

Washington, it was an offer that most accepted. A total of nearly 250,000 got belated opportunity to rebuild lives disrupted by earlier serve to their country.

The years 1935-36 witnessed not only a peak in the size and popularity of the Corps but revealed the first major attempt to change a system which had proved to be workable and successful since early in 1933. However, before this challenge developed, Congress authorized funded and extended the existence of the CCC until March 1935, with a new ceiling of 600,000 enrollees. This action left little doubt that the "grass roots" and their representatives were more than satisfied with the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

At first, it appeared there would be no problems in reaching the 600,000-man ceiling. However, a new name had appeared among Roosevelt's advisors. Harry Hopkins established new and uncoordinated ground rules for the selection of enrollees. His procedure, based on relief rolls, effectively ruined the quota systems in use by all the states. Fechner protested violently, and the hassle that developed slowed down the recruiting efforts and generated so much confusion that by September 1935, there were only about 500,000 men located in 2,600 camps. Never again, during the remainder of the life of the Corps, were there as many men in as many camps.

While Fechner was still struggling with the changes required by the failure to meet the 600,000-strength figure, he was struck by another change in strategy that spelled disaster to him. Roosevelt quietly informed him to expect a drastic reduction in the number of camps and enrollees in an effort to balance the federal budget in an election year. Roosevelt, a master politician, was aware that a major cut in government spending would be an important selling point in this campaign for re-election. However, in 1936 there were other factors involved that he either ignored or had underestimated. Election year or not, Roosevelt's proposed budget reform invited trouble.

As soon as the proposed reduction was announced the floodgates burst, and Congress was besieged with protests. The Corps was at the height of its popularity. No one wanted camps closed, especially those in his area. Republicans and Democrats alike frantically sought a reversal of Roosevelt's policy. The President was adamant. The plan would begin, he insisted, in January, 1936. By June, he wished approximately 300,000 men in about 1,400 camps. Coincidentally, about this time a few camps previously scheduled to close, did so. This action brought another deluge of mail. Congress, sparked by House Democrats, was in open revolt and was determined to take joint action to maintain the Corps at its current strength. Roosevelt and his advisors finally recognized the threat of such an action as a threat to their whole legislative program and wisely called a retreat. He advised Fechner that the proposal had been dropped and that all existing camps and personnel would remain in being. His own party had refused to let him