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June 16, 1958

Leadership Tip From The U.s. Past

This magazine lamented, in its review of the [U.S.](#) fitness program (SI, May 26), that while the President's Council on Youth Fitness has generated enthusiasm for its aims by propagandizing the problem in the last 23 months, it has not yet produced anything that can truly be called a plan of action to solve the problem.

How can it, readers have asked, when the President's council has no lawmaking powers, no police powers and no important money?

Well, we think there is a way, and a good way—a way that has a remarkable precedent in [U.S.](#) history. Let the President's new fitness chairman, [Interior Secretary Fred Seaton](#), and his fellow fitness officials turn back the pages to 1924, when the nation was just taking to the roads in automobiles. The public knew very little about driving, and drivers found different habits and customs and regulations in practically every state and locality through which they steered their cars. Police and lawmakers and highway departments had very little experience in handling their new problems. [Herbert Hoover](#) was Secretary of Commerce and he went to work. Within months, with the help of a variety of experts, he had produced a sensible and uniform code for state and local highway legislation and regulation and had circulated it to state and local lawmakers. In quick time, and with eagerness, [Hoover's](#) Uniform Code was adopted from coast to coast, and an effective program was achieved—despite the fact that [Secretary Hoover](#) had no lawmaking powers, no police powers and no important money.

[Hoover's](#) Uniform Code dealt with such things as traffic control, road engineering and road signs. With the same kind of leadership, [Secretary Seaton](#) and the President's council could produce a Uniform Fitness Code. We believe that states and cities and clubs and school boards everywhere would be grateful to follow the leader. Essentially, the code would set clear and simple doctrine on questions like these:

What fitness tests should be given to every child?

At what intervals should children be re-tested?

What essential activities should be included in physical education programs at various ages?

What minimum equipment should each school have for a proper physical education program?

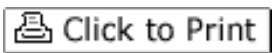
What minimum requirements should physical education instructors have?

How should community recreation directors cooperate with the schools on fitness?

These are just a few. We can think of others, and so can the council—when it realizes that the noise of propaganda, substituted for leadership, merely confuses and finally deafens even the most sympathetic ear.

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