

Here in Washington . . . By Rilla Schroeder

THE DEFENSE ISSUE—Opposition to the WPA appropriation bill, carrying the President's spend-in-eight-months clause, crumbled before the shibboleth, national defense, and the measure went through the House, May 23, with few changes.

The Woodrumites introduced the question of national defense in an effort to pare the appropriation or at least strike out the eight months clause, but it proved a boomerang. Friends of the bill caught it up, and WPA as a national defense measure went triumphantly on to a 354-21 finish.

The La Follette Bill—The gambit, however, acts equally well in reverse. The afternoon it was being used in the House to defeat the attack on WPA, it was being similarly employed on the other side of the Capitol to stop or amend grotesquely the La Follette Oppressive Labor Practices bill. The measure was denounced by leaders of both parties as contrary to the defense interests of the country. After several days of wrangling it passed, but with amendments attached by Senator Reynolds which doom it as a labor bill. To be sure, its four fundamentals remain, but the Reynolds amendments would require employers operating in interstate commerce to limit aliens in their employ to one in ten and denies employment to communists and members of the German-American Bund.

Drive on Labor Laws—The defense issue promises to be the screen behind which the anti-labor drive in both House and Senate will be concealed, albeit somewhat clumsily. Already those members who actually read their mail are noting that old advisers, those who have been writing denouncing labor legislation for years, are now employing the argument that the National Labor Relations Act, the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Walsh-Healey Act, and so forth, interfere with the efficiency of the defense program and must be eliminated or amended into futility. As we go to press, the Smith amendments to the NLRB, practically abandoned after the defeat of the proposed changes in the wage-hour measure, are about to be brought to the floor.

The Patriotic Motif—The old anti-alien, anti-foreign-philosophies campaign has taken on new life. The WPA bill carries an amendment banning communists and members of the Bund from employment and requiring those applying for WPA jobs to sign affidavits that they are neither. If not eliminated in the Senate, where the bill is scheduled for early action, this amendment promises a ticklish bit of clerical work for WPA administrators.

The announcement by Attorney General Robert H. Jackson, that the Department of Justice was planning the registration of the 3,500,000 aliens in this country, after the transfer to his department's jurisdiction of the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, revived the Smith bill, passed by the House and long dormant in the Senate Judiciary



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Committee. The bill has been redrafted and with a few changes will, undoubtedly, be passed by the Senate. The House has then only to concur in the changes. Mr. Dies of Texas, chairman of the Committee to Investigate Un-American Activities, has introduced a resolution calling for an additional appropriation "not to exceed \$100,000."

LITTLE HATCH BILL—This bill, placing the same limitations on the political activities of state employees paid from federal funds as the original bill does federal employees, has been ordered reported despite heroic efforts on the part of the House Judiciary Committee to keep it in their files. The committee has amended the bill in various particulars, but it remains to be seen whether the amendments will stick. They are still trying to explain the shenanigans whereby, with secret ballot and much hush-hush, the bill was earlier tabled. Chairman Sumners undertook the job of explaining on the floor, but left his hearers unconvinced. There are members of both House and Senate who sincerely object to the measure, but Mr. Sumners ignored the meat of their objections in his lengthy address to the House.

MIGRANT WORKERS—A special committee to investigate interstate migration has been appointed and has held one or two preliminary meetings. Members are John Tolan of California, chairman; Claude V. Parsons of Illinois; John J. Sparkman of Alabama; Carl T. Curtis of Nebraska, and Frank J. Osmers of New Jersey. The committee is anxious to emphasize the national scope of its investigation and the membership has been nicely selected with that idea in view.

Dr. Robert K. Lamb, an economist formerly on the Williams College faculty, then with the La Follette Committee, has been named chief investigator. His staff will be recruited slowly and will include experts loaned by the interested departments. Dr. Lamb is young, full of enthusiasm, and capable. Despite limited funds, only \$20,000 having been appropriated, the committee is ambitious. There will be four or five hearings held in different sections of the country, and a final hearing in Washington with promises of headlines and, it is hoped, an outline for the solution of the problem or at least for its intelligent treatment.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS—The Senate, having disposed of the La Follette bill and the new hospital program, had hoped to sit back and wait for the House to act. The sudden decision of administration leaders to bring up the tax question has changed their plans somewhat. The tax bill will go through but definitely not with the speed or unanimity of the defense measures. The special interests are already gathering to fight this or that proposal and they are not noted for their susceptibility to the patriotism plea. The tax business has decidedly prolonged the session. At this point it looks as though there might be a recess over the conventions and a special session early in the fall or late summer.

The Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce may bring out the hospital bill but it will be in its original form. Chances that the bill reported will be the amended Senate measure, passed by the Senate with only a few minor alterations, are slight. So far the committee has indicated no disposition to bring out either bill although the House measure was sponsored by the committee chairman, Clarence Lea of California. The Senate, however, is committed to the new program and in conference would stand firm. Perhaps the amendments could be made on the floor and, with the argument that good health is necessary to defense, could be passed without much argument.

The House has a lot of unfinished business on hand, but how much of it will be allowed to die in committee or on the calendar is a question. There are, however, a number of rules that must be considered. Probably most of the rest of it will be allowed to die. Friends of the housing bill, S.591, passed by the Senate, are making a last minute drive to secure favorable House action. They, too, are stressing the importance of housing as a background for a sound national defense program.

The Common Welfare

Refugees

THE magnitude of the relief problem of war-torn Europe cannot be hazarded at this writing. To homeless and uprooted Spaniards, Poles, Finns, Norwegians, German Jews, we know that there have been added in recent weeks millions of Belgians, Dutch, and French. We know that in many areas of Europe the question of food, clothing, and medical care already is acute. Some efforts are in progress to use a measure of this country's abundance to help stem the vast tide of human misery.

Last week the French Premier turned to American Quakers for help in caring for the millions of refugees of all nationalities now in France. Six members of the Quaker field service are already on the ground. The Friends at once sent ten more workers and emergency funds. The American Friends Service Committee, which has never before made a direct public appeal, pleads for money, food, and clothing for the work of the French field unit.

The American Red Cross is swinging into action on a wide front, and appealing for a \$20,000,000 war relief fund. Wayne Chatfield-Taylor, delegate to the International Red Cross, has established headquarters in Paris for French and Belgian refugee relief activities, and liaison officers have been named to coordinate the American work with that of the French and Belgian societies.

Hendrik Willem Van Loon heads the drive to raise an emergency fund of \$3,000,000, to be known as the Queen Wilhelmina Fund, for the aid of Dutch refugees.

The plight of German and Polish Jews has been intensified by the occupation of the Low Countries, where thousands of them had found haven. The Joint Distribution Committee is cooperating with local agencies in France in trying to care for these groups.

But Americans must realize that these modest voluntary efforts in behalf of the civilian victims of modern war are not enough. The weeks ahead will multiply the tragic need to translate pity and indignation into organized large scale effort if starvation and pestilence are not to stalk among the tortured civilians of western Europe.

Straws in the Hurricane

IN the midst of the clamor for preparedness and armed defense, three current news items report voices raised to express another point of view, and to defend freedom of conscience. The Northern Baptist Convention last month approved a form for the registration of pacifist members of the denomination. At its eleventh annual meeting at Harrisburg, the Pennsylvania council of churches adopted a resolution demanding for all church members the right of a free exercise of conscience in regard to military service, and opposing any form of conscription which disregards this right. Fifty of the country's outstanding Protestant ministers joined in a statement renouncing war and affirming their faith in the instrumentalities of peace.

With no desire to judge those who differ from us, whether actively engaged in war or advocating positions which we profoundly distrust as likely to eventuate in war, [these

church leaders] solemnly resolve and pledge ourselves: to have no part in any war; to promote actively and continuously, as the first aim of our nation's foreign policy the cause of peace and brotherhood, of "peace without victory" and brotherhood without preferment, firmly assured that on such a basis alone can a lasting settlement of the present conflict or of any other be achieved; to contend against the abiding causes of war in racial injustice, narrow nationalism, imperialistic ambitions, economic exploitation, and inequality of opportunity; to aid and relieve to the best of our ability the victims of war in all nations alike; . . . to give ourselves and urge our nation to give itself as opportunity permits to the promotion of a Christian treaty and to the sacrificial building of a new world-mindedness committed to disarmament of the nations, and to the founding of a community or federation that shall strive to abolish the anarchy from which war comes and hold the common interests of mankind above the selfish interests of nations.

Blue Stamp Year

DURING the year in which it has been in operation no very substantial criticism has been heard of the food stamp program for the distribution of surplus commodities. Social workers, suspicious of any form of relief in kind, have found abundant evidence that the plan has improved the diet of their clients. The people eligible to use the stamps—WPA workers and recipients of all forms of public assistance—like the scheme because it increases their food purchasing power. In general the communities where it is established have found the plan effective as "a normal process of trade."

Started in May, 1939, in Rochester, N. Y., the food stamp scheme took hold immediately. Given the fact of the control of surplus commodities by the government, even doubting Thomases saw this as a more orderly and decent method of distribution than the commodity warehouse with its rigid system, which, it must be remembered, still prevails in all but a few places. In August the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation, under the Secretary of Agriculture, extended the program into five more "experimental areas." By May 1, 1940, it was in operation in sixty-eight centers, and was reaching about 1,300,000 people. Twelve additional centers are designated for early operation and plans are under way for 125 more in the course of the year. Upwards of a thousand communities have asked for the program.

During the past year, blue stamp users purchased surplus butter worth, at the market price, about \$2,000,000; eggs, \$1,900,000; flour, meal, and rice, \$1,700,000; pork and lard, \$2,500,000; vegetables, \$700,000; fruit, \$1,700,000.

The major purposes of the Federal Surplus Commodity Corporation is of course to increase farm income. The stamp plan is merely a device for "bridging the gap between price depressing surpluses on our farms and inadequate diets in our small towns and cities." Thus far the tail seems to have wagged the dog, for while the program has proved useful in getting food to people who need it by a procedure which takes some of the curse off relief in kind, it has had, says Secretary Wallace, very little