

Washington Digest

National Topics Interpreted
by William Bruckart
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Washington.—One swallow does not make a summer nor does one statement, even though from a high official, make a condition absolute.

Relief Problem

But one statement from a high official under the present New Deal relief setup comes rather close to disclosing the transcendent importance of the nation's relief problem in American economy at this time.

I refer to the recent testimony by Harry A. Hopkins, Works Progress Administrator and professional reliever, before the house committee on appropriations. He told that group a few days ago that 3,853,000 heads of families or unattached persons were receiving a livelihood for themselves and their families from the federal government on March first of this year. If this be true, and it can hardly be disproved, there are nearly fifteen million persons dependent entirely upon Federal assistance. And the condition appears even worse when it is shown that about ten million others are receiving assistance from state, county and city relief or charitable organizations. In short, the Hopkins testimony reveals that about 20 per cent of all of our people are living on relief money.

These figures are astounding. They are made the more amazing when one considers that the condition exists even after the New Deal has expended approximately twenty-one billions in its three years of government management, the bulk of the outgo being directly chargeable to what Mr. Roosevelt has consistently maintained was an emergency.

I have reported to you intermittently heretofore the various stages through which Reliever Hopkins has gone in search for means to solve the relief problem. I have been among those observers here who have felt that even though Mr. Hopkins lacks practical experience in commercial life and even though he casts aside every consideration except those inherent in the mind of a man who has devoted his life professionally to relief work, that he should be given time to solve the problem, it seems to me, however, that he has had ample time to find the answer if he is going to provide a solution. Neither he nor President Roosevelt has given any indication yet that they know the answer or even have a clue to it. The net result of their efforts to date has been the expenditure of money in unprecedented amounts and the piling up of a debt, the like of which this country never has known.

Mr. Hopkins has gone about his job smugly and with that apparent complacency that characterizes the official who is convinced that he alone is equipped to do a particular job. By his attitude, he has created in congress a feeling that he thinks he is a superior being, and if anything makes a congressman hot under the collar, it is to see a member of the executive branch exhibit a pose that the congressmen are dumbbells. Some of them are, of course, but that is not true of all and it is fast doing Mr. Hopkins no good at all to show arrogance toward the men who go out and campaign directly for the votes of the people.

I said that the relief problem was of transcendent importance in governmental affairs at this time.

Visionary Policy

This is true because I believe the conviction is growing that the whole New Deal policy on relief is impractical and visionary; that it is founded upon a wrong psychol-

ogy; that it is creating in this nation the greatest mass of panhandlers and "the world owes me a living" type or class of individuals that has ever existed anywhere and that, in addition the men who are doing the job for the federal government lack the ability to understand its whole significance.

As proof of the observations I have just stated, let me point out how the demands for vast expenditures of money and wholesale methods of relief for the destitute have subsided in congress. Time was when a half dozen so-called welfare workers, college professors or organization leaders could get a hearing by the simple crook of a finger before a congressional committee. Such men as Senator La Follette of Wisconsin, and Senator Costigan of Colorado, and the late Senator Cutting of New Mexico, to mention only a few, would weep salty tears in senate speeches; they would call for ten billions for this and five billions for that and other billions for other things and shout that people were starving in the midst of plenty. And they were starving in the midst of plenty, but the shouting and the tumult raised by these political saviors did not provide a solution for the problem. I have a hunch that the silence of such men as these through the last year can mean only that they were off on the wrong foot. They cannot help but realize that their theories were all wet, because Mr. Hopkins certainly has disproved the value of their plans.

Another indication of how congress feels is the movement to divide the billion and a half relief fund, which President Roosevelt asked, between Mr. Hopkins and Public Works Administrator Ickes. The President demanded that congress give the whole fund to Mr. Hopkins. It probably will work out that way eventually but the feeling against Mr. Hopkins cannot be denied. It is violent and only a small part of it has come to the surface.

The congressmen could not afford to see the flow of money cut off in an election year so they maneuvered to spank Mr. Hopkins by seeking to give a portion of the money to Mr. Ickes.

Now, it is currently rumored that Mr. Ickes, who never has liked Mr. Hopkins, has done some lobbying in the fine underground manner of which he is capable. He sincerely believes that the use of funds in the construction of permanent things like buildings, roads and bridges gives the government and taxpayers at least something for their money. But, be that as it may, the ground swell against Mr. Hopkins is very powerful and if Mr. Hopkins possessed any understanding of the science of the times he would see it. Thus far he has given no indication that he understands what it means.

Where will it all end?

The answer to this relief problem is not now near enough to hazard a guess.

Let us go back for a brief review. When President Roosevelt took hold of the relief problem early in his administration, he advanced two theories. They were to solve our problems and solve them quickly. He urged the NRA and the PWA, which with the AAA, formed the first battalion of the alphabetical army. The NRA was designed to regiment business and indirectly force re-employment by the shortening of hours and the spread of work. The PWA was to provide a lot of construction jobs immediately, giving work to those not absorbed in private commerce and industry and thus take up the

slack until buying power of individuals had been restored.

By November, 1933, it became quite evident to unbiased observers that NRA and PWA were falling short of the mark. So, out of the Presidential hat came the CWA. Congress promptly provided funds so the Civil Works administration—and here is where professional reliever, Mr. Hopkins, came on the scene—could hire such unemployed as had not been absorbed by PWA or had not been restored to jobs in commerce and industry by NRA.

It was not long until CWA was as much in disrepute as the original schemes for providing employment. I believe it was in even greater disrepute because ordinary citizens could see the utter waste and the reckless expenditures of money occurring under CWA for its relief raking and stone gathering and other nonsensical job-creating results. CWA went the way of any unsound proposition.

Forward then came FERA. It was a proposition of emergency relief. Washington writers were deluged with speeches and statements that none should be allowed to starve. The spigots of the treasury were opened wide and \$4,880,000,000 gushed forth. In every section of the country, federal money was distributed and distributors in Washington were none too careful of how they passed it out. In parallel lines with FERA, the politicians formed to the right. They saw the money and from precinct to pinnacle of politics, they were on the job and they have been on the job ever since.

Last year the President became convinced that there was too much waste; that FERA was building up a clientele of millions who were saying, both publicly and privately, that it was no use to work when the government would feed them and he ordered a quick change in course.

With this change in course came a locking of horns between Messrs. Hopkins and Ickes. Mr. Ickes was licked by the simple expedient of a new federal agency. Bounding forth came Mr. Hopkins' own brain child, WPA. While it stands for Works Progress administration, a different name, the initials, to those who have studied the situation, spell FERA and CWA combined.

The President announced to the country that "this business of relief must end." Those who could not be employed must be taken care of by the states and local governments and those who were employable would be taken off relief but they must do work for the funds which the federal government passed out to them. The result has been a considerable mess and there is not a day goes by that congressional mail does not reveal cruel results, absolute destitution and hardship and privation unparalleled in the United States.

Where will it all end? "This business of relief" is still relief by whatever name the alphabetical agency in Washington may be known. It can be only relief and there can be no doubt that it must be continued.

Although President Roosevelt had demonstrated his willingness to make shifts in his program, it is becoming more and more evident that a fundamental alteration of his whole scheme must be undertaken.

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POTPOURRI

Reversed Tattoo

Tattooing can be successfully done only on light-skinned people, for the process is one of puncturing the skin and rubbing colors into the fresh scars. However, dark skinned races use a related, or reversed method. They gash the skin and rub ashes or clay into the wounds thus causing light, raised scars to form.

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Lights of New York

By L. L. STEVENSON

Have often wondered what kind of gadgets were included in the kits that members of the homicide squad carry in the cars in which they ride to the scene of the crime. Well, it seems among the tools used in running down slayers are back saws, chisels, pliers, shears, rubber gloves, an 18-inch steel jimmy, a magnifying glass, a flashlight, a finger-printing outfit and a pint of alcohol, along with some other accessories. It may be seen readily that all those articles, with the exception of the finger-printing outfit, would prove exceedingly useful to a burglar who in some manner had lost his equipment or who, being new in the business, hadn't acquired his tools. As a matter of fact, it was through a burglary that I acquired the facts as stated. A thief broke into the Manhattan homicide squad's car parked in front of a police station and stole the kit. It didn't do him much good however, as a plain ordinary cop soon found it. It was intact, even to the alcohol.

Speaking of policemen brings to mind that drink popular in Harlem. It's known as "Joe Louis punch" and is a mixture of applejack and rum, along with a dash of cordial lime juice and a bit of pineapple. It is said to be just about as powerful as the wallop of the Brown Bomber himself. The police connection comes through the fact that a colored boy, not more than five feet tall, after imbibing one or maybe two of those punches, called at a nearby police station and mused up four big cops. He then made the request that he be arrested—a request that was heeded immediately. He said he didn't know what was in the punch but guessed it was dynamite.

The surgeon discussing local anesthetics with a patient, declared that he would prefer to use cocaine. But the government was so fussy about granting a permit, etc., that he had to use patent preparations for fear he'd become an "addict through aggravation."

Taxicab drivers don't have such an easy time in this town despite the addiction of New Yorkers to such a form of transportation. Testimony recently given before a legislative investigating committee was that drivers who worked days earned from \$10 to \$14 a week by working from 60 to 75 hours. Those who drive nights earn from \$15 to \$18 and work from 84 to 120 hours.

It seems as if I'm always running into something new designed for the comfort of dogs. The latest is dog boots with an inner cushion footpad. There are sizes for puppies and toys on up to collies and police dogs. Not only do they protect the dog's feet but keep the animal from tracking up the house. And on Park avenue, the other afternoon, a woman was seen taking her Pom out for an airing in a costly beribboned perambulator.

In New York not so long ago, your correspondent found himself down at the Fulton fish market on a day when the wind carried sharp ice particles and the wind went right through heavy clothing. There he discovered indubitable evidence that no matter the weather, men go to sea and fish. A small schooner had just reached the slip. Hardy, dark men, so bundled up they looked like animated bales, were making icy lines fast to the pier. That done, they began to chop away gear of various kinds. Finally, they opened a hatch and chunks of silver, shaped like fish, went ashore. The masts, the various lines, the stays, the dories were ice patterns, and the sails as stiff as boards. Yet the fishermen had wrested a living from a gale-swept and icy ocean and come back safely to port. And your correspondent wondered if any who ate their catch gave all that a thought.

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