

Once Upon a Time the Government Encouraged Real Men

The last week of summer found me on Minnesota's North Shore, enjoying the waves of Lake Superior, and the woods and rocky cliffs that surround the world's largest body of fresh water.

But these natural beauties weren't the only thing that caught my eye. As I made my way back home, I stopped at a state park and paused to read a small display about the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), which cleared the land and built many of the unique and picturesque stone structures that dot the landscape along the lake. Particularly prevalent in Minnesota, the CCC was established as a project of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Depression-era New Deal, employing young men in their late teens and early twenties to make the wilderness more accessible to the average American.

While I'm not too keen on big government projects, reading about the CCC and its policies made me think that this was one project in which the government got a few things right.

For starters, the CCC encouraged work over handouts—and hard work at that. This was no “line up and get your stimulus checks, boys!” Anyone who has seen the landscape of northern Minnesota will quickly understand that work in the CCC camps meant hauling huge boulders, cutting trees, and living—and building—life on the edge of dramatic cliffs.

Officially, the men were paid \$30 a month, plus room and board. But there were other non-monetary benefits to life in the CCC, namely, education and on-the-job training. Trained masons and other skilled laborers taught the young men under their charge valuable skills, while the classroom portion was open for general educational instruction every evening. In

fact, nearly [60,000 men learned to read](#) while working with the CCC.

But the CCC also realized that all work and no play made their armies of men dull boys. The camps organized many sporting activities and opportunities to encourage sportsmanship, fun, and the type of camaraderie and brotherhood that seems to [make men grow and learn](#).

Finally, the CCC recognized the importance of family and the need to train these young men to responsibly provide for their own. Of the \$30 each man earned monthly, \$25 were designated to send home to help his family, leaving only \$5/month to the young man himself. Talk about a way to encourage selfless responsibility and commitment to kin!

As I read about these policies, I couldn't help but think of how unlikely it was such a program would even exist today, let alone succeed. Shortly after perusing the CCC display, as if to underscore this thought, I saw that actor Timothée Chalamet was trending on Twitter for his red-carpet appearance [sporting a tight, shiny, backless red pantsuit](#). Looking at the picture of Chalamet in this highly feminized contraption, I tried to picture him working in the CCC camps. It made me giggle.

Ironically, Chalamet seems to sense that something is wrong in this world, noting during his red pantsuit appearance that "societal collapse is in the air." I would agree, although I don't think poor Chalamet realizes that he is exhibiting one of the main symptoms of this collapse: namely, a feminized society that really doesn't know how to shape up, work hard, and take responsibility for life.

Former President Teddy Roosevelt recognized the danger of such a people long ago and had some choice words for those inclined to lead Americans toward the cliff. [Speaking in Paris in 1910, Roosevelt said,](#)

Shame on the man of cultivated taste who permits refinement

to develop into fastidiousness that unfits him for doing the rough work of a workaday world. Among the free peoples who govern themselves there is but a small field of usefulness open for the men of cloistered life who shrink from contact with their fellows. Still less room is there for those who deride of slight what is done by those who actually bear the brunt of the day; nor yet for those others who always profess that they would like to take action, if only the conditions of life were not exactly what they actually are. The man who does nothing cuts the same sordid figure in the pages of history, whether he be a cynic, or fop, or voluptuary. There is little use for the being whose tepid soul knows nothing of great and generous emotion, of the high pride, the stern belief, the lofty enthusiasm, of the men who quell the storm and ride the thunder. Well for these men if they succeed; well also, though not so well, if they fail, given only that they have nobly ventured, and have put forth all their heart and strength.

The men of the CCC camps learned how to quell the storm and ride the thunder, mercifully ditching the foppery of an easy, gentle life that was probably never available to them in the first place. If we are to escape the societal collapse that even Timothée Chalamet senses is coming, then we will need to teach today's young men to exchange sparkling red pantsuits for a masculine toughness that includes hard work, sacrifice for family, manly friendships, and the healthy competition they will need to pull society out of the pit.

—

Image Credit: Picryl