

NEW

OUTLOOK

A P R I L , 1 9 3 5 : P . 5 5

Teeth

IN THE EARLY DAYS of FERA, when there existed among not a few of the assistant chefs of the alphabet soup the idea that the Escoffier of the New Deal really intended that the government should do everything for its 126,000,000 (now believed to be about 140,000,000) citizens, an elderly man applied at relief headquarters in New York City. He proved the required degree of poverty. He also satisfied the spending agency that his greatest misery came from his teeth. He submitted indisputable evidence that all of them ought to come out. (1) Would the government stand for it—i.e., pay for it? (2) Would the government buy him a pair of store teeth?

As to the first request, the relief agency was pretty sure the government was prepared to do the handsome thing. As to the second, there was some doubt. The applicant was told to report back in a few days. In the meantime further queries would be made at State Headquarters.

The gentleman of the bad molars did as directed. When he made his next visit he was informed definitely that the government was prepared to pay for the extraction. No decision yet on whether Mr. Ickes was authorized to go into the open market for bridge work. Report back in a week, he was told, maybe there would be definite word then. He again did as directed. Again no definite word.

Teeth

Well, the thing dragged on that way for months. Finally the glad news came, presumably direct from headquarters. The sufferer was told to go ahead and have his troublesome teeth pulled and funds for that part of the undertaking were immediately supplied.

When the operation was performed the now toothless applicant again appeared before his local relief board to receive the disheartening information that there had been a hitch somewhere; no funds for new teeth would be available until July, 1936! And nothing could be done about that.

There is a sequel to this sad tale. In the course of her travels Mrs. Roosevelt heard the story and when next she met the President of the United States he was told the story. Mr. Roosevelt was deeply impressed with this miscarriage of the best intentions of an all-benevolent government. He insisted that there must be a happy ending to the story. He asked Mrs. Roosevelt to have Miss Lorena Hickok, who not only serves as an efficient aide to the First Lady but who is also a special relief investigator for the White House, look into the situation and see that the Relief Administration (by special order) made full amends. The requested Presidential Investigation was speedily and efficiently made, turning up the following information: "Case closed. Applicant dead. Cause: malnutrition."

CASE CLOSED