



## Boy Scouts – Militaristic?

With the formation of the Boys Scouts by General Robert S. S. Baden Powell, the use of uniforms that were modeled after military uniforms, the use of Scout staves that could be likened to carrying rifles and drill practice certainly had cause to question the Boy Scouts as a militaristic organization. With the formation of the Boy Scouts of America following the same program a B-P, this issue was certainly not confined to the British view. With just starting an organization, getting rules, regulations, by-laws into place along with providing handbooks, uniforms and supplies, they had to rely on a lot of volunteer help and existing suppliers. They adapted B-P's Scouting for Boys, but had Ernst Thompson Seton made a few changes – that of course caused friction with B-P, but they did get their own early version out in 1910 that way. Uniforms though were available through many private sources with many variations in style. However, when you have an ad in your first Boys' Life issue in 1911 with a very definite pose of military style uniform complete with rifle, you know you are not making progress away from the military criticism. Then you have the volunteers helping with a publication in the name of the Boy Scouts of America as a Drill Manual, you are not helping your cause.

**IT IS NOT MILITARY**

There is no military meaning attached to the name scouting. Peace scouting comprises the attributes of frontiersmen in the way of resourcefulness and I have never met a man who has seen war in a civilized country who remained a so-called anti-militarist. He knows too well the awful and cruel results of war, and until nations have agreed to disarm he will not invite aggression or leave his country at the mercy of an enemy by neglecting its defense. You might just as well abolish the police in order to do away with crime before you have educated the masses not to steal.



So like many other organizations who are trying to change their image, you use a little marketing. First you tell them in Boys' Life that the organization is not military. On the back of every membership card, you emphasize again that it is not military and the Boy Scouts are advocating universal peace. In your now fully new Boy Scout Handbook, you explain the Boy Scouts are "Peace Scouts" and they just have to be prepared just like those in the military. It took a few years and the actions of the organization to change the perception, but the success of the Boy Scouts has shown their resolve. That is not to say that the U. S. military still looks to the Boy Scouts for some of their best leaders with heavy recruiting at National Jamboree. Those outdoor skills coupled with the leadership skills do fit very well with their needs.