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PUBLIC WORKS

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT and Interior Secretary Harold Ickes are reported considering a request to congress for an additional \$1,700,000,000 for public works. This would bring the federal fund up to the \$5,000,000,000 urged by Progressive senators, the American Federation of Labor, economists and others.

Out of the \$3,000,000,000 voted for public works under the NRA some \$2,112,000,000 has been allotted for federal and non-federal works. At the present rate the entire fund will be apportioned by Jan. 1. Thousands of worthy projects are before the public works administration. Of these there are enough sound enterprises to use of \$2,000,000,000 additional.

While private capital remains timid, public spending should go forward at an increased tempo. It is important, however, that the spending be of the right sort. We are satisfied with pork-barrel federal buildings. We have about reached the saturation point on roads and waterways. We have spent enough for the present on reclamation works.

We have not driven with enough will and wherewithal for that type of building certain to bring back the quickest returns in prosperity and human dividends—rehousing the American masses in decent homes.

Just as the sudden development of the automobile pulled America out of the last depression so may a nation-wide rehousing movement help bring prosperity now. This means not only razing and rebuilding the 9,000,000 American "homes" in the blighted slum areas of our cities. It also means public parks and playgrounds, wider streets and boulevards and ample city entrances and exits, the decentralization of industry. It means, in short, the remaking of American cities into comfortable and healthful abodes.

This type of construction is unique in that it gives men work and stimulates the heavy industries and at the same time creates new standards, new wants, new markets. Every dollar spent in rehousing brings a crop of many dollars.

That the government proposes to lead this movement is shown by its creation of the new federal housing corporation. Through this the government can build houses just as, for twenty years, it has built reclamation works for its citizens.

NO REVOLUTION

ALTHOUGH it has become the fashion to speak of the recovery program as a kind of revolution, no one who looks into the matter closely can fail to see that basically it is only a conservative proposition.

The truth of this statement can be tested by looking at the very obstacles which are slowing up the progress of recovery.

First among these obstacles, no doubt, is the fact that the owner of capital still is a bit skittish about putting his money to work. His fear of inflation would seem to have been quieted by the forthright manner in which the gold question is being handled; but he still is afraid that he will not be able to make a profit on the employment of his money, and so he is hanging back.

In the past, depression ended when the chance to make money began to reappear in commerce and industry. We are trying to end this one in the reverse order—by putting re-employment and increased wages first and trusting that profit will follow in the natural sequence.

Owners of capital are not yet persuaded fully that the profit actually will appear on schedule. Furthermore, witnessing the vast sums that are being spent, and considering the heavy taxes that will have to be levied ultimately to meet these expenses, they are afraid of what may happen to their profit when it does appear.

Consequently, capital in the main is hesitant, and the recovery program does not make the speed we should like.

Yet all this fear of capital, and the efforts of government to provide reassurance, add up to just one thing: The fact that the new deal is, at bottom, conservative and not revolutionary.

Notice this for example: The entire recovery program still depends on the profit motive—the distinctive feature of the capitalistic system as we have known it. There is no hint that the profit motive is to be shelved.

Capital may be hesitant, fearing that the scheme may not work out well; but it isn't running for the storm cellar, as it would if it foresaw any intention to do away with the rules under which profit is possible.

Could there be a better indication that the administration seeks to change our existing order as little as possible? It is staking its entire program on the belief that the confidence of capital investors can be restored.

If its program had a revolutionary tinge, that point would not bother it for a moment.

DECLINING 'PLAGUE'

THE campaign against tuberculosis, carried on with vigor in recent years by public health agencies and the National Tuberculosis Association, is showing some very substantial results.

Dr. Frederick L. Hoffman, New York statistician, points out that the death rate from the disease in fifty-nine representative American cities was lower last year than ever before. It dropped to a mark of fifty-six for each 100,000—which compares with 174 for each 100,000 in 1910.

To be sure, the fight isn't over. Tuberculosis still takes 75,000 lives a year in America. But the fight is being won, and in the sharp decline in the death rate there is a world of encouragement.

The Case of Dr. Athearn

An Editorial

WHEN a decent employer wishes to discharge his office boy he gives the lad a chance to state his side of the case. Hilton U. Brown, Hugh T. Miller and Emsley W. Johnson, local trustees of Butler university, summarily dismissed Dr. Walter Athearn as president of the institution without even granting him this ordinary justice.

Their conduct is ample proof of Dr. Athearn's charges that these gentlemen have made Butler their vest pocket college. All three trustees are estimable citizens.

The fact is that running a university is a highly specialized job requiring a life-time of preparation. Messrs. Brown, Miller and Johnson have demonstrated fully in the last few days that they are conspicuously inept in administering an educational institution.

Unfortunately college presidents are human. Sometimes it is necessary to remove them, but such removal should be only after the most careful weighing of the facts by the entire board of trustees and not by a local committee of three.

Regardless of the merits of Dr. Athearn's case these three men stand convicted before the public of smug insolence and cruelty in which their rangings to and fro are none of the public's business. The public interest is distinctly involved in their controversy with Dr. Athearn.

Butler has a considerable property which is exempt from local taxes. Therefore every taxpayer is involved directly because he is helping support the university. His taxes are higher by reason of Butler's exemption. Any taxpayer may, with complete propriety, inquire concerning the administration of an institution which is costing him money.

If Messrs. Brown, Miller and Johnson have a real case against Dr. Athearn they should promptly and fully state it. Their explanations thus far have been most inadequate. If they remain silent or give vent to further vague remarks along the "good-of-the-service" line they are placing Butler in a sorry position before the judgment seat of public opinion.

A CHARTER FOR CAPITAL

IT has been our American custom to concern ourselves, at intervals, over corruption in politics, but to ignore entirely the abuses in business which touch our personal lives much more closely.

Today NRA is undertaking the economic housecleaning task which has been neglected for so long, and the public is beginning to realize how much unnecessary hardship it has endured. Before the job is finished it may prove of far more significance than the spectacular emergency work of the recovery program.

The six classes of unfair trade practice just condemned by NRA hint at what has been going on in business to the detriment both of business and its customers. The first rule prohibits inaccurate advertising and other misrepresentations of commodities, credit terms, values, policies and services. It condemns misbranding and "balting" of customers with misleading sales methods. Under other headings NRA attacks secret rebates, commercial bribery, including the rendering of inaccurate bills, and forced purchase of one article by purchase of another.

Business, itself, has suffered from these abuses almost as much as the public, but in the past has found it impossible to correct them. Led to the brink of ruin by cut-throat competition, business began years ago to demand that it be given a chance to clean up itself without having to fear the operation of anti-trust laws.

The industrial recovery act gave business the opportunity it wanted and it has set about the task. To the credit of business the practices listed by NRA are forbidden in most codes of fair competition thus far drafted. NRA is watching to see that important points are not overlooked and that the rules are lived up to after they once are made.

Having classified and made uniform unfair trade practices, NRA probably will do the same thing for cost accounting, so that customers and competitors both may be protected against loading up cost accounts with excessive charges.

The two things should mean billions of dollars saved each year to the American public, when it is able to distinguish for itself what products are worth the price charged and what ones are not.

The probable benefits to business are not limited to freedom from unfair competition. It will find that if confidence replaces justified cynicism on the part of the customer its ledgers will record the change in substantial rows of black figures.

As a congressman said last winter, the cotton problem would be solved if every Chinaman could be persuaded to add one inch to his shirt tail.

At one time you find people drinking a quart or so each day on the theory that it is desirable to "wash out the kidneys." At another time, you find them getting along with a single glass, or none at all, save what goes with tea, coffee, or soda pop, on the theory that water is fatiguing.

Inventions, fads, the itch to try substitutes and the tyrannical rule of that curious abstraction which we call style are forever playing havoc with our economic structure.

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You can't boom the wheat market on a reducing diet or build up the textile industry with short, light-weight dresses.

The real catch in the problem is that by the time we have brought production down to fit such conditions, bread and long shirts may have come into fashion once more.

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A LOT of men are going without hats these days. I leave it to the brain trust whether this is due to low finances or a popular whim.

A rise in the cigarette trade has diverted a certain amount of business from candy kitchens.

Who saw it coming, and who can tell how long it will last?

Emotionism plays a big part in determining not only our cultural and recreational wants, but our existence wants. We used to classify bananas as a luxury, but just now we regard them as a necessity. It is conceivable that a well-directed advertising campaign might turn us against wheat in favor of rye or barley.

The first linen mill in this country has just been opened at Chicago. Who knows what they may mean to the cotton crop? Back in Babylon, linen furnished cloth for the common herd, while cotton was the aristocrat wearing apparel.

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The only trouble is that figuring out why cops aren't always honest and why the courts don't always co-operate leads you to the very heart of the most difficult and complicated problems our democracy faces.

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University of Chicago professor suggests more subjects be taught in public schools. Result—the children would learn less and less about more and more.

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