

## LOOKING AT WASHINGTON

By HUGO S. SIMS, Washington Correspondent

### Will Federal Aid Start Public Works Program?

Mayor Fiorella La Guardia of New York warns Congress that it will "re-delay" unless it acts without delay to provide grants to the municipality for its post-war public works program.

The Mayor of the nation's largest city suggests a capital budget for 1946 of about \$225,000,000 which, he says, could be expanded to \$450,000,000 if Federal grants are forthcoming.

Of course, Congress can hardly afford to make a special grant for the benefit of the city of New York without providing grants on an equal basis in other centers of government throughout the nation.

Many months ago the Federal Government offered to provide funds to enable local governmental units to prepare plans for post-war projects.

Under the plan the Federal Government provided the necessary funds which constituted an outright gift in the event that the projects planned were not subsequently constructed.

The idea behind the Federal proposal was to stimulate the formulation of plans so that, in the event of widespread unemployment, no time would be lost in the preparation of plans and the projects could get under way immediately. Unfortunately, not many governmental units took advantage of the offer.

There may be considerable temporary unemployment in the next twelve months, but, upon the basis of prevailing opinion among economists, the unemployment will not last long. The process of reconversion is under way and most experts look for something of a boom in production in the latter part of 1946. What will come after

the boom depends upon several factors, including the success or failure of methods to maintain adequate buying power among the masses of the country.

### Talk About Deficits But Vote Tax Cuts

Every once in a while some member of Congress gets up to protest the amount of public spending, calling attention to the national debt and the immense annual sums that the Government will have to raise to meet its obligations.

The argument is somewhat persuasive until there is a proposal to reduce current taxes on individuals and corporations, and then, in nine cases out of ten, the same Congressman who proclaimed the desperate condition of the national treasury calmly votes to reduce taxes.

We are not among those who have been scared to death over the rising national debt, but we think it would be the part of prudence to continue the present high taxes, at least during the present prosperous period, and make some readjustment of the Government's fiscal affairs.

With a large national debt, increased annual expenses in connection with the war and reconversion problems, the Government is not in the position to extend financial favors to those able to pay taxes. This applies to most of the individuals and most of the corporations in the country.

The fiscal policy of the United States should include heavy taxation in prosperous years, with an eye to cutting down the national debt, and reduced taxation when the economic affairs of the country make it hard for citizens to balance their budgets. So far as 1945 is concerned, there is no real need for reduced income taxes, either upon corporations to know what the state of affairs will be in 1946, the probability is that it will be another good year.

### Flat Rate Unreasonable For Unemployment Payments

The debate in Congress and the discussion throughout the country over the proposed unemployment bill seems to have revolved itself into an argument over the \$25-a-week provision.

To fix a flat rate, applicable to all workers, may tickle the sensibility of those who claim that everybody is equal, but it makes little sense. Obviously, \$25 is not too much for a worker making \$50 a week, but it is too much for those who have made less than that sum.

The proponents of the flat rate of pay to all argue that everybody is entitled to the same consideration from the Government. They overlooked the fact that individuals make different contributions to society and receive different compensation. It seems to us that the unemployment payments might well have a minimum but that there should be some sliding scale, based upon the income lost by the worker.

The same observation applies to the payments made to the dependents of men in service. The idea of equal sharing is all right if the Government is distributing wealth, but if it is providing compensation for dependents of men taken into service, the amount paid should have some reasonable relationship to the amount previously earned.

We call attention to this matter without any idea that there will be any changes made. The rock-bottom fact is that each individual has an equal vote and that is what the lawmakers apparently have in mind.

Can We Avoid Labor Wars to Settle Economic Issues?

The process of industrial reconversion is running into snags, as various labor organizations demand wage increases and threaten to tie up the production of peace-time goods by strikes.

The situation threatens the stability of our present economic order because widespread wage increases will inevitably result in higher prices which, we hope, can be avoided in order to prevent steps toward inflation. Moreover, the higher prices go, the fewer products consumers can buy and consequently the wheels of industry will have no occasion to operate.

The tug of war between labor and capital concerns every American. The majority of the people of this country are not interested in any particular labor dispute, but the net result of many deadlocks between labor and employers will seriously impair the economic strength of us all.

For this reason, there is considerable sentiment in the nation in favor of some legislation that will provide for the peaceful settlement of industrial disputes. Such proposals are usually frowned upon by labor leaders for fear that they will be unable to win adequate recognition for the members of their unions unless they have the power to strike, thus cutting down production and hitting the employer in the pocketbook nerve.

Certainly, it seems possible to work out some feasible plan for the settlement of industrial disputes. It is not intelligent for labor and capital to settle economic issues through a contest that often times involves brute force, even if the term is used only in regard to economic pressure. Moreover, there are some people who begin to suspect that the power to strike, if ruthlessly utilized, permits labor leaders to point a pistol not only at employers, but at the population at large and to demand and receive more than would be possible otherwise.

We point to these questions as a friend of labor. In general, we support the principle of organized labor but only to the extent of equalizing

the bargaining power between wage earners and employers. We insist that the rights of the public should be first and that no demand, whether of labor or capital, should be permitted to imperil the economic general welfare of the nation. It is often hard to draw the line but, eventually, it must be drawn.

In considering the various disputes that arise and will arise between labor and capital, let no citizen imagine that the ruthlessness and greed of labor leaders is not fully equalled by the ruthlessness and greed of employers or that the common sense and patriotism of labor is not likewise equalled by that of employers and capitalists. This realization may assist us in maintaining an even keel in the midst of industrial storms on the labor front.

### Reconversion Report Reveals Much Progress

The War Production Board, surveying forty-two industries, finds that reconversion is proceeding much faster than expected and that the process is more than twenty-five per cent completed. The industries surveyed had an output of \$244,000,000 in August and are expected to reach \$572,000,000 in December and nearly \$1,000,000,000 a month next summer.

Automobiles: 3,897 cars produced in August, with an increase to 223,656 cars in December expected. By next summer production is estimated at around 500,000 cars a month.

Tires: Simple process of reconversion, changing from tires for military vehicles to passenger-car tires, with a quick increase over the 2,000,000 monthly production when the war ended. Synthetic plants continue to operate but will probably slow down when natural rubber becomes available.

Radios and Farm Machinery: Quick civilian production in both lines, with big volume output in sight. Farm

machinery production now well above pre-war monthly average of \$50,000,000.

Refrigerators and Laundry Equipment: Production jumping, with production in both lines to touch 300,000 units by end of the year and approach 500,000 units per month next summer.

Electric Ranges: Production approximately one-fourth of pre-war with average pre-war rate to be reached in December and doubled by June, when about 100,000 units are expected per month.

Electric Fans: Off to a quick start, with 200,000 a month by December and 250,000 a month by June.

Vacuum Cleaners: Expected to reach pre-war levels by December, with 199,000 units and to add an extra 100,000 per month by summer.

We cite the figures for the above products because of a widespread general interest. Something of a boom is expected in construction, but the process will develop slowly, hardly reaching a peak until late 1946 or early 1947. The shortage of lumber is impeding construction and also the construction of wood furniture, with August production being about two-thirds of the peace-time monthly average.

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