

Ratner and Wilbur civilian defense tour of Kansas

This press release describes the efforts of Kansas Governor Payne Ratner and Colonel E. R. Wilbur to promote civil defense education in Kansas. Wilbur represented the Seventh Corps Area defense region including Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, and Kansas.

Creator: Ratner, Payne Harry, 1896-1974

Date: 1942

Callnumber: Governor's Records, Governor Ratner, Box 16, Folder 9

KSHS Identifier: DaRT ID: 217080

Item Identifier: 217080

www.kansasmemory.org/item/217080



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Release Wednesday afternoon, January 21 and thereafter.
Gov. Payne Ratner-Col. E. R. Wilbur Civilian Defense Tour of Kansas

Seventh Corps Area defense region officers under the guidance of Gov. Payne Ratner will carry defense plans and war activities to the state's grass roots early in February. This plan was announced in Topeka today, following a specific request for such a coverage from Col. E. R. Wilbur, Omaha, War department liaison officer for this region.

With Colonel Wilbur will be Joseph D. Scholtz recently named civilian director for the Seventh Corps region, comprised of Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri and Arkansas, in addition to Kansas. Scholtz has been an inspector general in the Office of National Civilian Defense, headed by Mayor Fiorella H. LaGuardia, New York City, and James M. Landis, executive director.

It is expected that Colonel Wilbur will be accompanied by at least one of his military aides, probably Lt.-Col. Raimon Walters, state senator, Garden City, who has been called to active duty and has just completed a training course in civilian defense in an eastern training center. Governor Ratner has not yet announced the members of the state defense council who will accompany him.

Definite dates and meeting places have not been determined, according to Governor Ratner. It is understood, however, that the tour will blitz its way through the state the first or second week in February and will cover nine meetings to be held at different cities located on the rim of an oval drawn from east to west to afford the most convenience to those who will attend.

Attempts will be made to hold each meeting at a location conducive to a maximum of rail or bus travel for officials who are to attend. North and south rail transportation difficulties in the state, particularly in the western area, have complicated the routing. It is hoped that eventually the meetings can be so arranged so as to minimize wear and tear on precious rubber. It is likely that the ruling of Attorney General Jay Parker to the effect that defense officials may be reimbursed for defense expenses will be construed as permitting use of city or county-owned automotive equipment for transportation of elected or appointed officials.

Colonel Wilbur, in discussing the tour with Governor Ratner, asked that each meeting have two parts. One session will be devoted to the general public, the other to defense officials. These include:

- Mayors
- City councilmen or commissioners
- Tire and automobile rationing board members
- County Commissioners
- Officers and members of local defense councils
- Representatives of other local bodies set up at the request of Washington in the meantime.

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Colonel Wilbur said that among others these subjects would be considered:

Formation and training of civilian defense units most likely to be needed in Kansas, including auxiliary police, auxiliary firemen, fire watchers, air raid wardens, demolition and clearance crews, bomb squads, decontamination corps, emergency feeding and housing units, and rescue squads.

Medical services: To supplement or even to replace physicians and surgeons who will be called to active service with the armed forces, leaving many communities dependent on first aid trainees in emergencies.

Nurses' aides: Registered nurses will be drawn upon in large numbers for the expanding armed forces, forcing local communities to rely on young women trained as assistants.

Women drivers and messengers.

Morale and welfare workers, particularly in the fields of health, recreation, education and nutrition.

Farm laborers, both men and women, to overcome the threatened danger to harvest because of lack of manpower.

In short, Colonel Wilbur and Director Scholtz plan a campaign of education which is designed to improve the Kansas defense organization which has already been cited for its initial excellence. How to locate meeting points to insure a minimum of inconvenience and wear on tires is the first problem of the state defense council. Frank Milligan, state business manager, executive vice-chairman, and Jeff Robertson, labor commissioner, secretary of the council, are at work on this phase of the program.

At the same time, they must consider how to transport the defense clinicians with a maximum of speed to permit covering the greatest amount of the state's territory without consuming too many vital materials. Type of transportation for the flying squadron has not been determined. Final decisions will be made early next week to permit the most publicity possible prior to the meetings.

Defense officials will not be limited in their choices of meetings. Freedom to select the meeting which can be attended with the least loss of time and the smallest use of automotive equipment owned either by local governments or individuals is expected to increase attendance at all meetings.

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