

THE END OF THE LINE

By Boris Shishkin
AFL Economist

Suppose you opened your morning paper and read a story about a highway bandit who hijacked a motorist, took his money, stripped

him of his clothes and drove off with his car, leaving him stark-naked on the road. But before the holdup man drove off, according to the story, he handed his terrified and shivering victim an

elaborate handbook on "How to Undress"! You wouldn't believe such a story, would you? Yet this story is very much like the one you have been reading in the papers about the removal of OPA price control.

The gentlemen who were out for easy profit at your expense did a thorough job. On the first of this month, all controls went off. The price of your food, your rent and your new shirt sailed away up. And now the same gentlemen have bedeviled and coerced Congress into writing a new APO law. But this new law, instead of showing how OPA should control prices, tells how OPA should take price controls off. Never mind that controls are already off, it says: take them off twice if you have to make sure they are off.

The old OPA law said it was a crime for the merchant to charge more than the maximum price set by the government. The new OPA law is quite different. The new law says it is a crime for the government to set a maximum price on, say, a cotton shirt, unless the price is high enough to cover the cost of everything, including the manufacturer's and the merchant's Havana cigars, plus a sure profit.

Under the new law, there will be no price ceilings on most basic foods until August 21. After that, a new three-man decontrol board would have to decide what to do with prices of such products. This new board may set new price ceilings on other products and set them quite high. The law gives detailed instructions how not to set the price ceilings too low but gives little guidance on when price ceilings would be too high. Having let go of most food prices from the start, the law provides that price ceilings on all other commodities must be lifted in five months—at the end of this year—unless OPA makes a specific finding that each removal will affect business costs or living costs.

This half-revived OPA will restore rent control for one year. But whether its weakened administration is enough to bring rents back to where they left off at the end of June—and to hold them there more than a few months, while other prices are allowed to go up—is a big question. And don't forget one other thing Congress has renewed along with the Price Control Act but without saying a word about it: wage control. That is at the heart of Congressional action.

You see, the new controls will have to accept most of the sharp price rises that have taken place in recent weeks. They will legalize the black market prices. Other prices under the new law are tied to high-speed escalators which will shoot them right up. But wages will remain riveted to the same stationary rung at which they were held to the end of last June. Workers who have helped to hold the line for four years will now find themselves at the end of the line—holding the bag. That's what workers will have to fight; and the A. F. of L. will help them fight it.

ILO GROUP DRAFTS SAFETY STANDARDS
San Francisco — A safety code for factories, with emphasis on prevention of accidents as industrial rehabilitation gets underway in nations scarred by war, was completed here by technical experts of eight countries. It will be printed for a tripartite conference of government, employer delegates meeting in 1947 under auspices of the International Labor Office.

A statement issued following the sessions said in part: "The code covers conditions found in various factories throughout the world and deals with many special industries, such as explosives, magnesium manufacture, celluloid, handling of strong acids and other corrosive and harmful substances.

"It not only covers the field with regard to mechanical processes but to respiratory protective devices, clothing and other means which can be taken to prevent injuries during operations.

"Primarily, our object was to set up standards whereby employees would not be unduly exposed to harmful conditions but where it was apparent, due to the process involved, that there might be some exposure our task was to suggest some protection against such exposure."

After you have read The Journal pass it on to your neighbor.



GARMENT WORKERS GIVE \$75,000 — David Dubinsky (right), president of the International Ladies Garment Workers-AFL, turns over to Jarvis Cromwell, Greater New York Fund Campaign chairman, the union's gift of \$75,000 to the 1946 American Red Cross fund.

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