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Editor and Proprietor

EDITORIALS

RAILROADS AT THE JUNCTION

"American railroads are at the junction point, with the Congress which convenes next month likely to decide whether they are to remain under private control or to be forced, directly or indirectly, into government ownership and operation," declares the Transportation Conference in a recent statement.

"The railroads expect the reintroduction of Senator Wheeler's bill authorizing the government to acquire and run the roads, and they are also confronted with a drive by labor groups for a 39-hour week and other 'make-work' measures adding heavily to their financial and regulatory burden.

"Meanwhile the roads are resolutely facing their problems of capital needs, refunding and repayment of debts; meeting huge and rising taxes; recouping some of their depression losses as traffic picks up with the business revival and improved rail service; adjusting fixed charges to earning power, rehabilitating their properties and rolling stock; working toward necessary reorganization and consolidations; and many of them struggling with bankruptcy or the threat of insolvency.

"Not only is the future of rail transport at stake, but the formulation of a national transportation policy to include all forms of transport waits on the legislative developments affecting the railroads."

Grave as these statements are, there is no exaggeration in them—they reflect the opinions of numerous independent commentators who have studied and analyzed the transportation problem. It is safe to say that the American people do not want government ownership of our greatest single industry—yet there is a dangerous possibility that if Congress cripples the rails with burdensome new laws, or falls in its duty to equalize all transport legislation, advocates will urge socialization of the rails as a substitute for private enterprise.

Much will be before the next Congress—many problems demand attention. None of those problems is more important, or more directly affects the public welfare, than the transportation problem. How far Congress will swing toward socialism remains to be seen.

ROADS TO TAX REDUCTION

There are two principal ways in which the cost of government may be reduced.

One way is by the elimination of unnecessary functions. The other is by cutting overhead costs through combining bureaus, doing away with

overlapping of activities, etc. One is as important as the other.

Many authorities have said that it is now time to eliminate some of the current functions of government.

It is likewise advocated that the Congress pass legislation authorizing a survey of bureaus, commissions and other bodies with a view to consolidating them, and lowering personnel and other administrative costs. It is unquestionably true that cutting the red tape that today surrounds so many official activities would make government more efficient, as well as less expensive.

This is all in the interest of better government and more economical government. Other units of government—state, county and local—should follow suit. It is just as wasteful to perform an essential function of government inefficiently as it is to put government into fields where it does not belong.

THE ANSWER IS UP TO YOU

When the final figures are made up, it will very possibly be found that the automobile accident record of 1936 was the worst in our motoring history—from the standpoint of injuries and property damage, as well as fatalities.

Will 1937 further "improve" that record? The answer is up to the millions who drive cars and walk our streets and highways.

We make our cars mechanically safer—and accidents increase. We apply the most advanced engineering knowledge to the problems of highway construction—and accidents increase. We stiffen our traffic laws—and accidents increase.

It is a telling commentary on our driving habits that the worst accidents involve cars in good condition operating on first-class highways under excellent weather conditions—not worn-out wrecks driving on icy pavement in a storm. There is a percentage of drivers who habitually exaggerate the "safety factor"—and the annual cost is 35,000 lives and hundreds of millions of dollars in property destruction.

The driver who steps on it—who weaves through congested traffic—who disdains traffic signals—who regards pedestrians as a nuisance to be run off the streets—this driver is responsible for mass manslaughter on an unprecedented scale. Will the American people continue to countenance his ravages?

ONE IMPORTANT RESOLUTION

Most New Year's resolutions don't survive the second of January. But there are a few resolves that all of us should make and keep. One of them could well be, "I'll do my part to protect my property and the lives of my loved ones from fire."

During the past year, the fire loss has tended to rise. Part of the increase is doubtless due to increases in property values. But the principal factor is human indifference, human carelessness and human ignorance.

The refusal of millions of citizens to do anything to prevent fire might be understandable if the job required a lot of money. But it doesn't. It is expensive, of course, to rebuild a deficient house in accordance with the best fire-resistant standards. But a large proportion of the most potent and ordinary hazards can be completely eliminated without spending a cent.

For example, there is an excellent chance that your attic and basement are jammed with old magazines and newspapers, discarded

clothes and broken down furniture. Thousands of fires have started in such trash—and every one of those fires could have been prevented had property owners simply avoided such worthless accumulations.

It is also probable that somewhere about your home you have stored varnish, gasoline or other inflammables in improper containers, or near heating equipment. Here is another major cause of fire that can be eliminated in five minutes.

Carelessness with smoking materials is one of the most common causes of fire—a cause that only the habit of thoughtfulness can eliminate.

So—if you don't want your home to possibly be among the \$400,000,000 worth of property that will be destroyed by fire this coming year, or your loved ones perhaps among the thousands of people whom fire will kill—resolve to carry on a personal fire prevention campaign during 1937. And keep that resolution.

Economic Highlights

Happenings That Affect the Dinner Pails, Dividend Checks and Tax Bills of Every Individual. National and International Problems Inseparable from Local Welfare.

One of the most interesting and potentially far reaching phases of future stability for the nation is the increasing interest shown by industry—and especially large corporate industry—in matters of social, as well as economic significance.

Prime example of this was provided at the recent annual meeting of the National Association of Manufacturers, representative organization of most of the big goods-producing concerns of the country. The president of the Association, C. N. Chester (who in business life is Chairman of the Board of General Foods Corporation) sounded the keynote of the gathering when he said, "Industry cannot just sit back and enjoy the fruits of prosperity. We must understand better what has been happening since 1929. Now that the course of the depression is behind us, lending itself in its entirety to analysis, it is the job for industry, general business and all affected sectors of our economic life to join in creating a national depression study committee."

Mr. Chester then presented 11 specific suggestions which he believes industry should follow. Business Week briefs them thus: 1. To continue making better goods at lower costs, raising living standards but defending personal opportunities; 2. Put all possible unemployed back to work; 3. Keep its house in order; 4. Oppose monopoly; 5. Engender greater confidence in workers; 6. Promote public understanding; 7. Share the proceeds of industrial operations fairly among workers, management and investors; 8. Help create economic security for all; 9. While accepting its responsibilities, insist

that all other interested elements, including labor organizations, be made equally responsible; 10. Cooperate with government; 11. Join other groups in a preventative study of depressions.

These goals were approved by the delegates to the meeting. Most serious dissension arose over the Social Security Act which has many enemies as well as friends. But finally, the purpose of the Act was approved—though the Act itself was criticized in detail, a criticism that has been made often before and will very possibly lead to some revision of the measure in the next Congress.

The meaning of all this is that all industry is making a determined effort to strengthen every phase of industrial activity to improve employment and safeguard steady jobs.

The service industries are following suit. For example, the railroads and the electric utilities are doing everything possible to stabilize and increase their operations so as to employ the greatest number of person and render the highest public service.

National political interest has naturally been focused on Washington during the past year. As a result, local governments have come in for only a modicum of attention.

In 1937, however, local politics will be of vital importance. During January, no less than 43 state legislatures will convene.

Before these legislatures will be many highly important questions. One of those questions is that of relief—Federal appropriations for this purpose are gradually being reduced, and tremendous pressure will be brought on states to appropriate funds to supplant the lost Federal dollars.

Only a handful of states have yet passed laws to bring their citizens completely under the Social Security Act. In the bulk of states such laws will be up for debate and considerable dissension is in prospect.

Furthermore, in practically every state local problems of more than ordinary significance will be an issue. The question of public economy and taxation is looming larger every day—and the collection and disbursement of public funds is being more closely scrutinized. In at least one state, California, revision of the state constitution is considered.

Thus, during the next month or two, more of the political news in your newspapers will be given to state activities.

Long debated has been the proposal that the President of the United States should be restricted, by

law, to but a single term of six years' duration.

Prime argument in favor of the proposal is that under present conditions, Presidents are virtually forced to build political fences during their first term in an effort to assure their reelection. The single term would stop that long established practice.

A bill to pave the way for a Constitutional amendment making the proposal the law of the land will probably be introduced in the Congress.

New S.P. Freight Cars Would Make 109-Mile Trains

If all the freight cars and motive power units ordered in 1936 by the Southern Pacific and the Pacific Fruit Express, in which it owns a one-half interest, were placed end to end, they would make up a train 109 miles long.

The train would consist of 12,525 new freight cars of various types and 46 new locomotives with a combined pull of 253,000 horsepower, according to J. H. Dyer, vice president in charge of operations for the railroad.

Traveling at the rate of 35 miles an hour, it would require more than three hours for such train to pass a given point, Dyer stated.

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