

A report on the feasibility and advisability of some policy to inaugurate a system of rifle practice throughout the public schools

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**A REPORT ON
THE FEASIBILITY AND
ADVISABILITY OF SOME POLICY
TO INAUGURATE A SYSTEM OF
RIFLE PRACTICE
THROUGHOUT THE PUBLIC
SCHOOLS
OF THE COUNTRY**

By

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Of New York

and

**Gen. AMMON B. CRITCHFIELD
Of Ohio**

**PUBLISHED IN ACCORDANCE WITH A RESOLUTION OF THE
NATIONAL BOARD
FOR THE PROMOTION OF RIFLE PRACTICE**

**WASHINGTON
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
1907**

NOTICE

At the annual meeting of the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice, held at Washington, D.C., January 24, 1906, the question of building up an interest in target practice throughout the schools of the country was discussed, and a special committee consisting of Gen. L. M. Oppenheimer, of Texas; Gen. George W. Wingate, of New York, and Gen. Ammon B. Critchfield, of Ohio, was appointed to inquire into and report at the next annual meeting of the board upon—

The feasibility and advisability of some policy to inaugurate a system of rifle practice throughout the public schools of the country.

At the last meeting of the board held at Washington, D.C., January 25, 1907, the report of this committee was submitted by Generals Wingate and Critchfield, and

is published in accordance with the following resolution of the board, which was unanimously adopted:

Resolved, That the report of the committee on rifle practice in public schools be approved and the thanks of the board be tendered Generals Wingate and Critchfield for their valuable paper; that the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice recommend to the various educational authorities the desirability of interesting school boys over 13 years of age in the subject of rifle practice. It was

Further resolved, That this report be printed separately and given the greatest publicity, the matter of distribution and number of copies required therefor to be submitted to the committee on publicity, with power.

It is deeply regretted that before the completion of the report General Oppenheimer died, and his great help in assisting to promote interest in rifle practice is lost to the country.

This report is earnestly commended to the superintendents of public instruction throughout the country.

ROBERT SHAW OLIVER,
Assistant Secretary of War,
President National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice.

GROTE HUTCHESON,
Captain, General Staff,
Member and Recorder, National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice.

Report on the Feasibility and Advisability of some Policy to Inaugurate a

System of Rifle Practice throughout the Public Schools of the Country.

NEW YORK, *January 21, 1907.*

NATIONAL BOARD FOR THE PROMOTION OF RIFLE PRACTICE.

GENTLEMEN: In pursuance of the resolution of the board requesting the late Gen. L. M. Oppenheimer, of Texas (who died since the last meeting of the board, and whose death is deplored), and the undersigned to report "on the feasibility and advisability of some policy to inaugurate a system of rifle practice throughout the public schools of the country," we respectfully report:

For many years attempts have been made to inaugurate a system of military instruction in the public schools of the country. As a rule, these have not proved successful. In a few private military schools situated in the country some target practice is conducted, but the difficulty of carrying on anything of the kind in the public schools has rendered it impracticable.

The matter, however, has recently been introduced in the public schools of the city of New York, and the success which has been attained there has demonstrated the feasibility and advisability of introducing rifle practice in the public schools among the boys over the age of 13 years.

The schools of the different States are organized upon many different methods. The educational authorities not unnaturally are jealous of their prerogatives. No outside organization could well introduce a new subject of instruction in the schools without seriously interfering with the educational routine. Consequently, however desirable it may be that the pupils attending these schools should be taught to shoot, such instruction can only be secured by the voluntary action of the school authorities and with their hearty cooperation.

The result which has been attained by the Public Schools Athletic League in introducing shooting in the high schools of the city of New York has been so thoroughly tested that the committee are of the opinion that that system should be recommended for adoption.

Few appreciate the magnitude of the New York public schools. There are 3 training schools, 19 high schools, 490 elementary schools, 2 truant schools, and 1 nautical school; total, 515, with 14,500 teachers.

These schools are scattered all over the 326 square miles which the city covers.

The registered number of pupils enrolled in these schools is about 600,000, which is more than the entire population of St. Louis, the fourth city in the Union. Half of them are boys. The number attending the high schools is about 20,000, a little more than half of whom are boys. The College of the City of New York has about 4,000 male students.

The vast territory over which the city has spread, and its congested streets have made it impossible for the children (particularly in the poorer districts), to get any physical exercise, and the physical condition of many of them has in consequence not only become below normal, but instead of spending their energies in play, as they do in the country, the boys are led to join "gangs" and to become criminals.

This lamentable condition of affairs led to the formation of the Public Schools Athletic League for the purpose of promoting wholesome athletic exercises among the children attending the public schools of that city. The league is made up from officers and directors of the board of education, superintendents, principals and teachers, prominent athletes, gentlemen interested in philanthropic work, and leading business men. It was organized December 4, 1903, and its progress has been so great that during the year 1906 there were over 150,000 entries in the games which it carried on, which numbered over 600.

In the early part of 1905 it decided to institute rifle practice among the boys of the high schools of the city, which schools are attended by boys from fourteen to nineteen years of age, by installing in as many of the high schools as possible a "subtarget gun machine." This is an ingenious apparatus, by which an ordinary Krag army rifle is attached to a rod upon an upright standard, placed to the right of the firer, in such a way that while the gun is movable, the rod follows the movements of the barrel of the rifle, and is at all times parallel with the line of the sights.

The shooter cocks the rifle and aims at a target a foot high on the other side of the room, and when his aim is satisfactory, pulls the trigger. When this is done an electrical connection is made which shoots forward the rod which is on the standard, so that its point punches a hole in a miniature target like a visiting card, which is placed in front of it, which hole is mathematically on the same relative place on the card target as would have been made in the target at which the shooter was aiming if he had a bullet in his rifle. It consequently gives the same experience in holding and "pull off" as is had in actual shooting.

The machine possesses the additional advantage that the instructor standing on one side of the shooter can see by the movements of the point of the rod on the miniature target exactly how the aim is being taken on the large target and is able to correct all errors in holding and pulling off as they are made, something which has hitherto been supposed to be impossible. The apparatus makes no noise. There is no danger of its hurting anybody. It can be used very rapidly, and there is no expense involved in its operation. The results obtained from its use are so valuable that several of the New York National Guard regiments consider the machine equal in value to their rifle galleries.

The league succeeded in interesting a number of prominent gentlemen with the importance of teaching the youth of the country the use of the military rifle, so that they presented a sufficient number of these machines to enable the league to install one of them in each of ten of the high schools at a cost of \$265 each. The schools which are thus equipped are as follows:

Mr. S. R. Guggenheim, the treasurer of the league, gave one to each of the following schools:

The High School of Commerce and the De Witt Clinton High School (Manhattan), Morris High School (Bronx), Boys' High School (Brooklyn), Curtis High School (Staten Island), and the Bryant High School (Queens).

Col. Leslie C. Bruce presented one to the Stuyvesant High School (Manhattan), Mr. Warren Cruikshank gave one to Erasmus Hall High School (Flatbush), Col. Robert B. Woodward gave one to the Manual Training High School (Brooklyn) in memory of his brother, the late Maj. Gen. John B. Woodward, and Hon. Bird S. Coler and Mr. Horace J. Morse united in giving one to the Commercial High

School (Brooklyn). Another, presented by Mr. J. A. Haskell, will shortly be installed in one of the other high schools. The City College expects to have one during the spring.

In pursuance of the policy adopted by the league in regard to its athletic games, it caused a "marksmanship committee" to be appointed in 1905, consisting of the coaches of the different schools having gun machines, to organize and control the shooting under regulations adopted by the high schools games committee and approved by the central games committee of the league.

This committee has been found of great value in carrying on the work and creating interest in shooting in their different schools.

In 1905 Mr. Henry Payne Whitney presented to the league a beautiful bronze bas-relief, being a reproduction of Darnley's "Battle of Lexington," for annual competition by teams from the different schools having these machines, the winning school to keep it for the year.

In 1905 four gun machines were in use, namely, by the De Witt Clinton High School, High School of Commerce, Morris High School, and the Boys' High School.

In June, 1905, a competition was held between these schools, each school shooting in its own building under the inspection of the "marksmanship committee."

The following were the scores for teams of 8, 10 shots standing, highest possible score 400:

De Witt Clinton High School	377
High School of Commerce	363
Morris High School	345
Boys' High School	344

The winning team averaged 47-3/8 out of 50.

Two boys made perfect scores.

Each member of the winning team was given a bronze badge modeled from the Whitney trophy.

The result of this match greatly stimulated interest in the shooting. It also attracted public attention.

During the fall of 1905, and the spring of 1906, the league was able to equip the remainder of the other six high schools with the machine.

In 1906 it employed Capt. G. W. Corwin, inspector of rifle practice in the Seventy-first Regiment, New York National Guard, and one of the best shots in the National Guard, as a general instructor, who served until after the Creedmoor competition.

He selected in each school a teacher who was interested in the subject (usually the athletic instructor) as superintendent of shooting, and in each class four boys as sergeant-instructors. The superintendent and these boys were carefully instructed by Captain Corwin in the theory and practice of shooting, so as to make them competent instructors.

The system adopted varied in the different schools. Most of them preferred to use school hours for the purpose. In these schools, usually when each class was sent to the gymnasium for physical exercise, squads of boys in rotation were detached to practice their firing under the immediate direction of a sergeant-instructor, and the general direction of the superintendent of shooting, the whole being carefully supervised by Captain Corwin.

Some schools preferred to have their shooting after school hours, in which case, however, it was carried on under the same general principle.

Captain Corwin was of the opinion that the former method was the most satisfactory, although the Morris High School, which won the Whitney trophy in 1906, adopted the latter method.

The league established a marksmanship badge, to be awarded, as in the National Guard and in the Army, to each boy who annually showed satisfactory proficiency in shooting. The qualifying score first adopted for this badge was 40 out of a possible 50 "off-hand." It was found almost immediately that the boys

were shooting so well that it was necessary to raise the standard, which was therefore increased to 42 and later to 43.

The following is a list of the number of boys who qualified as marksmen in their respective schools during the year 1906:

Boys' High School	45
Bryant High School	18
Commercial High School	6
Curtis High School	24
De Witt Clinton High School	23
Morris High School	16
Erasmus Hall High School	15
Manual Training High School	23
High School of Commerce	19
Stuyvesant High School	8
Total	197

The qualifying score has now been raised to 44.

The Brooklyn Eagle assumed the expense of manufacturing and presenting these badges, which consisted of a Maltese cross having crossed rifles, the seal of the league, which is the "Winged Victory," in the center, the whole being suspended from a bar with the word "Marksman" on it, and the date.

During the spring of 1906 a large number of interscholastic competitions were held. These were found valuable, not only in broadening the boys' ideas in respect to shooting, but in helping their nerve in competitions.

On June 1 and 2 the annual interscholastic competition for the Whitney trophy was held. Instead of having each team shoot in its own school it was decided to have them shoot together at the Seventy-first Regiment Armory as neutral ground, under the supervision of Captain Corwin as range officer. The following were the scores, the conditions being the same as above stated:

Morris High School. Instructor E. M. Williams	359
Curtis High School. Instructor O. M. Curtis	356
High School of Commerce. Instructor Charles Jamison	355
De Witt Clinton. Instructor Emanuel Haug	354
Manual Training High School. Instructor Ernest G. Muller	350
Bryant High School. Instructor George W. Norton	349
Erasmus Hall High School. Instructor J. M. Tilden	348
Stuyvesant High School. Instructor M. F. Goodrich	348
Boys' High School. Instructor W. H. Andrews	340

The two best scores were not as high as were made in 1905, largely owing to the strain of shooting in actual competition and among strange surroundings. But the average was better and the scores were closer.

The Savage Arms Company presented a rifle to each of the six schools whose team made the highest score in this match.

For the purpose of impressing upon the boys and the public that those who could make a good score on the subtarget gun machine could shoot accurately in the field, the league arranged for a match between teams of five from all high schools and colleges, to be held at Creedmoor, July 26, 1906, to be shot 100 yards standing; 400 yards lying, five shots at each distance. It also arranged for two days' previous practice by the teams and also by all other boys who had won its marksman's badge, and paid the transportation and ammunition for the participants. It provided Captain Corwin as instructor, who was assisted by a number of volunteers from the National Guard. About 150 boys in all availed themselves of this opportunity. None of the boys had ever previously fired a cartridge. Some of them were consequently a little nervous, in addition to being embarrassed in shooting in the presence of so many military men. After a few shots, however, they got over their nervousness.

In the first practice the average score was about 60 out of 100. The second score averaged 80.

Mr. J. A. Haskell, president of the Du Pont Powder Company, and a member of

the national board, induced that company to present for annual competition in the match, a handsome bronze trophy.

Mr. Simon Uhlmann presented a bronze figure of a rifleman, as second annual prize.

The following is the score of the competitors in this match; highest possible score 250:

De Witt Clinton High School (Manhattan)	220
Boys' High School (Brooklyn)	215
St. John's Military School (Manlius, N.Y.)	211
Commercial High School (Brooklyn)	201
Curtis High School (Staten Island)	201
St. John's Second Team	183
Manual Training High School (Brooklyn)	181
Stuyvesant High School (Manhattan)	174

The winning team averaged 44 out of a possible 50, although the day was a difficult one for shooting.

The School of Applied Science of Columbia University asked to be allowed to enter a team in this match, and offered to allow the high school boys a handicap of 25 points. This was objected to on the ground that they were grown men, who had opportunities for practice which were out of the reach of the boys, and who were not in the same class. They were, however, allowed to shoot under protest for the purpose of seeing how their scores would compare with those of the boys.

The score which they made was 218, which is less than that of the De Witt Clinton team, which could have beaten them without any handicap.

This shooting shows the value of the practice with the subtarget machine, as the teams from both Columbia University and St. John's Military School had been practiced in actual rifle shooting, and yet were inferior in marksmanship to the high-school boys, who had only used the machine.

A match was put on the programme of the New Jersey Rifle Association, September, 1906, at Sea Girt, in which a number of the boys entered. The pressure upon the target accommodation in consequence of the national matches was, however, so great that it could not be held at the date appointed, and the boys could not remain.

The high schools which are equipped with this subtarget gun machine have organized rifle clubs, and are holding interscholastic contests in the armories of the different regiments of the National Guard, shooting with .22-caliber ammunition, and are displaying great proficiency.

The movement has the hearty support of President Roosevelt, who has accepted the office of honorary vice-president of the league, and also has announced his intention of writing to the boy who attains the greatest skill in the rifle matches during the year a personal letter of congratulation and commendation.

At the present time there are over 7,000 young men being instructed in these high schools in shooting with a military rifle, the gun used being the regular Krag army rifle as issued by the War Department.

Great interest in the matter has been taken by both teachers and boys. Many of these have now become so proficient, that the services of a paid instructor have been dispensed with. It would, of course, be much better if a regular officer could be procured for such a purpose. But the finances of the league will not permit it to continue to incur the expense of paying the salary of such an instructor. It is believed that if a young and active regular officer could be detailed to act in this capacity he would be of the greatest service, and could, besides helping the shooting, give the boys some idea of military movements and discipline, which would be of great value. In fact an officer in this position would accomplish greater results for the country than is obtained by any of those who are detailed as instructors in many of the small colleges. The supply of regular officers is, however, insufficient for the needs of the Army, and it has so far been impossible to have one detailed for this purpose.

The league is now preparing a manual of instruction to be used in the different schools. In addition to containing instructions for the use of the subtarget gun machine it will give a general idea of what is necessary to know in order to shoot

accurately.

Those who have had charge of the instruction of these boys are unanimous in the opinion that they acquire knowledge of rifle shooting in about one-quarter of the time that is found necessary in the case of grown men.

It is hardly necessary to state that the experience of our recent wars has pointed out that while there is no difficulty in case of war in getting all the volunteers that the country requires and they can be given a reasonable amount of drill in a few weeks, it takes a long time to teach them to shoot, and that unless they can shoot accurately they are of little value as soldiers. If, however, the young men who are graduating from our high schools in the different States should be skilled riflemen the country can rest content with a small standing army, knowing that in case of war it can put into the field at short notice a force of volunteers whose skill in rifle shooting will enable them to be fully the equal of any army which may be brought against them.

The system is, therefore, a great factor for national peace.

The committee would therefore recommend:

1. That the largest possible publicity should be given to the methods that have been found to be so successful in the New York high schools.
2. That the educational officials of the different States should be urged to introduce instruction in rifle shooting in their schools among the boys of 13 years of age and upward, conforming to the New York methods as far as their situation will permit.
3. That this would be helped by the organization of a public schools athletic league in each educational center.

GEO. W. WINGATE,
A. B. CRITCHFIELD,
Committee.

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