

Universal Military Training Not The Answer, Decatur Pastors Say

By KENT ALVERSON
Of The Herald Staff

The plan for universal military training proposed by President Truman's advisory commission brought a rain of criticism yesterday from the ranks of Decatur ministers.

"I am against it tooth and toenail," is the way Rev. Laren Spear, First Methodist church minister and newly elected president of the Decatur Ministerial association, expressed his disapproval of the measure which would require all youths to register for a year of military training immediately after they reach the age of 17.

"IT IS MILITARIZING the mind of young America," he declared. "If we use the plan, we are following the same pattern Germany and other defeated nations used which is in direct violation of American principles.

"From the standpoint of safety of our nation, our safety does not depend on a large standing army, but on a more specialized system of defense and offense. After disrupting the lives of our boys, we still do not have an effective defense. Warring methods are so soon outdated.

Rev. Mr. Spear suggested that this country continue to make enlistments as attractive as possible and develop primarily the navy and the air forces.

"There is a trend in this country for the military mind to take over and that is bad," he said. "Right now, for us to launch an armament program would be a threat to our leadership in the direction of peace."

Rev. Robert R. Crothers, pastor of the Westminster Presbyterian church and a former army chaplain, said, "Personally, I don't think it's the answer, but it had to come."

"THE NEXT WAR will be a war of scientists and we will need an army of technicians, not what you can get in a year's training," he continued. "However, I think we will have to accept universal military training as the lesser of two evils, as a deterrent to any power which might be inclined to be expansionist.

"We will be sadly disillusioned, though, if we think this sort of plan will do the job. It will have to be supplemented with a highly trained technical force."

Rev. Mr. Crothers also declared the presidential commission should have included some persons not already committed to a belief in universal training.

"I hope some better, more Christian way can be found to straighten out this tangle we're in," said Rev. S. J. Laws, pastor of Trinity C.M.E. church. "I think military training

is good for young men, but I hate to see them go into another war."

SEVERAL MINISTERS termed the question as only a military one, remarking that there are no advantages for the youths and any advantages claimed for physical, moral or mental training simply confuse the issue.

Rev. Robert E. Larson, First Baptist church minister, held the opinion that "Things are bad, but not so bad but that compulsory training would activate rather than remedy the trend toward war.

"Putting the nation on such a military basis has been against the principles of this nation since its founding. It would be too much of a departure from the spirit of its heritage.

"I understand the navy is setting up a program which is more appealing to young men and is on a volunteer basis. Such a remedy as this would be more effective than compulsory training."

Rev. Mr. Larson went on record as favoring a universal military police force with each peace-loving nation making its contribution.

IN ANSWER to a question about Russian aggressiveness, he said, "I don't think we can solve differences with Russia by force. The answer is more spiritual. If we

lived correctly here, Communism would not get anywhere.

"The difficulty is that we must answer these questions as laymen," he added, "since we don't know what is going on behind the scenes."

Conrad Kranz, general secretary of the Y. M. C. A. and secretary of the Ministerial association, declined to comment on the necessity of the rearmament program for national security.

"I don't feel competent to judge as against Dr. Karl Compton and others on the presidential commission," he said. "I haven't enough information that I know is correct. It would be hard on the boy to send him away for military training —to be out of step with society and under control of the military. To be told that obedience is the first rule of life is not to the best interests of the boy."

Rev. W. R. Catton, pastor of the First Congregational church and former navy chaplain, said, "If we grant the premise that we must continue to operate within the present system of power politics and must continue to regard war as inevitable, then the courses of action within that system recommended by the Compton commission are well chosen.

"BUT NEED WE grant the premise? Doesn't it make more sense

to say that if these have to be the courses of action within the system then the system had better be changed.

"If you don't like universal military training, get busy and work your head off for world government. You're going to have one or the other. Either we must have a strong United Nations and ultimately a world government, or we will be faced with the continuing necessity of universal training, staggering military expenditures, and the perpetual dread of 'sudden death' atomic warfare.

Rabbi Leo E. Turitz of B'Nai Abraham temple was the only one questioned who was wholeheartedly in favor of the commission's proposition.

"I have every feeling," he said, "that the leaders of our peace-loving nation know what they are about in calling for some form of military conscription.

"I personally am wary of the effect, moral and spiritual, that occupation of conquered countries has upon our young soldiers, but military leaders have indicated their earnest intentions to elevate training to as wholesome a level as possible. Wholesome training such as portrayed in the one experimental camp I have read about, can certainly do no harm to our young men."