Collier's

WILLIAM L. CHENERY, Editor



The Poor Ye Have

THE general improvement brought about within the past seven months is marvelous. Factories have reopened. At least two million men and women who were unemployed now have jobs. Wages have risen. Buying power has been increased. Business has expanded. We have taken long and courageous strides back to normal economic health.

As time passes the emergency will shrivel and vanish and the depression will be remembered as one of the major historic catastrophes which afflicted mankind. Meanwhile, however, there are vast numbers still in need of food, clothes, shelter, medical care and jobs. They must be helped this winter.

The federal government is dispensing relief upon an unprecedented scale. States, counties, cities, towns, villages are almost everywhere rendering some assistance to those unable to help themselves. The government cannot, however, carry the entire burden of relief.

Private charity must take compassion upon the needs of those who are not and cannot be cared for by public relief.

President Roosevelt very wisely pointed out the fact that the government could not and the government ought not to carry the full load of relief.

The plain truth is that in all times, good and bad, many need help. Unemployment did not begin with the depression of 1929. A certain number of men and women are involuntarily jobless at all times. They must be fed.

Other large groups are permanently in need of charity. Where old-age pensions have not been established, charity must contribute to the maintenance of old people. Children deprived of the normal support of working parents must be reared. The sick, the maimed, the unfortunate, all need aid.

Year by year public welfare agencies assume responsibility for relieving new

groups, but laws are rigid and always lag behind human need.

The President has made a powerful plea to the states and to the local governments to share the burden of emergency relief with the federal government and with private charity. It is expected that \$73,000,000 will be given this winter for private relief. The entire program of the national government is based on the expectation that the American people will continue to be generous.

Giving to the poor is a hardship to some, but on the whole it is the best method yet devised for caring for those unable to care for themselves. Certainly those who do contribute to the necessities of the less fortunate are better citizens and better human beings than those without compassion for poverty and misfortune.

In perhaps a majority of the states the funds for private charity are being raised through Community Chests. These are coöperative enterprises intended to support the larger and more important social agencies.

The Community Chests should be supported. In the old days religious men gave a tenth of their incomes to their churches. Millions now owe allegiance to no church. They do, however, owe a duty to humanity. Giving generously to those organizations which decently, sympathetically and understandingly are caring for the weak and helpless is one effectual way to discharge this obligation.

More than that, good citizens will insist that their state and local governments do their fair share and not depend upon the federal government to carry the entire responsibility. Too many states and cities have callously sought to shift their obligations to Washington. This is bad morality and bad economics.

The national government has quite enough to do under the most favorable circumstances. The sums now borrowed for relief must sometime be repaid through taxes. The larger the debt accumulated the heavier the future burden. Prudence now will pay large dividends in the future.

The federal government has expended millions to care for the Dakota farmers whose lands this summer were stripped clean of growing food by a blight of grasshoppers. Large areas in the South laid waste by drought also required prodigious gifts by the central government. These things, however, are what seamen call "acts of God," too vast and too destructive to be within human control and too extensive to be subject to relief by local authority or private charity.

The poor who have but little always share that little with those who have less. Being poor, they understand need and share their small possessions. If the story of the gifts and contributions made during these recent years by those themselves on the poverty line could be adequately told, it would compose one of the truly noble records of human achievement and generosity.

They who have more now have the opportunity to express good will, even to the point of personal sacrifice, by contributing during these weeks dedicated by the nation to raising funds to enable charitable agencies to do their work during the months ahead. We who have jobs or incomes have the obligation and the privilege of sharing.

"Cast thy bread upon the waters" is an admonition which goes far back in history, even to the times before Christianity arose. It was wise counsel two thousand years ago and it is the essence of wisdom today. Listen to the President's appeal and heed the pleas made in behalf of those who depend for life and well-being on their more fortunate neighbors. It may hurt to give but it hurts far worse to be deaf to the call of the helpless.



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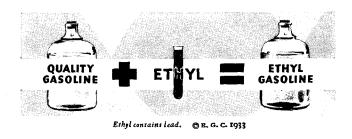
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