

The Public Weal, a Legislative Task

The People's Representatives, Gathering This Year in the Halls of Congress and of Most State Capitols, Face the Problem of Aiding Millions of Distressed

A LONG program of suggested remedial legislation lies ahead of the 7,500 representatives of the people who gather this year in the halls of Congress and of all but four State Legislatures. The NRA will come under the closest scrutiny. As the old year waned, the NRA was being attacked and defended.

In Chicago, Frank Bane, Director of the American Public Welfare Association, urged Congress and the forty-three State Legislatures which meet this month to work out a plan for public welfare. Congress, he said, "probably will consider ways and means for stimulating and assisting private enterprise, an enlarged public-works program, unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, aid for mothers with dependent children, health insurance, and other measures for social security.

State Responsibility

"These measures," he added, "will not lessen the responsibility of the States, but will require from them additional efforts. . . . The need for carefully planned welfare legislation is obvious and urgent. One may well wonder how much suffering has been occasioned, and how much money has been wasted because, in the welfare field, in the past, we failed to organize proper welfare services, and to build sound welfare policies."

A similar national program for the public weal was presented by Dr. John B. Andrews, General Secretary of the American Association for Labor Legislation. Speaking also in Chicago, where a dozen societies of learned men were in their several sessions, Doctor Andrews declared that the public expected the President to fulfil his promise to have enacted a program for economic security. The program embraced unemployment insurance, health insurance, and old-age pensions.

"Expectation," said Doctor Andrews, "has been raised to a point where anything less will be regarded as a breach of that 'solemn covenant with the people' as supplemented by Presidential promises and reenforced in the late country-wide campaign with new political indorsement." Technical research, asserted Doctor Andrews, "has prepared the way for wide acceptance of a national program into which the States are to fit their constructive measures harmoniously."

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The "seamier side" of New York City life: the tenant of a shanty cooks supper

determined insistence that those pledges of prompt action—upon which the high hopes of our millions of distressed people are now depending—shall be rigorously fulfilled.”

George Terborgh, of the Brookings Institution, asserted that NRA had retarded recovery, but “whether the loss to recovery has been justified by gain through reform I leave it to others to say.” Most of the excessive price competition of which industry complained, he said, would have disappeared naturally with the revival of business. The price-control devices used he thought were “for the most part either non-administrable, or objectionable on grounds of public policy. . . . My own view,” he said, “is that the boosting of costs and prices that went on under the NRA was premature, ill-advised, and inimical to the expansion of productive activity.

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So far, he went on, it “has proved to be a rather inadequate device for Federal labor legislation. Excepting wage minima and hours, the codes, by and large, have reflected the *status quo ante*.

“But,” Doctor Lorwin added, “the NRA still represents, in principle, a great social advance in so far as it recognizes the obligation of society to secure a living wage for its workers, and in so far as it invests the Government with the function of planning a stable prosperity for the nation as a whole.”

Coming to the defense of NRA, Blackwell Smith, Acting NRA Counsel, declared that it had helped raise wages and eliminate child labor, and that recovery was well under way as a direct result of NRA operations. He recited that there had been an increase of 35 per cent. in pay-rolls since April, 1933, and an estimated increase of 25 per cent. in wages above the cost of living for all employees affected under the codes.

Problem of Old Age

FERA officials said that research revealed that large blocks of relief population “can not be regarded as emergency problems.” Clark Tibbitts, Coordinator of Urban Research, pointed out that 700,000 on the relief-rolls had reached the age of sixty-five, and that “the number of aged is expected to double in the years to come, with consequently larger numbers becoming dependent.”

Then there is the problem of the employables whose skills are becoming outmoded, and who will be replaced by younger workers.

Mr. Tibbitts said that the relief adminis-



New York City's destitute and homeless men find daytime shelter in the armories

tration needed help in solving these and related problems because the character of relief was shifting from merely supplying temporary needs to permanent rehabilitation.