

LOOKING AT WASHINGTON

By HUGO S. SIMS, Washington Correspondent

Price Controls Should End When Supply Balances Demand

The bill to extend the life of the Office of Price Administration starts its legislative journey with the approval of the House Banking Committee, although given some amendments that arouse the ire of various persons and groups.

One amendment provides for mandatory but gradual liquidation of price controls in various areas of the economy as supply comes into balance with demand, and leaves to the President the decision when this comes into being.

We do not think that there can be any serious objection to this provision because the basic justification for price control at the present time, is the danger of inflation if anxious buyers, well supplied with funds, bid without restrictions for scarce goods. Naturally, when supply approximates demand there should be no further reason for price limitations. Prices would adjust themselves to competition amid normal supplies.

If It's Good For Petrillo, Why Not Good For All?

The bill passed by Congress to curb the powers of James C. Petrillo and his union, in connection with radio broadcasting, probably meets the approval of the vast majority of the people of the United States.

The legislation, among other things, provides a fine of \$1,000 and a year's imprisonment for the use of force, threats or intimidation intended to compel broadcasters to (a) hire more persons than they actually need or (b) to pay money to a union or person for services not performed.

The question has been raised by a number of persons as to why this legislation is good law and sound public policy, in regard to Mr. Petrillo's union and the radio companies, and not sound principles for basic legislation to safeguard all enterprise in the nation which is, or may be, threatened and compelled to hire persons not needed or pay for services not performed.

Give Your Congressman Your Views On Controls

The plea of five Federal agency heads for quick extension of price control without "crippling" amendments should remind the people of Hertford that the matter is before Congress and that prompt action must be taken.

There has been so much discussion about price control that it is difficult for ordinary Americans to get at the facts. It is significant, however, that the criticism, as a rule, comes from individuals and organizations that believe they have an opportunity to make greater profits by selling scarce products while there is an overwhelming demand.

The contrast of prices during and after the second World War with conditions that obtained during and after the first World War provides an unanswerable argument for the continuation of effective price control. There may have been bulges and some selfish interests may have taken advantage of the political power of their groups, but, in the main, price control has served the interested of the vast majority of our people.

We are inclined to agree with the conclusion of the five Federal officials who say that the nation stands at a crossroads, with one way leading to economic disaster and the other to a possible long-range prosperity. Furthermore, we cannot take much stock in the charge that price controls are restricting production when the figures show that civilian output today is setting a peace-time record for production.

Arnall Says Railroads Should Obey Anti-Trust Law

Governor Ellis Arnall, of Georgia, denounces the Bulwinkle Bill which, as we understand it, would authorize railroads and bus and truck lines to set up rate-making bureaus and immunize them from the violation of the anti-trust laws in the matter of rate-making.

We do not see why the railroads should be relieved from the terms of the anti-trust law, which, like Governor Arnall says, should apply "to the big and little alike." Certainly to permit transportation agencies to set up rates, while protected from the anti-trust laws, would seem to invite something like a raid on the pocket-books of shippers.

"Death Sentence" Upheld After 11-year Legal Battle

In 1936, Congress passed the Public Utility Holding Company Act, which included what has been termed the "death sentence" provision, which compelled interstate gas and electric corporations to limit their activities to a single, integrated system.

The legislation was bitterly de-

nounced by public utility companies. Most of them waged a bitter fight against the enforcement of the Act. In 1942, the Securities and Exchange Commission ordered the \$2,800,000,000 North American Company to divest itself of all properties, except those in the St. Louis area. This led to a suit which went to the Supreme Court.

The high court's ruling ended a four-year fight. Six justices, a legal quorum, participated in the opinion, unanimously sustaining the legality of the controversial clause. The decision had been anticipated and there was little or no excitement in public utility circles.

The challenge to the law required years for its disposition. The holding corporations were given until January, 1938, to curtail their operations and the effort of the North American Company to have the law declared unconstitutional, on the ground that it represented a taking of property without due compensation, created the issue which finally reached the highest court of the land.

Legion Head Says Vets Can't Get Surplus Property

Asserting that "surplus property is melting away through various channels" and that veterans are not getting a fair share, National Commander John Stelle, of the American Legion, proposes the temporary seizing of all surplus property until the situation can be surveyed and the veterans given improved priority.

We have no direct information as to the difficulty encountered by veterans in their efforts to obtain surplus war goods but we can easily imagine that the regulations designed to prevent scandals may work undue hardships against many veterans who have no idea how to proceed.

While thoroughly in sympathy with the idea of giving veterans an opportunity to secure surplus war goods, and even a priority over civilians, it should be pointed out that a number of scandals developed after the first World War, in connection with the sale of surplus goods. The answer is not simply to assert that veterans should have priority, because there have been instances where veterans used priority for the benefit of other individuals.

The matter needs study, definite regulations and widespread publicity so that the bona fide needs of veterans can be adequately met.

Peace-Time Production At All-Time Dollar-High

John W. Snyder, Reconversion Director, says that the country is in the middle of a boom and that production is now at the annual rate of \$150,000,000,000, which is all-time record.

No wonder President Truman concludes that the nation is "over the hump of reconversion" when he knows that production of goods and services for the civilian market is higher than ever before. Naturally, the President observes that this fact is the best possible answer to talk that his wage-price policy was impeding reconversion.

Mr. Snyder points out, in his report, despite widespread shortages of many items, American buyers found sufficient goods to keep spending going during the first three months of 1946 at the same rate of the Christmas boom. In addition, the Reconversion Director reported total employment, exclusive of farm help, at 44,700,000 in February, which is higher than before V-J Day.

Nationwide Debate Over The National Health Bill

The heat engendered all over the country by discussions of the National Health Bill, sponsored by Senator Wagner of New York and Representative Dingell, of Michigan, seems to have reached Congress.

When a Senate Committee met to begin hearings and Senator Murray, of Montana, the chairman, began an opening statement, he was interrupt-

ed by Senator East, of Ohio, who insisted on making a statement without waiting for the chairman to conclude his remarks.

This led to an exchange of words between the two Senators, with Mr. Taft promising to present a national health bill of his own and Mr. Murray threatening to call officers and have the Ohioan removed from the room. Thereupon, Mr. Taft left the room, with the declaration that he would attend no more meetings of the committee.

NEW THRILLING STORY OF THE WEST

For thrills and adventure be sure to read "To Gold and Glory on Wagon Wheels," story of the early West, written by Billy Dodson, pioneer plainsman, cowboy and trail driver. This new feature, in color, begins April 28 in

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