

# ANSWERING THE CALL TO DUTY

**T**he attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States into World War II and brought the call to arms that included a call to duty in service of our nation for all Americans. It was a call that vocational education was ready to answer and had been preparing for in the previous months.

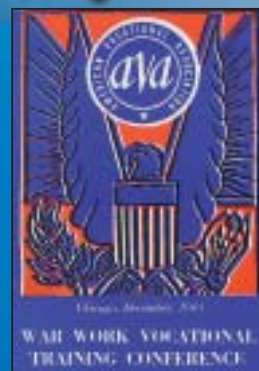
## **AVA and the Wartime Commission**

When the United States Office of Education's Wartime Commission was established on December 23, 1941, the American Vocational Association was represented by its president, John J. Seidel, and its executive secretary, L.H. Dennis. The Wartime Commission was organized to provide a united voice for all education in the war emergency, to develop sound policies and procedures for the mobilization of all American educational agencies in working toward victory, and to eliminate the duplication of effort.

Recognizing that victory in battle depended upon training and skill as well as courage, the membership of the AVA was prepared to assist the military in preparing our soldiers. The U.S. Army called upon the educational institutions of America to assist in pre-induction training, and vocational education resolved to meet that call with training in automotive and airplane engine mechanics; radio, telephone and telegraph operation; and tool design and manufacturing.

## **AVA War Work Training Conference**

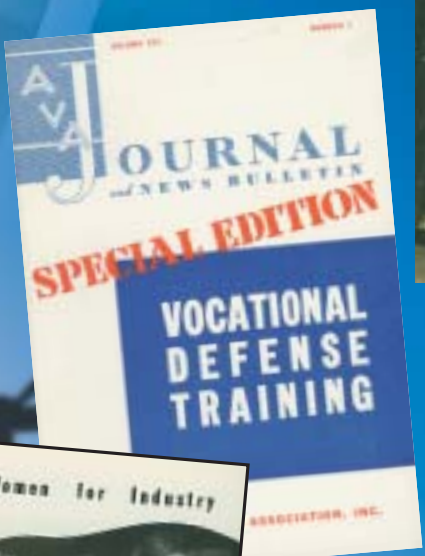
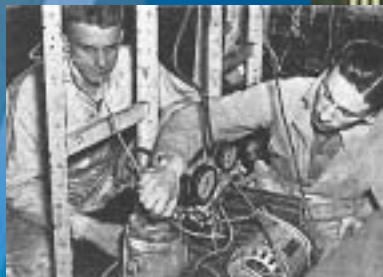
Conducted as the annual AVA convention, the War Work Training Conference was held in Toledo, Ohio, December 2-5, 1942. The conference was directed toward the winning of the war and planning for the peacetime to follow. Representatives of the U.S. Army, the U.S. Navy, the War Manpower Commission, war industries, and federal and state governments participated in sessions at the conference. Topics included increased efficiency for the federal



**“Production of war goods could never have approximated the goals set by the president had not the vocational schools of the nation developed adequate training programs.”**

**—Brigadier General Frank J. McSherry, U.S.A.,  
Director of Operations,  
War Manpower Commission**

THE TRAINING FOR  
**WOMEN**  
 WHO WANT TO  
 HELP WIN  
 THE WAR



The following letter was read at the AVA War Work Conference in Chicago in December 1943.



War Department General Staff  
 Organization and Training Division G-3  
 Washington

9 December 1943

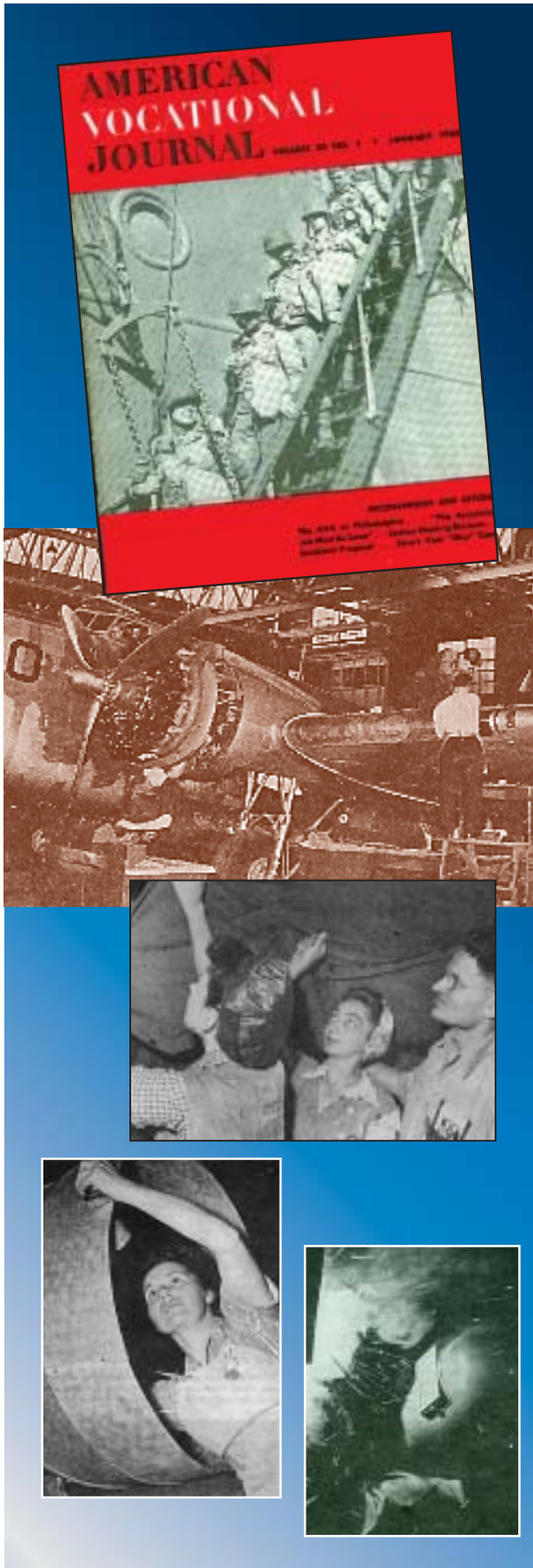
Dr. L.H. Dennis, Executive Secretary  
 American Vocational Association, Inc.  
 Palmer House  
 Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mr. Dennis:

It is with a deep sense of pride as well as appreciation that the War Department acknowledges the contribution of the Nation's public vocational schools as summarized in the report on training service which your association recently provided. We are happy to record our appreciation of the program of public school vocational education which has been initiated and implemented so patriotically and intelligently through the membership of the American Vocational Association.

Sincerely yours,  
 Ray E. Porter  
 Major General  
 Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3





program of Vocational Training for War Production Workers, teacher shortages, food production, food distribution and utilization, and the post-war needs for vocational education.

At the Toledo War Work Training Conference, the AVA became the first major educational group to advocate a 12-month basis of wartime operation for a division of the public schools with a resolution requesting the U.S. Office of Education “to assist the vocational schools of the Nation in operating to the fullest extent possible for twelve months of the year.”

The AVA Executive Committee appointed an AVA Pre-Induction Training Committee to work with Merwin M. Peake, the chief of the Pre-Induction Training Section of the U.S. War Department.

The determination of the AVA and its members to help win World War II is expressed in AVA President Fred Smith’s February 1943 editorial. “Our vocational schools have trained more than three million workers since the summer of 1940 and have reason to feel proud; but there must be no let-up in this respect. We must continue to train replacements for men called into the armed services; we must redouble our efforts.”

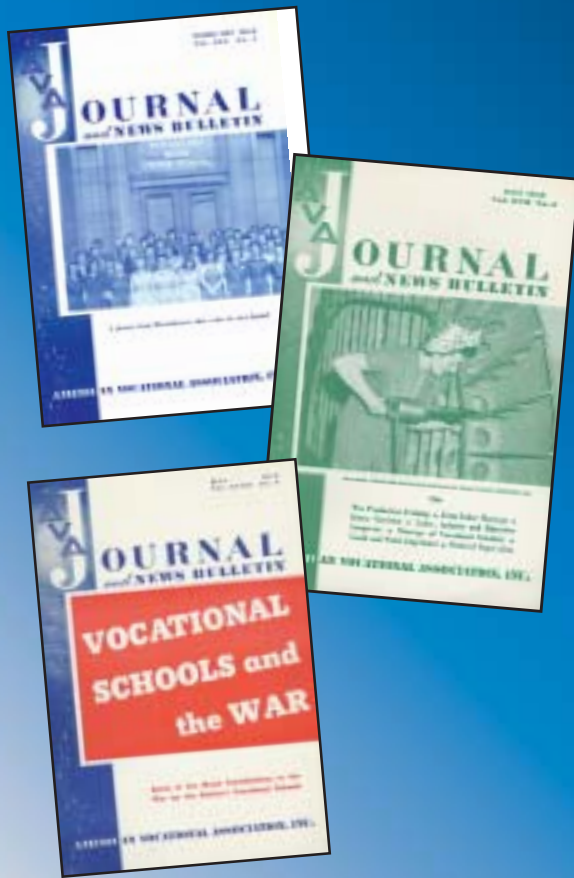
### Women in War Industries

As more and more men were needed for military service in World War II, more and more women became needed in war industries at home. Under the terms of the law providing training for the war effort, women were to be accepted on an equal footing with men. But that doesn’t mean they were always accepted with open arms. Some Congressmen saw it as the death knell for the American home if women went to work in factories. Some men feared for their own jobs, and others believed that women simply did not have the mechanical ability required for the tasks. But necessity won out over doubts, and by the end of 1942, women were working in shipyards, aircraft assembly plants, factories and foundries. They were helping to run railroads, airlines, streetcars and buses. They were doing welding, operating cranes, assembling detonators, and operating lathes. “Rosie the Riveter” became an American icon. She could also be considered a symbol of the training women received during the war in

**“Vocational education taught farmers how to repair precious farm equipment that couldn’t be replaced. It taught women how to take the place of men gone to war.**

**“‘Bread and butter’ education? It would be better to call it ‘civilization saving’ education.”**

—from the June 1945 issue of the  
*American Vocational Journal*



vocational education programs across the country.

The number of women trained for the war effort up to December 1, 1941 was 11,552, but by April 1943, 741,322 women were enrolled in training programs. And, according to a study done by the U.S. Office of Education from July 1, 1942 to December 31, 1942, 81 percent of all employed women trained for war production work were working in war production industries.

Employment opportunities were opening up for older women, married women and women of color. In some plants, women doing the same work as men were even being paid the same wages as the men.

Throughout World War II, vocational education served the country well by maintaining a well-trained war industry workforce and by assisting in pre-induction training. The nation’s farmers and homemakers also aided the war effort at home through their dedication to producing the most goods and services possible with the smallest amount of our precious resources. But when the war was won, there were new challenges for vocational education on the home front.

### **Post-War Training**

With veterans returning from the war, and war industry workers changing over to peacetime occupations, the nation was faced with the possibility of training or retraining more than 30,000,000 individuals. In 1945, an AVA committee was working in cooperation with officials of the U.S. Office of Education to help develop material showing the vocational retraining services available for veterans in the public vocational schools.

Industrial arts education, apprenticeship training and veterans on-the-farm training were among the education programs that would prepare the new peacetime workforce.

M.D. Mobley, 1944 AVA president, said, “Next to winning the war and securing a lasting peace, the paramount objective of the American people is to provide peacetime jobs for all employable workers ... Vocational education will, and must, play an important role in this undertaking.”

## Federal Legislation in the 40s

Appropriations initiated by Congress in 1940 to train defense production workers started at \$15 million and increased each year until they exceeded \$100 million. The program was discontinued in 1945 as the war ended, but by then vocational education had proved its worth. New legislation providing federal appropriations for vocational education was passed by Congress then signed into law by President Harry S. Truman on August 1, 1946. The George-Barden Act superceded the George-Deen Act and increased funding from \$14 million to \$29 million annually.

In 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the G.I. Bill of Rights, which provided benefits for veterans, and in 1947, legislation was passed making vocational training available to veterans through institutional-on-the-farm training.

The AVA was active in the late 1940s in arranging conferences with the Veterans Administrations of various state and regional vocational groups to deal with the securing of proper support for vocational training programs for veterans.

## A Change at the Top

L.H. Dennis, who had been executive secretary of the AVA since the association's Washington, D.C., office was established on January 1, 1934, retired from his position on December 31, 1950. Dennis had been a member of the original group that drafted the Smith-Hughes law and, at the time of his retirement, had been associated with every federal vocational act. He was succeeded by Mayor Dennis (M.D.) Mobley, who had served as AVA president in 1944. Mobley described his predecessor as, "the man who made the AVA, who for 17 years devoted his every thought to its betterment."

Following his retirement, Dennis worked as a consultant and lecturer on vocational education and traveled to countries around the world. He died in 1955 at the age of 74.

## New Wars to Fight

In 1952, both presidential candidates, Dwight D. Eisenhower and Adlai E. Stevenson, wrote to AVA expressing support for vocational education. Only one



**At the 40th annual AVA convention, the new president was elected unanimously—and for the first time in the association's history, the president was a woman. Florence Fallgatter was the head of the home economics department of Iowa State College in Ames, Iowa, which was the largest department of home economics education in the country. She served as AVA president for 1946-1947.**



**L.H. Dennis,  
Executive Secretary,  
1934-1950**



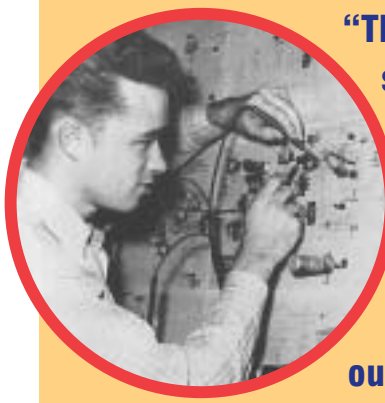
**M.D. Mobley,  
Executive Secretary,  
1951-1966**

**"For 50 years, Americans have watched with interest and appreciation the growth and achievements of what is today the AVA—a great national education association.**

**"Your organization and its predecessors have furnished the stimulus, and much of the organized support, for every federal program that has been designed to promote vocational education."**

**—U.S. Senator Stuart Symington, January 1957**

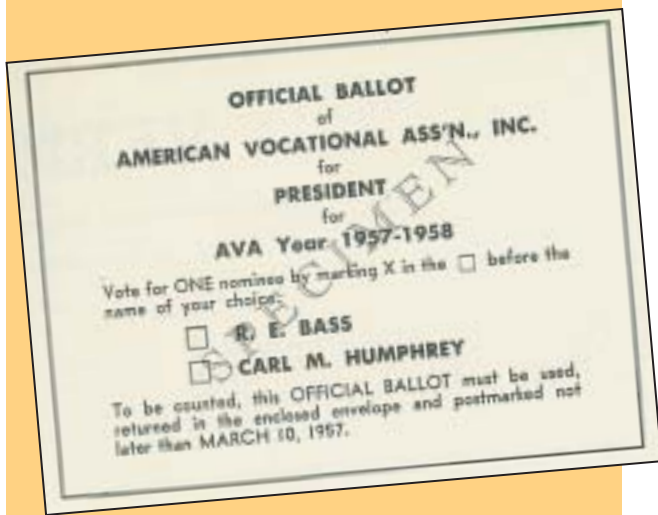




**“The educational structure of America is responsible for the growth, strength and prosperity of our nation. The vocational education**

**foundation of that structure is responsible for America’s world superiority in developing a superior, skilled, hard-working and efficient supply of manpower which can out-produce the world.”**

**—Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey in a letter welcoming the 1951 AVA convention to Minneapolis.**



**Effective December 1, 1956, an amendment to the AVA constitution provided that every member of the association would have an official vote in electing the new president, and that at least two candidates would be nominated each year. The 1957 election by ballot marked the beginning of the democratic process that gives every member of the association a vote in naming the person who will serve as their president.**

of their party platforms—the National Democratic Platform—specifically mentioned vocational education. This marked the first time one of the major political parties had included an item in its platform pledging support to vocational education, but the early 1950s found the AVA fighting harder than ever to keep that support. In 1951, the AVA was successful in diverting the Bureau of the Budget’s recommendations to set aside millions of dollars of George-Barden appropriations for defense training, which would have seriously threatened vocational education programs. All but \$900,000 was restored to the final vocational appropriations.

The tide appeared to be turning when, for fiscal year 1956, Congress approved a record-breaking amount for vocational education appropriations. In hearings before the House and Senate committees and on the floor of the House, 102 Congressmen (including 14 Senators) spoke on behalf of vocational education, and many more sought floor recognition in order to express their support.

There was a new kind of war being fought in the world, and this Cold War was also fought on the education front. In December 1955, M.D. Mobley noted that Russia was continuing to expand her vocational and technical training program and cautioned that, through this increased training, the communist state was trying to increase and improve production in order to become a competitor in the world marketplace. In response to these concerns, vocational and industrial arts leaders representing several AVA divisions met in Washington in January 1956 to consider ways to expand and improve vocational education in our country.

The association had another battle of its own to wage in 1958 when the Joint Federal-State Action Committee and President Eisenhower recommended the transfer of full financial support for vocational education to the states, with the elimination of federal funds to begin in 1960. In March 1958, Mobley testified before the Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations in opposition to the recommendations, and in September the House and Senate approved a total of \$40,888,412 in federal funding for vocational education for fiscal 1959—ending the decade with one more victory for the AVA and its members.