I argue that vocational rehabilitation became a focal point of conflict. The state and wounded veterans worked to define their mutual obligations and confronted the nation's conflicting commitments to democracy and social efficiency.⁶

Though the project of vocational rehabilitation struggled across the country, the FBVE's District 2, the New York Board of Vocational Education (NYBVE), received more formal complaints than all other regional districts combined. In the spring of 1920, a muckraking series of articles in the *New York Evening Post* prompted the House of Representatives to investigate. Although frustration with the NYBVE stemmed from the office's inefficiency and slow pace of case processing, criticism of the district coalesced around the *Post*'s exposure of a so-called "Hard-Boiled Order." Allegedly distributed by a high-ranking district official, the order provided strict instructions to the vocational guidance counselors who evaluated veterans' requests to be trained for specific occupations.

The organs used in approving cases are the eyes and the brain. The ears and the heart do not function. Be hard-boiled . . . Put cotton in your ears and lock the door. If you are naturally sympathetic, work nights when nobody is there.⁷

Although the bureaucrat who penned this memo was fired, the content of the order touched a nerve within the network of wounded veterans and their advocates. For many disabled veterans, the Hard-Boiled Order confirmed that the scope of the vocational reeducation program was constrained by official policy rather than administrative ineptitude. The *New York Evening Post* charged that the NYBVE was more interested in securing speedy job placements than in maximizing the range of opportunities available to retrained veterans. Arthur Griffin, a frustrated former training supervisor, described the NYBVE office as "hard-boiled" because of its "policy of narrowing the opportunities for training." Another NYBVE advisor explained that disabled veterans called him "hard-boiled" whenever he denied their requests to pursue the vocations of their choice. This official testified that

If I am an advisor at all, I can not take every man who comes to me and says he wants to be an accountant and say, 'all right, Jack, accountancy.' I have had any number of them go away and say that I have been 'hard-boiled.'

As the number of these incidents mounted, veterans nicknamed the experience of visiting the NYBVE's midtown Manhattan office as "The battle of Fifth Avenue." One veteran testified that "if a man was on his way to the vocational board, his buddy would say to him, 'going to war?'"⁸

This "hard-boiled" atmosphere was not merely the result of logistical complications.⁹ Instead, the controversy surrounding the NYBVE was generated by

conflict between disabled veterans' demands for vocational transformation and the conservative directives of postwar reconstruction and labor force allocation. Empowered by their service to the state, most disabled veterans demanded that the federal government reciprocate by retraining them into positions as skilled laborers even if they had worked in unskilled jobs before entering the military. In an environment charge by wartime nationalism, federal officials felt a special pressure to listen to these wishes. The FBVE, for instance, promised that the retraining of wounded U.S. soldiers would provide greater freedom of choice than its European counterparts.¹⁰ To some extent, Congress and FBVE officials demonstrated a commitment to state-sponsored economic mobility for disabled veterans. Ultimately, FBVE administrators were empowered to judge whether or not the majority of wounded veterans were capable of learning new skills. Although the FBVE hoped to resolve these sensitive issues by relying on the expertise and tact of vocational guidance counselors, the clash between veterans' expectations and the bureaucracy's desire to maximize postwar economic efficiency plagued the reeducation program. Underlying this tension was wavering official confidence over the intellectual and physical potential of an ethnically diverse and relatively uneducated population of soldiers.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1918

By the conclusion of the First World War, millions of U.S. military personnel had been wounded overseas. In addition to the pensions established by the War Risk Insurance Act of 1917, the Federal Board for Vocational Education developed a plan for the vocational rehabilitation of disabled military personnel. The following year, the recommendations of the FBVE culminated in the passage of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act. The FBVE established a Rehabilitation Division and separated retraining into two sections. 'Section 2' intended to equip veterans with new skills if they were unable to return to their prewar occupations. This section provided free instruction and financial support for students and their dependents during the entire duration of training. 'Section 3' training provided free instruction, but no stipend, to veterans with minor disabilities. If veterans completed their retraining courses, the FBVE also aided their job searches.¹¹

The Vocational Rehabilitation Act set the stage for conflict by failing to articulate clear instructions about the extent of veterans choices. The act gave an ambiguous directive to local vocational guidance counselors in each district office. The FBVE stated that "other things being equal" veterans should be granted their first choice of training program "provided they were capable of carrying it on successfully." The act empowered FBVE advisors to deny any course requested by a veteran if they deemed the course of study to be "non-feasible," not directed towards a key sector of the economy, or otherwise not likely to lead to employment. A counselor demonstrated the act's vague language by noting that his responsibility to the disabled veteran consisted of "making a vital choice for him; or assisting him in making it."¹²

Out of the total number of veterans in training at any given time, the majority were enrolled industrial or commercial trade courses. Veterans in rural

areas could be assigned to agricultural courses and the small number of veterans who had attended college could qualify for training in a variety of professions. Roughly 15 percent of disabled veterans were enrolled in “prevocational” training designed for veterans who could not read or who were learning to speak English as a second language. The NYBVE also attempted to retrain veterans through apprenticeships in 80 different shops and schools such as the City College of New York, The Art Students’ League School, and Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute.¹³

In New York City, the program of vocational reeducation faced special challenges due to the large volume of veterans who returned to the region after the war. By 1919, the city’s job market had become extremely tight as war production ceased and veterans returned home. The labor turbulence that followed hard on the heels of the war also interfered with apprentices and job placement.¹⁴ Making matters worse, the NYBVE did not enjoy the full cooperation of business or organized labor. While business groups generally supported vocational education as a way to undercut the economic power of unions, the postwar recession made employers reluctant to invest human resources.¹⁵ Although a few New York unions embraced the reeducation program and the American Federation of Labor urged all of its locals to support the work of the FBVE, the reeducation program collided with organized labor’s long-standing suspicion of state-sponsored vocational training.¹⁶

Citizen-Soldiers & Vocational Self-Determination

Despite these obstacles, the Rehabilitation Act raised hopes that the state could serve as an advocate for veteran self-determination and economic opportunity by transforming their prewar employment trajectories. While disabled veterans of World War I expected the state to compensate them for their sacrifices, they generally wished not only to become economically self-sufficient, but also to select their course of retraining. This finding is consistent with David Gerber’s assertion that American veterans of the Second World War desired to determine their own futures and resisted the “feminization” that resulted from accepting government largesse.¹⁷ After World War I disabled veterans generally subscribed to a particular definition of their economic rights. By and large, they demanded to be able to choose their future vocation and they demanded that these vocations be skilled.

Many advocates believed it to be particularly crucial for all veterans to find attractive jobs upon their return since they may have developed new ambitions during their time overseas. President Wilson, for example, stated that

The men in the trenches who have been freed from the economic serfdom to which some of them had been accustomed will, it is likely, return to their homes with a new view and a new impatience.

Similarly, the *American Legion Weekly* argued that vocational reeducation should be provided to each U.S. veteran because “life in the army has broadened his horizon.” Others argued that the rehabilitation process should allow disabled veterans to radically transform their pre-war vocational status in order to compensate for the economic injustices which had forced so many ex-servicemen to

leave school prematurely. The vocational expert of the Red Cross, for example, declared that because so many unskilled disabled veterans had never been given "a fair chance" to pursue professional development, it was "surely the duty of the state to repair so far as practicable this former inequality of opportunity."¹⁸

The FBVE and the NYBVE contributed to the impression that wounded veterans, in particular, would be encouraged to train for new and highly-skilled careers.¹⁹ The FBVE's organ, *The Vocational Summary*, stated that combat experience sometimes "clarified a man's aims and made him turn his back completely on his former occupation and everything connected with it."²⁰ Indeed, the FBVE referred to "the real reeducation" as a process which would provide unskilled veterans with radically new opportunities. One FBVE official went so far as to suggest that a veteran with a fifth grade education could be retrained as a physician. The FBVE promised that the "occupational horizon" of disabled ex-serviceman would be "extended and widened." In this spirit, *The Summary* published a poem written by a disabled veteran illustrating the transformative potential of vocational reeducation for a wounded soldier "torn from books ere he was grown."²¹

The FBVE also predicted that rehabilitation could be especially transformative for disabled African-American veterans. The *Summary* emphasized that the transition from unskilled to skilled labor would expand black soldiers' "view of the whole range of life." The FBVE boasted that "the Negro has seen the highways of progress opened to him in the land he helped to defend." *The Summary* also portrayed a black mother reckoning that after "these colored sons has shown the white folks what kind of stuff they is made of, the opportunities will be as golden as the streets of heaven, and as wide open as the pearly gates."²²

Some government officials intended to fulfill these promises by allowing disabled veterans to choose the form of their reeducation. Initially, the House Education Committee had recommended that a wounded veteran should select a new occupation "upon his own initiative." During the "Hard-Boiled" investigation, a NYBVE employee testified that

I think it is the right of every American to follow the occupation of his choice . . . even if there is some other occupation in which he will make a greater success."

Simeon Fess (D-OH), Chair of the 1920 House investigation, agreed with this official. Fess argued that the average wounded veteran "has had an unusual experience, and you ought to listen pretty generally to what he wants."²³

To some extent, the FBVE and the NYBVE satisfied these expectations by allowing wounded veterans to transfer between various retraining courses. NYBVE counselors were empowered to grant veterans' requests for alternative rehabilitation placements without consulting the central FBVE office in Washington, D.C. In March of 1920, for example, Tony Androsky switched from silversmith training to typewriter repair, while William Cossen moved from typewriter repair to shoemaking. By 1924, NYBVE counselors were authorized to allow veterans to train for more highly skilled jobs than they had held before the war, so long as their success was seen as "probable." During the course of 1924, an average of 16 percent of all trainees transferred from one placement to another in any given month.²⁴

Citizen-Soldiers & Vocational Conservation

Despite the wishes of disabled veterans and the rhetoric of the FBVE, a variety of factors limited the reeducation project to a mission of vocational conservation rather than self-determination. After the armistice, President Wilson moved quickly to preclude the redirection of wartime agencies towards peacetime objectives of industrial reform or regulation. Since progressive politicians had come to view Civil War pensions as a symbol of gilded age corruption, many were determined to limit the scope of veteran benefits after World War I.²⁵ Consistent with these policy directives, the Vocational Rehabilitation Act stated that only severely disabled soldiers were entitled to retraining. The FBVE ruled that disabled veterans must be unable to find any sort of employment, even temporary, part-time, or menial, in order to qualify for complete retraining. Others, regardless of their wounds, destitution, or dead-end occupations received disability benefits, but no invitation to retrain for new careers.²⁶ Bluntly stating that “the policy of vocational rehabilitation is one of conservation,” FBVE policy aimed to return disabled soldiers to their prewar circumstances.²⁷

This policy of vocational conservation resonated with the conventional wisdom concerning U.S. economic health during and after the world war. Since the outbreak of hostilities, Federal economic planners believed that the state should monitor and direct the distribution of laborers.²⁸ In the wake of wartime upheaval, the necessity of a rapid reconversion of civilian industry seemed self-evident to most government officials. FBVE leaders generally agreed that returning soldiers to their prewar positions was the most efficient plan for demobilization.²⁹

In the early planning stages of the Rehabilitation Act, some policymakers believed that this economic imperative would justify keeping disabled veterans under martial law until they completed their retraining. Initially, the War Risk Insurance Act of 1917 mandated vocational retraining for any wounded veteran who wished to receive disability compensation.³⁰ Two FBVE officials eventually testified before Congress that they thought it unfortunate that veterans were not held under martial authority throughout the course of their rehabilitation. Though stopping short of martial law, Congressman Thomas Blanton (D-TX) recommended that FBVE experts assign ex-servicemen to courses instead of considering “merely the inclination of the young man who was crippled in body and soul and mind and probably did not know what was best for him.”³¹

Often favoring coercion over volunteerism, the American mobilization for the First World War brought into particular focus a longstanding debate over the relationship between individual autonomy and national need. During the war, rumors spread of the possibility of drafting laborers into defense industries and managing them with military discipline and the threat of court martial. In May of 1918, the government actually issued an order to “work or fight” which pushed many unskilled workers into the army.³² The federal government also collaborated with right-wing organizations to limit dissent and encourage deference to the state. Many progressive-era policymakers wondered aloud whether democracy was best served by expanding individual choice or by subordinating one’s interest to the collective will.³³

This dilemma was especially evident in contemporary discussions of voca-

tional education.³⁴ John Dewey, in particular, recognized that vocational education was a doubled-edged sword that could serve either to expand or to limit individual opportunity. Observing the U.S education establishment's love/hate relationship with the highly-regulated system of rehabilitation employed by the German government during W.W.I., Dewey asserted that "we are struggling for the elimination of Prussianization when at the same time we are secretly admiring and envying it."³⁵ Herbert Croly, for his part, had far fewer qualms than Dewey about demanding that individuals subordinate themselves to a collective economic scheme. Croly's *New Republic* editorialized that the role of the federal government was not so much to ensure individual freedom as it was "to assert mastery over social and economic affairs." Indeed, Croly's tract, *The Promise of American Life*, called for vocational education as part of an extensive governmental regulation of individual economic roles. In this scheme, the laborer became increasingly viewed as just another resource to be placed, in the words of Frank Parsons, just "as timber, stone and iron, in the places which their natures fit them."³⁶

If the program of veteran reeducation was caught in the balance of these conflicting visions of patriotic duty and of vocational education, the trauma of World War I and the diverse demography of the armed forces served to tip the scales. The unprecedented technological horror of the war shook the faith of progressive intelligentsia in the reasonableness of human beings and the transformative power of education. In the early 1920's, for example, Dewey lamented that the war produced a "cult of irrationality" amongst the general populace. Eventually, Walter Lippman also repudiated his earlier belief in the capabilities of an informed citizenry, publicly doubting if "the public might ever know or act rationally in the modern world." Coincidentally, Lippman also recommended that the nation establish an expert "intelligence bureau" to organize the labor market in a more efficient manner. Eric Foner has concluded that early 1920's political culture began to question altogether "the idea of the self-directed citizen."³⁷

In this atmosphere, the relatively low educational attainment of the average W.W.I. veteran further decreased the expectations of retraining officials. Approximately 25 percent of the wounded veterans were illiterate and the majority had left school between the fifth and seventh grades.³⁸ The NYBVE viewed these "educational and mental qualifications" as firm limits to the vocational potential of most disabled veterans. The NYBVE established educational prerequisites for each job in the New York area and typically ruled against the "feasibility" of allowing a veteran to complete elementary or high school education before undertaking training for many skilled vocations.³⁹ To some extent, the NYBVE would have been hampered by its dependence upon the city's existing adult educational facilities even if it had attempted to provide substantial academic retraining. Most of the schools attended by disabled veterans were private, for-profit institutions, and few offered any academic courses. One NYBVE official attributed the agency's low success rate to this inability to locate appropriate forms of remedial academic education. In and of itself, this gap in New York's institutional capacity may have narrowed policymakers' assumptions about the feasibility of achieving educational and vocational transformation.⁴⁰

Ethnic and racial prejudice also limited the NYBVE's appraisal of veteran's capabilities.⁴¹ A NYBVE official testified that many vocational advisors were

unprepared to deal with the 20 percent of veterans who were born outside of the U.S.

They didn't know what kind of men there were in the Army . . . They did not know about the Russians and the Poles and the Italians and Hindus, and all the other groups that came along.⁴²

These prejudices were compounded by the FBVE's use of intelligence tests. Developed by the U.S. Army at the start of the war, the intelligence test was rife with class, racial, and regional bias. The tests concluded that the average mental age of soldiers was only 13 and that between 30 and 50 percent of white men, and 80 and 90 percent of black men, were technically "moronic." These tests, furthermore, purported to measure a form of inborn intelligence which remained constant regardless of education or training. Since the FBVE regarded the tests as "fairly reliable" gauges of veterans' ability to train for various jobs, these scores allowed NYBVE officials to excuse their poor performance on the grounds that many disabled veterans were racially, ethnically, and intellectually inferior. NYBVE Director William Clark informed Congress of his belief that a large number of wounded soldiers "would have been very difficult problems for vocational education even before they entered the army." Aware of these sentiments, a veteran quipped that many officials "take these soldiers who whipped the Germans to be mental cripples."⁴³

The imprecision of NYBVE medical evaluations also rendered the retraining process especially susceptible to the influence of social prejudices. The majority of the injuries sustained by the returning soldiers were invisible to the naked eye. Only from five to seven percent of the applicants to the FBVE were missing an arm or a leg. Instead, the majority of wounded veterans suffered from some form of internal injury whose diagnosis was contingent, to some extent, upon subjective considerations of character. Accounting for more than a third of veteran disabilities, cases of tuberculosis epitomize the murkiness of NYBVE diagnostics. One doctor revealed that the vocational prospects of the tubercular veteran were defined less by physical markers than by intangible elements such as "the personality of the worker." This physician stated that his diagnosis was informed by whether the veteran was "High strung or phlegmatic? Stupid or quick of perception?" Another doctor agreed that when he evaluated TB patients, "psychology, sociology, and medicine are mingled as in no other medical problem."

The destinies of the eight to fifteen percent of veterans diagnosed with ill-defined mental conditions such as "shell shock," "nervous disorder," "neurasthenia," and "psycho-neurosis" also depended upon the subjective judgments of doctors and guidance counselors. Several NYBVE officials blamed the poor performance of their office on veteran mental instability. One counselor commented "there are a great deal of young men extremely difficult to advise. Their nerves are shot to pieces." For instance, Ellis Guralsky, a former machinist's helper was labeled un-trainable after he was diagnosed as "a nervously unstable individual" who had lost "his usual energy and ambition to do things." Another official did not even bother to interview recovering veterans at the Cape May Naval Hospital since the doctors informed him that they only discharged "the dead and the crazy." The racial, ethnic, and class prejudices of the doctors and

vocational advisors likely biased judgments of which wounded veterans had sufficient character to “carry on” in various forms of reeducation.⁴⁴

While avoiding the use of outright coercion, the FBVE employed experts to survey the post-war labor market and direct veterans towards undersupplied occupations. The Board's monitoring of training for automotive vocations best illustrates the manner in which macroeconomic concerns limited veterans' retraining options. Since veterans' demand for training in these disciplines so far exceeded NYBVE projections of available jobs, auto mechanics became an especially troublesome field for the New York office. An NYBVE official observed that “the job of the vocational director is to dissuade many from this first and universal choice.” The NYBVE eventually addressed this problem by issuing a blanket ruling that wounded veterans could not pursue automotive training unless they had previous experience in the field.⁴⁵

In addition to limiting the number of disabled veterans who could train for popular jobs, NYBVE officials hoped to lower the aspirations of many of their clients. An expert on commercial education complained that many disabled veterans “are looking too far up the scale” and recommended that NYBVE vocational counselors to “cease trying to make ‘Captains of Industry’ of men who are only fit for ‘Sergeants of Service.’” Similarly, the FBVE's Chief of Vocational Rehabilitation observed of disabled veterans that “very frequently they want to do things that they are not capable of doing.” Congressman Platt (R-NY) agreed that “a good many men want training that they should not be given.” Testifying before Congress, a veteran responded to these sentiments. The vet told the Representatives that

A man of 20 or 30 years old, I think he is old enough to know what he wants to do in his future life. If he does not know then he never will. No man can tell him.⁴⁶

Not only did the FBVE and NYBVE policy limit reeducation options, but the New York district also failed to provide any sort of training for some veterans assigned to workplaces for on-the-job “placement training.” While the NYBVE periodically inspected factories, such Brooklyn Auto-painting shop Wycomb Perfect Finish, to determine if they emphasized production at the expense of education, the NYBVE faced repeated allegations that it neglected the education of veterans who were training on the job. A supervisor testified that the NYBVE placement department was pressured to find jobs for trainees, rather than ensure the quality of onsite training. The *New York Evening Post* accused the NYBVE of merely providing “contract labor” to factories.⁴⁷

Although the *Post*'s rhetoric seems somewhat overblown, the NYBVE did adhere to a narrow definition of vocational education. Vocational guidance counselors denied veterans' requests to study English because these courses were considered to be “education and not vocation.” When a mill offered an apprenticeship to one disabled ex-serviceman with the stipulation that he improve his language skills, the NYBVE denied the man's request and ordered him to learn a different trade instead. Even foreign-born veterans with disabilities could not necessarily count on having English courses included in their retraining assignments. One Russian-American veteran, for example, was told that his “training

must be vocational; it can not be purely academic.”⁴⁸ To be sure, the NYBVE recognized some overlap between academic and vocational pursuits, especially with respect to semi-illiterate or foreign-born veterans. By 1920, roughly 15 percent of the disabled veterans retraining in New York City were studying language arts or elementary social studies simultaneous with coursework in specific trades. The Chief of Vocational Rehabilitation explained that he approved these “pre-requisite” or “prevocational” courses since a disabled veteran was “much more readily employable if he knows something about civics and the history of the country and things of that kind.”⁴⁹

Nevertheless, the boundary between vocational and academic education was a consistent source of tension between disabled veterans and NYBVE officials. No matter how much a veteran may have needed to improve his English skills before qualifying for the occupation of his choice, the NYBVE did not allow students to enroll entirely in academic courses. According to a NYBVE official, the resentment which this ruling spread among disabled veterans taking academic courses was “a very sensitive matter.” For example, Irving Kantor, who had worked as a laborer for a newspaper company before the war, decided that his vocational aspirations would be better served by obtaining a high school diploma than by training in a fountain pen factory. Kantor explained that “I could learn more in the educational line than I could learn in the pen factory. I tried to explain it to them people, but they wouldn’t reason with me.” In addition to students such as Kantor, teachers and administrators complained that veterans who had left school early in their lives were compelled to transfer out of elementary education courses before they had learned enough skills to qualify for a decent range of economic opportunities.⁵⁰ Throughout the postwar period, the NYBVE stumbled over the question of how to serve disabled veterans whose prewar economic prospects had been especially narrow. After all, if the goal of rehabilitation was to return veterans to their prewar vocational status, what sort of retraining should have been provided to the 50 percent of veterans who had been chronically unemployed or who had previously labored in menial and temporary forms of work?

Citizen-Soldiers Vote with Their Feet

Throughout the brief period of post-war reconstruction, many veterans demonstrated their discontent with the restrictions placed on their reeducation options. Disillusioned by the gaps between the rhetoric and reality of the NYBVE, many veterans refused to enter retraining courses in the first place. The task of recruitment proved to be so difficult that the government enlisted the aid of the American Legion, the Red Cross, and the Elks. The Elks produced a short film entitled “The Way Back,” and formed a special committee to convince disabled veterans to accept retraining. It was not unheard of for the Elks to send a representative to a veteran’s home 15 to 20 times before the disabled soldier was finally persuaded to accept the value of vocational reeducation. The American Legion also sent letters and made house calls in order to convince wounded veterans of the value of retraining.⁵¹

The sheer frequency with which disabled veterans passed up on the opportunity for reeducation or dropped out before they graduated demonstrates that

their expectations went unfulfilled. Throughout the FBVE rehabilitation project, 30 percent of veterans for whom courses of reeducation had been approved refused to begin their training. An additional ten percent dropped out after embarking on a course of rehabilitation.⁵² Even among veterans who completed a retraining course, significant numbers refused to accept job offers for which they had been reeducated. In the six months between March and August of 1924, the proportion of New York veterans who were labeled "non-cooperative" in their job hunt ranged between 13 and 53 percent. This label was attached to veterans whose expectations for future employment were judged unreasonable by NYBVE officials.⁵³

While there are several possible explanations for a wounded veteran's decision to forego reeducation, several individual cases suggest that many veterans rejected training because they could not be retrained for the skilled jobs of their choice. Gilbert Wright, a Brooklyn-based chauffeur before the war, wanted to acquire the skills necessary to manage a garage. Wright emphatically wanted "to be put in a position of training where I could take charge of a garage, not work in a garage." Sensitive to the declining status of industrial labor in New York City, Wright aspired to train for "a position" as an executive rather than "a job" as an operative or a clerk. Nevertheless, a NYBVE advisor assigned Wright to a secretarial course at the Madison Avenue Merchants and Bankers School. According to an indignant Wright, his advisor simply told him that elementary clerical work was the "one thing" that he was fit to learn. As a result of his experience with the NYBVE, Wright became so "sick and disgusted" that he dropped out of the rehabilitation process. During the 1920 "Hard-Boiled" investigation, Representative Simeon Fess (D-OH) scolded Gilbert Wright for second-guessing his placement. Fess told Wright that

The board really ought to be more capable of deciding that than you . . . Vocational guidance is a profession in itself, and very often a young man wants to do a thing and is anxious to do a thing and is not capable of doing it.⁵⁴

Like Wright, veteran Irving Kantor also grew frustrated when the NYBVE denied his request to be retrained as a skilled gem setter. Stymied by NYBVE officials, Kantor testified that he "would not have liked to go into a shop . . . setting precious stones is no shop sir. It is no shop."⁵⁵ Many other disabled veterans were not satisfied with promises to retrain them as semiskilled workers. Buoyed by a belief that they were owed a debt by the Federal government, many veterans refused to accept these sorts of placements. For example, a June 1925 report on the pending registrations of New York City veterans stated with regard to one applicant that "suitable training could not be made due to claimant's unwillingness to accept the training offered." Similarly, the NYBVE office reported that the disabled veteran George Greene "stated that he did not believe the Bureau could train him into a steady paying job in a year's time."⁵⁶

A FBVE occupational therapist summarized the manner in which the ambitions of many disabled veterans put them at odds with the process of reeducation.

Now, the man with a fifth-grade education . . . comes to the conclusion that he wants to be a doctor or a lawyer or a professional man of some kind, and as soon as he gets the opportunity he asks for that, and the Federal board can not give

that man the training for medicine or law; he hasn't the elementary education; he hasn't high school or college training and they can not put him through the complete course. Then when he can not get it, he says, 'it is all a fake.'

The awkward testimony of Uel Lamkin, FBVE Chief of Vocational Rehabilitation, also demonstrates the manner in which the rehabilitation process stumbled over the issue of student assignments. Lamkin became uncomfortable when the Chairman of the House Committee on Education asked him how the placement of the ex-servicemen would be determined.

The Chairman: Now who is going to be the judge?
Mr. Lamkin: That is a pretty hard question to answer.
The Chairman: It has been shown before the committee here that the boys are dissatisfied.⁵⁷

Wavering between the democratic appeal of individual course selection and a perceived national imperative for economic and social efficiency, the advisement process never effectively addressed the issue of student choice.

As discontent mounted, Congress and some FBVE officials began to advocate for a more flexible interpretation of the rehabilitation mandate. To some extent, the FBVE had already responded to the narrow language of the Sears Bill by urging a "liberal" interpretation of the law.⁵⁸ According to an FBVE official, the Federal Board regularly "stretched the law" to give men fully-funded Section 2 training who did not technically qualify. In July of 1919, a year before the "Hard-Boiled" investigation, Congress amended the Rehabilitation Act. This amendment expanded the scope of the reeducation program by offering Section 2 training to all veterans whose job performance was affected by war wounds, regardless of whether they had been able to get a new job or not.⁵⁹ By the time that the reforms were enacted, however, the whole endeavor had been tainted as "hard-boiled."

The Federal Board for Vocational Education ultimately provided retraining to only a few thousand men nationwide, a small fraction of the soldiers disabled during World War I. By March of 1920, the NYBVE had approved courses of reeducation for only one sixth of the 29,816 New York veterans who were registered as eligible for training. Out of this number, only a few hundred had actually begun taking classes. After the Rehabilitation Division of the FBVE merged into the Veterans Bureau in 1921, it accepted the retraining applications of only one quarter of the 110,000 remaining eligible veterans.⁶⁰ These failures can be partially attributed to a lack of political will and a dearth of resources. But the rehabilitation process was also foiled by conflict over the scope of the program.

As a group, the disabled veterans of the First World War present a unique case study of the substance and the mythology of the nation's economic and educational ideals. To some extent, veterans were able to leverage their patriotic status in order to advocate for an expansion of the initial reeducation legislation. Nevertheless, ambiguous directives concerning the range of student choices, a narrow definition of vocational training, a lack of institutional capacity, and social prejudice frustrated ambitious veterans and perplexed the vocational officers responsible for implementing FBVE policy. As a result, veterans' hope that the

state might serve the interests of opportunity went unfulfilled. While the disabled veterans of World War I were often disappointed, their protests foreshadowed the modern disability rights movement's demands for self-determination and the welfare rights movement's calls for the decoupling of public assistance and state paternalism.

More immediately, the disabled veterans of World War I directly and indirectly contributed to the campaign for the relatively democratic educational policies of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944. Although the GI Bill still disproportionately benefited middle class white veterans, its generosity and flexibility contrast dramatically with the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1918. Indeed, the differences between the GI Bill and the educational benefits of World War I represent the culmination of an array of WWI veteran activism.⁶¹ In particular, the formative "Post-war Manpower Conference" that spanned 1942 and 1943, sought to avoid the contested aspects of World War I rehabilitation by emphasizing multiple forms of training and providing stipends sufficient to maintain veterans during their time of study. While initial plans were more limited, the GI Bill ultimately determined the number of years of schooling according to soldiers' length of service rather than their age or previous educational status. Perhaps the most striking contrast to the W.W.I. experience was that the veterans of World War Two were empowered to attend schools of their choosing as long as they could meet the respective admissions requirements.⁶² Ironically, the resonance of the World War I experience also explains why some disabled veteran advocacy groups opposed the broad scope of the GI Bill. Organizations such as the Military Order of the Purple Heart and Disabled American Veterans both worried that the GI Bill's widely distributed benefits might render the legislation vulnerable to future cuts that would be especially dire for disabled veterans. After all, the disabled veterans of W.W.I. had seen their benefits curtailed or threatened during the postwar recession of the early 1920s and by the Economy Act of 1933.⁶³

While the primary organizational lobby for the GI Bill was the American Legion, an advocacy group for both able-bodied and disabled veterans, the experience of wounded veterans remained particularly important to the emergence of this legislation. Their experience in the 1920s encouraged policymakers to broaden the training provisions of World War Two veterans' benefits. It was to this campaign that American Legion Commander Warren Atherton paid tribute when he spoke of the "decades of sacrifice, suffering, trial and error" preceding the development of the GI Bill of Rights.⁶⁴

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ENDNOTES

I would like to thank Eric Foner for his encouragement of an earlier version of this manuscript.

1. Theda Skocpal's work suggests that perceptions of the "rights" of veterans contrasted to a policy discourse around meeting the "needs" of women. Theda Skocpal, *Protecting*

Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States (Cambridge, 1992). For more on the gendering of social welfare policy in this period, see Linda Gordon, *Pitied but Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890–1935* (New York, 1994) and Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in the 20th-Century America* (New York, 2001).

2. Skocpal argues that that support for these Civil war pensions was fueled by the dynamics of a late nineteenth century system of political patronage. She also recognizes the influence of a national sense of moral obligation to veterans. Skocpal, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, pp. 66, 149; David A. Gerber, “Disabled Veterans, The State, and the Experience of Disability in Western Societies, 1914–1950,” *Journal of Social History* 36 (2003), p. 899; Patrick J. Kelly, *Creating a National Home: Building the Veterans’ Welfare State, 1860–1900* (Cambridge, MA, 1997). For an important reminder that the U.S. government has often failed to fulfill its obligations to veterans, see Lewis Milford and Richard Severo, *The Wages of War: When American Soldiers Come Home, from Valley Forge to Vietnam* (New York, 1989).

3. Kelly, *Creating a National Home*. Whereas only ten to twenty percent of soldiers were conscripted, roughly seventy percent of soldiers in World War I were drafted. Similar to the concept of the “citizen soldier,” Kelly uses the term “martial citizenship.” Jennifer Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America* (Baltimore, 2001).

4. Cecilia O’Leary, *To Die For: The Paradox of American Patriotism* (Princeton, NJ, 1999).

5. Soldiers disabled by war have generally been committed activists to veterans’ rights in mixed as well as disability-centered organizations. Gerber, “Disabled Veterans,” pp. 902, 907, 911–12; K. Walter Hickel, “Medicine, Bureaucracy, and Social Welfare: The Politics of Disability Compensation for American Veterans of World War I,” in *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, edited by P. Longmore and L. Umansky (New York, 2001).

6. For discussion of these tensions during the progressive era, see Steven Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era* (New York, 1998) and David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York, 1980).

7. The American Legion of New York State also held a series of public hearings in 1921 to investigate the inefficiency of the NYBVE. U.S. House Committee on Education, *Charges Against The Federal Board For Vocational Education: Hearings Before The Committee On Education*. 66th Congress, 2d sess., 1920, pp. 4, 7; *The Vocational Summary* (June 1921), p. 29.

8. *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 553, 684, 244, 1644; Milford and Severo, *The Wages of War*, p. 259.

9. In 1923, Federal investigators discovered that NYBVE staff had left approximately 200,000 letters from concerned veterans and their allies unanswered. In February 1920, the *New York Evening Post* claimed that it took the FBVE six to nine months to process many claims. Veteran rehabilitation was also impeded by corrupt officials within the Harding administration. Milford and Severo, *The Wages of War*, pp. 247–58; Harold Littledale, “Thousands of Disabled Men Untrained in This District,” *New York Evening Post*, 18 February 1920, p. 1.

10. Milford and Severo, *The Wages of War*, p. 217; Donald McMurtrie, "Vocational Re-Education of Disabled Soldiers and Sailors," *Annual Proceedings of the National Society for Vocational Education* (New York, 1918), pp. 51–2; Federal Board for Vocational Education, *Annual Report of the Federal Board for Vocational Education* (Washington, DC, 1919), pp. 20–1; *Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Soldiers and Sailors: Letter From the Federal Board for Vocational Education*. 65th Congress, 2d sess., 1918, p. 31; *Charges Against The Federal Board For Vocational Education*, pp. 468, 834. For a discussion of the relationship between European and American reforms during the progressive era, see Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, 1998).

11. Some potential trainees were discouraged by the meager \$80 stipend provided to veterans in Section 2 training. This sum was hardly sufficient to support an individual in New York City, let alone a family. Most veterans with minor disabilities who were eligible for Section 3 training, also could not afford to take advantage of this benefit. By February of 1920, only 142 New York City veterans had begun Section 3 training. *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 316, 693, 948, 1678; Harold Littledale, 'Disabled Soldiers Untrained After 19 Months of Red Tape,' *New York Evening Post*, 16 February 1920, p. 4.

12. The War Risk Insurance Act established the War Risk Insurance Board (WIRB) in order to administer the financial compensation of wounded veterans. The FBVE evolved out of the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, the first federal support for vocational education. Also known as the Sears Bill, the Vocational Rehabilitation Act initially appropriated \$2,000,000 to establish the FBVE's Rehabilitation Division. On the FBVE see, A McClure, J. Chrisman and P. Mock, *Education for Work: The Historical Evolution of Vocational and Distributive Education in America* (Cranbury, NJ, 1985); Herbert Kliebard, *Schooled to Work: Vocationalism and the American Curriculum, 1876–1946*. (New York, 1999); Harvey Kantor, *Learning to Earn: School, Work, and Vocational Reform in California, 1880–1930* (Madison, 1988). On the Rehabilitation Act, see Hickel, "Medicine, Bureaucracy, and Social Welfare," p. 239; Federal Board for Vocational Education, *Annual Report* (1919), pp. 1, 7–18; *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 21, 1150, 1463–4, 459, 574; *The Vocational Summary* (May 1921), p.3. On the development of the vocational guidance profession, see Kantor, *Learning to Earn*, pp. 150–56; Joel Spring, "Education and Progressivism," *History of Education Quarterly* 10 (1970), pp. 53–71; Kliebard, *Schooled to Work*, pp. 163–171.

13. "Summary, Semi-Monthly Training Reports," August through May, 1921, Rehabilitation Division of the Federal Board for Vocational Education and U.S. Veterans Bureau, 1918–28, Records of District and Regional Offices, National Archives and Records Administration, Northeast Region, New York, NY, Record Group 15.5.2, Box 53, "New York [Files]"; *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 539, 732, 972; *The Vocational Summary* (May 1920), p.1; "Report on Prospective Rehabilitations," January through July, 1924, FBVE Records, Box 30, "Employment"; C.T. Lile to Chief of the Rehabilitation Division, 28 March 1925, FBVE Records, Box 53, "New York [Files]."

14. New York had supplied ten percent of all U.S. overseas forces during W.W.I and served as the nation's most common port of reentry. *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 355, 452, 1451, 1764; M.E. Lynch to H.L. Brunson (Memo: "General Situation in New York"), 11 March 1920, FBVE Records, Box 44, "Placement Training—Publicity"; "Help for Veterans Asked From Public," *The New York Times*, 30 August 1923, p.22; William Clark to the Director of the Medical and Rehabilitation Service, 4 March 1924, FBVE Records, Box 30, "Employment"; J.C. Warlow to the Chief of the Rehabilitation Division, 31 January 1924, FBVE Records, Box 30, "Employment." On economic con-

ditions and labor activism in the World War I era, see Joseph McCartin, *Labor's Great War: The Struggle for Industrial Democracy and the Origins of Modern American Labor Relations, 1912–1921* (Chapel Hill, 1997) and William J. Breen, *Labor Market Politics and the Great War: The Department of Labor, the States, and the First U.S. Employment Service, 1907–1933* (Kent, OH, 1997).

15. *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 1438–9.

16. Unions were wary that trade education might serve to institutionalize a system of economic caste and demanded that vocational students be offered a diverse curriculum and the opportunity to transfer freely from one curriculum to another. Some unions were also concerned that federal training might flood the tightening postwar job market and reduce their bargaining power. Union leaders also worried that employers would leverage federal training initiatives to support their preference for cheaper semi-skilled operatives. International Association of Machinists, *Proceedings of the Sixteenth Convention* (Washington DC, 1920), p. 103; American Federation of Labor, *Proceedings of the Annual Convention* (Bloomington, IN: 1918), pp. 237, 320–1; AFL, *Proceedings* (1921), p. 319; *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 383–4, 1600, 229; Ira Katznelson and Margaret Weir, *Schooling For All: Class, Race, and the Decline of the Democratic Ideal* (New York, 1985); Stillman Benway to H.L. Brunson, 14 May 1920, FBVE Records, Box 44, “Placement Training—Publicity”; Breen, “Industrial Training and Craft Dilution in World War I”; *The Vocational Summary* (May 1921), p. 5; Arthur Griffin to J.A. Chandler (Memo: “Meeting of Central Federated Union”) 27 November 1918, FBVE Records, Box 26, “Miscellaneous Correspondence 1918–1919.”

17. Gerber, ‘Disabled Veterans,’ pp. 900–901.

18. Marquis James, “Learning While They Work,” *American Legion Weekly*, 12 September 1919, p. 14; Kennedy, *Over Here*, p. 248; *Charges Against The Federal Board*, p. 1853; McMurtrie, “Vocational Re-Education,” pp. 58–9.

19. These expectations began to be established even before soldiers returned home. During the six months that elapsed between the armistice and the demobilization of most American soldiers, the Army established the American Expeditionary Forces University at Beaune, France. The AEF University permitted a portion of US overseas forces to study various trades while serving only one hour of regular military duty per day. Speakers at school assemblies regularly boasted of the opportunity that soldiers would have to obtain skilled employment in a bountiful America. Mark Meigs, *Optimism at Armageddon: Voices of American Participants in the First World War* (New York, 1997), pp. 189–90.

20. *The Vocational Summary* (May 1921), p.3; Littledale, “Disabled Soldiers Untrained After 19 Months of Red Tape,” p.4; “Extract from District 2 Conference,” 1 November 1922, FBVE Records, Box 29, “Certification of Graduation—Disbursing.”

21. *The Vocational Summary* (April 1919), p. 6.

22. *Charges Against the Federal Board*, pp. 452, 487, 1649; *The Vocational Summary* (October 1918), p.7; *The Vocational Summary* (June 1921), pp. 29, 34; *The Vocational Summary* (April 1919), p. 89.

23. U.S. House of Representatives, *Vocational Rehabilitation of Returned Soldiers and Sailors*, 65th Congress, 2d sess., 1918, p. 2; *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 459–60, 628.

24. Uel Lamkin to District Vocational Officers (Memo: "Changes and Extensions of Courses"), 29 October 1919, FBVE Records, Box 26, "Miscellaneous Correspondence 1918–1919"; "Record D2-19753" and "Record D2-25683," 9 March 1920, FBVE Records, Box 44, "Placement Training—Publicity"; M.E. Head to H.V. Stirling (Memo: "Rehabilitation Survey Group, NYC"), 31 December 1924, Box 52, "Mineola—New York [Files]."
25. The post-war depression of 1920–1922 also hampered the efforts of activists to enlist the aid of the federal government. Skocpal, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, pp. 262, 308; Kennedy, *Over Here*, pp. 250, 287; McCartin, *Labor's Great War*, pp. 175–191; David Montgomery, "Industrial Democracy or Democracy in Industry?: The Theory and Practice of the Labor Movement, 1870–1925." in *Industrial Democracy in America: The Ambiguous Promise* edited by N. Lichtenstein and H. Harris (New York, 1993), p. 21.
26. *Charges Against The Federal Board*, p. 1115; John Cummings, "Reconstruction and Vocational Education," *The Vocational Summary* (February 1919), p. 6; U.S. House, *Vocational Rehabilitation of Returned Soldiers and Sailors*, pp. 2, 8, 18; U.S. Senate, *Training of Teachers for Occupational Therapy for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Soldiers and Sailors* 65th Congress, 2d sess., 1918, p. 60; U.S. War Department, Office of the Surgeon General, Abstracts, Translations, and Reviews of Recent Literature on the Subject of the Reconstruction and Reeducation of the Disabled Soldier, Bulletin No. 1, 1918, p. 63; The Vocational Summary (October 1918), p. 1; Arthur Griffin to the Chief of the Division of Rehabilitation (Memo: "Rulings in Regard to Compensation by the Bureau of War Risk Insurance"), 29 October 1918, FBVE Records, Box 26, "Miscellaneous Correspondence 1918–1919."
27. *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 739, 242.
28. Breen, *Labor Market Politics and the Great War*.
29. Charles Winslow, "Address," *Annual Proceedings of the National Society for Vocational Education 1918*, p.73; *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 313, 1864.
30. *Charges Against The Federal Board*, p. 379.
31. United States House, *Vocational Rehabilitation*, p.8; *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp.455, 1140, 262–3.
32. Kennedy, *Over Here*, pp. 259–60, 166.
33. For more on government sponsored repression during W.W.I., see O'Leary, *To Die For*; U.S. War Department, *Abstracts, Translations, and Reviews*, p. 63; U.S. House, *Vocational Rehabilitation*, pp. 2, 5, 8; *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 455, 1140, 1316; McMurtrie, "Vocational Re-Education," pp. 56, 73; McClure et al., *Education for Work*, p. 74.
34. In general, the pioneers of vocational education and vocational guidance had not been shy about limiting the career choices of their advisees. By the turn of the century, coincident with the growth of secondary schooling, the demise of apprenticeship, and the arrival of large numbers of immigrants, advocates of vocational education won increasing acceptance for their agenda. Ultimately, the Smith Act of 1917 endorsed federal funding for vocational education and the notion of the authoritarian guidance counselor was widely accepted. See Katznelson and Weir, *Schooling for All*; Marvin Lazerson, *Origins of the Urban School: Public Education in Massachusetts, 1870–1915* (Cambridge, 1971); Harvey Kantor and David Tyack eds., *Work, Youth, and Schooling: Historical Perspectives on*

Vocationalism in American Education (Stanford, 1982); Kliebard, *Schooled to Work*; Kantor, *Learning to Earn*.

35. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: an Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York, 1916), p.140; John Dewey, "Vocational Education in Light of the World War," in *John Dewey: The Middle Works, 1899–1924*, Vol. 11. edited by J.A. Boydston (Carbondale, IL, 1982), p. 54.

36. Kennedy, *Over Here*, pp. 246–7; Diner, *A Very Different Age*, pp. 229; Spring, "Education and Progressivism," p., 61, 64.

37. Dewey cited in Diner, *A Very Different Age*, p. 263; Lippman cited in Kennedy, *Over Here*, p. 91; Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York, 1998), p. 181.

38. *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 1622, 1139–40. For AEF demographics, see Kennedy, *Over Here*.

39. "Manual of Employment Objectives," April 1923, FBVE Records, Box 30, "Employment."

40. "Extract from District 2 Conference," 1 November 1922, FBVE Records, Box 29, "Certification of Graduation—Disbursing"; FBVE, *Annual Report*, 1919, vol. II, p. 15; *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 607, 599, 1627. On adult education, see Joseph Kett, *Pursuit of Knowledge Under Difficulties: From Self-Improvement to Adult Education in America* (Stanford, 1994).

41. A racist precedent was established early by the Jim Crow policy of the AEF University in France. Meigs, *Optimism at Armageddon*, pp.189–90. On racism in the W.W.I. Army, see Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*. Prejudice could also work in the favor of some veterans. Daniel Edwards, for example, was permitted to pursue coursework at Columbia University despite having only completed junior high school. A NYBVE counselor noted that Edwards was "above average in appearance and personality," "gentlemanly," and likely to become "a high-class man." *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 1277–80.

42. *Charges Against The Federal Board*, p. 740; Hickel, "Medicine, Bureaucracy, and Social Welfare," pp. 237, 256–8; Kennedy, *Over Here*, p. 157; Milford and Severo, *The Wages of War*, pp. 235–7.

43. Test experts generally believed that workers would be more fulfilled by following jobs for which science said they were suited rather than ones for which they chose on their own. Joel Spring, "Psychologists and the War: The Meaning of Intelligence in the Alpha and Beta Tests," *History of Education Quarterly* 12 (1972), p. 3; Nicholas Pastore, "The Army Intelligence Tests and Walter Lippman," *The Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 4 (1978), pp. 316–17, 324; Kennedy, *Over Here*, pp. 91, 162–3, 188; Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*, pp. 27–28; Kliebard, *Schooled to Work*, pp. 166–168; *The Vocational Summary* (June 1921), p. 34; *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 2057, 757, 278.

44. By the end of the initial WRIB screening process, doctors rejected over half of the 940,000 compensation claims. Hickel, "Medicine, Bureaucracy, and Social Welfare," pp. 244–51, 255–6; *The Vocational Summary* (March 1919), p. 9; *The Vocational Summary* (February 1919), p. 2; *The Vocational Summary* (March 1919), p.17; *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 1626, 2000, 765, 1189, 1205, 348, 2000, 1159, 1179; Arthur Griffin to

District Vocational Officer (Memo: "Initial Contact with Navel Hospital at Cape May, NJ"), 12 October 1918, FBVE Records, Box 26, "Miscellaneous Correspondence 1918–1919."

45. M.A. Gadsby, "A Government Program for Disabled Sailors and Soldiers," *Annual Proceedings of the National Society for Vocational Education* (New York, 1918), pp. 62–3; *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 628, 922; McMurtrie, "Vocational Re-Education," p. 59. Similarly, officials worried that too many veterans were seeking to obtain white collar jobs. Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*, p. 164.

46. "Extract from District 2 Conference," 1 November 1922, FBVE Records, Box 29, "Certification of Graduation—Disbursing"; *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 1160, 278, 52.

47. F.W. Lavenburg (Memo: "Placement Training"), 27 November 1922, FBVE Records, Box 44, "Placement Training—Publicity"; *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 357, 520, 1598; Littledale, "Disabled Soldiers Untrained After 19 Months of Red Tape," p. 4.

48. *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 242, 739.

49. In response to increasing pressure to meet the special needs of adult students, the FBVE established prevocational "Training Centers." At the end of 1921, *The Vocational Summary* could boast of an enrollment of 9,415 veterans in 145 training centers nationwide. *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 1207, 608, 611, 1217; *The Vocational Summary* (April 1920), p. 22; *The Vocational Summary* (November 1921), pp. 23–4.

50. *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 1333, 414, 1771; *The Vocational Summary* (May 1921), p. 3.

51. *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 295–6, 1075, 611. For a discussion of the gap between mainstream veteran organizations and the perspectives of disabled veterans see Gerber, "Disabled Veterans."

52. *Charges Against The Federal Board*, p. 49; Littledale, "Disabled Soldiers Untrained After 19 Months of Red Tape," p. 1.

53. Over the course of this period, the average rate of non-cooperation was 31 percent. "Analysis of Recapitulation of Cases Reported Rehabilitated and Still Unemployed," 1924, FBVE Records, Box 30, "Employment."

54. *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 129–148.

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 418–19.

56. "Eligibility Load," 3 June 1925, FBVE Records, Box 53, "New York [Files]."

57. *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 453, 1208.

58. Initially, the FBVE clashed with the more parsimonious War Risk Insurance Board (WRIB). Injuries needed to be confirmed by the WRIB before veterans became eligible for retraining. The WRIB also determined eligibility by comparing prewar income with postwar prospects. Veterans earning within ten percent of their prewar wages were ineligible regardless of injury. Eventually, disability compensation was decoupled from income and linked solely to the extent of injury. Littledale, "Thousands of Disabled Men Un-

trained," p. 7; *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 1471, 846, 586; Hickel, "Medicine, Bureaucracy, and Social Welfare," p. 239.

59. In a telling demonstration of the gap between the narrow law and the broad desires of certain proponents of transformative vocational reeducation, Congressman Horace Towner (R-IA) pressed Mr. Munroe to stretch the definition even farther, prompting Munroe to respond, "Do I understand, then, that the Congress wishes us to disobey the law?" *Charges Against The Federal Board*, pp. 1124–5.

60. *Charges Against The Federal Board*, p. 950; Littledale, "Disabled Soldiers Untrained After 19 Months of Red Tape," p. 1; Meigs, *Optimism at Armageddon*, p. 202; *The Vocational Summary* (April 1919), p.3.

61. For a strong assertion of the link between WWI veteran activism and the form of the GI Bill, see Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*, p. 205.

62. Like the Rehabilitation Act of 1918, the GI Bill was initially conceived of as an economic recovery measure just as much as a program for individual veterans. While the scope of the legislation was ultimately broadened, the original planning conferences for the GI Bill only proposed to compensate veterans who could demonstrate that the war interrupted feasible prewar educational paths. The GI Bill's expansion of access to education for all veterans is a theme that only emerged in retrospective accounts of the program. Most colleges also adapted their entrance requirements in order to further reduce educational barriers to veterans. Keith Olson, *The G.I. Bill, the Veterans, and the Colleges* (Lexington, 1974), pp. 6–17, 20, 24, 35.

63. Olson, *The G.I. Bill, the Veterans, and the Colleges*, pp. 21–22; Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*, pp. 199–200, 209.

64. Olson, *The G.I. Bill, the Veterans, and the Colleges*, pp. 18, 21.