

Youth Physical Fitness Program Support Enlisted

By STAN HALL

New York — (UPI) — At 46, Bud Wilkinson is personable, persuasive and as physically fit as the athletes he coaches on the University of Oklahoma football team.

As such, he was President Kennedy's choice for one of the toughest jobs on the New Frontier: toughening up the soft American.

Wilkinson flew into New York recently to enlist support for the President's Commission on Youth Fitness which he heads. He made his pitch to about 39 news executives at a lunch.

"Nobody's really against us or this program," Wilkinson told them, "but nobody's really for it, or if they are they only pay lip service to it. Not End Itself."

"This program, getting all our youngsters physically up to par is not an end in itself. We all know, I think, that to function best mentally, we must be physically fit. In this war for survival which we are engaged in, it is important that every single one of us performs at our maximum mental, as well as physical, level."

As high as 83 per cent of America's school-age children, he said, cannot perform minimum physical feats. And perhaps only 30 per cent of the nation's school have adequate physical education programs to help remedy this.

First goal of the commission, he said, was to try to bring the nation's youth up to par. Appeals are being made to school boards, educators and principals to adopt supervised physical education programs.

John Denson of the New York Herald Tribune, one of the editors at the lunch, said of Wilkinson: "I think he got home to all of us. What we've got to do is find some way to get to them, maybe a series of stories, to get across to them that they are more clearheaded when physically fit."

Articulate television personality John Charles Daley agreed.

Daley said he would do all he could to help promote the in-school fitness program. But he said he thought the better approach might be an in-home program in which the parent becomes interested. Daley said he would like to see it become "an American habit" for parents and children to get together in the home for the exercise needed to keep them all fit.

Wilkinson painted a stunning picture of the softness of all Americans. He blamed the good American way of life for it.

Even those tasks requiring the least effort, he said, such as opening cans or sharpening pencils, are often done now by gadgets.

"I certainly am not against these technological advances," Wilkinson told them, "but I think that we should adopt a program to give us the exercise we are missing because of them."

As recently as 10 years ago, he said, an American could get enough exercise to maintain muscle tone in his arms and hands simply by driving and parking his car three times a day.

"Now," Wilkinson said, "it requires no effort at all. You can get into the smallest parking place by using one finger, and you don't have to shift gears, you push a button or move a lever. And if your car isn't equipped with air conditioning, you can adjust the windows with another button."

Tools Shor, host at the lunch and a pal of many top professional athletes who frequent his restaurant, asked Wilkinson about the value of competitive team sports for youngsters.

The sad truth is, Wilkinson said, that many young-

sters, perhaps half of them in the country, do not have the coordination or muscle tone needed to participate in sports or even dance.

who, because of this, never would voluntarily take part in organized sports because they are not good at them."

Wilkinson has a small Washington staff which functions on a \$315,000 yearly budget. And he proudly told the editors, last year he sent \$49,000 of that back to the treasury.

SECTION B

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BACKS PROGRAM - At 46, Bud Wilkinson is personable, persuasive and as physically fit as the athletes he coaches on the University of Oklahoma football team. As such, he was President Kennedy's choice for one of the toughest jobs on the New Frontier: toughening up the soft American. Wilkinson is shown in a July 22, 1960 file photo. (UPI photo)