

# Here in Washington . . . By Rilla Schroeder

THE excess profits tax bill was enacted minus the Harrison amendment or any substitute clause protecting the social security status of men inducted into the military service in the present emergency.

Members of the conference committee were frank to admit that the problem was too big for them. The more they studied it the more convinced they were that separate legislation, very carefully thought out, was required. After the year's military service the drafted men will be veterans, entitled to all the rights and benefits bestowed by Congress upon that privileged group. Civil service preference will be theirs and government hospitalization and pensions if injured in line of duty. And yet these gains would be heavily outweighed were the men to lose their social security status. Merely amending already existing legislation is obviously not enough and, so far, a special system of benefits has not been suggested. Such proposals will be made, no doubt, by interested groups, but perhaps if Congress acts quickly and wisely the organized raids on the Treasury so familiar in the past will not be accomplished so readily.

A thorough overhauling and coordinating of the entire system of federal pensions would be the sensible course to pursue, but at this writing it does not seem probable. At present, there are three separate and distinct veterans' pensions committees on Capitol Hill, each grinding out legislation for its own group with no thought of the other two. The Invalid Pensions Committee was named to take care of veterans of the War of the Revolution and 1812. It is, of course, the oldest of the three and has jurisdiction over all legislation affecting veterans of wars prior to and including the Civil War, as well as legislation affecting "peacetime" veterans. In the natural course of events all veterans' legislation for conscripts and guardsmen would be referred to this committee.

Legislation for veterans of the Spanish American War is handled by the Pensions Committee. Lastly, there is the more recent World War Veterans Committee. To combine these three committees and coordinate their activities would seem to be logical, but it is a safe bet that this will not be done in the near future. The question of committee chairmanships must be considered, not to mention clerk and janitor allowances and office space. Small items, to be sure, but they are not generally overlooked on Capitol Hill.

Social security legislation involving taxes as well as benefits is handled by the Committee on Ways and Means in the House and the Finance Committee in the Senate. Railroad Retirement legislation goes to the Interstate Commerce Committees of the House and Senate.

All these committees are concerned in the problem presented by the passage of the Selective Service and National Guard bills. Before the emergency responsible for the legislation, the agencies handling

the various pension systems found a considerable degree of duplication. It goes without saying that the induction into military service of hundreds of thousands more men will increase the overlapping.

When the three veterans' committees came into being there was, of course, no social security program. Now, however, to regard the problem as entirely a veterans' matter would be to deprive many of the men now going into service of the benefits they have come to expect and, in a measure, have paid for.

To extend the Old Age and Survivors' Insurance program as basic protection would seem to be on the cards. And yet the veteran angle cannot be disregarded entirely. Nor can the question of employment after the year's training has been completed.

This was the situation confronting the conferees on the excess profits tax bill and it is no wonder that they ducked from under, leaving the next Congress to untangle the mix-up. Some attempt will be made to find the answer in these last weeks of the 76th Congress, but the time is too short to expect a solution.

As it now stands, the only sure benefits the conscripts and guardsmen will receive is Civil Service Preference. As yet, the commission has not handed down a decision on the subject, but a reading of the Veterans Preference Act leaves no doubt. Peacetime veterans, under the act, share in its benefits equally with those who saw war service.

DEFENSE HOUSING HAS GOTTEN OFF TO a flying start with \$150,000,000 to spend under the Lanham Act, which places responsibility for the undertaking with the Public Works Administration. Every effort is being made to utilize private housing wherever possible. Just what defense housing has to be constructed, how many units, of what types, is being



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worked out in the office of the defense housing coordinator. The law authorizes the public works administrator to act through "the federal works agency, and other federal agencies, and any local agency, with the consent of such agency." It now seems likely here that much of the actual building will be done under the Public Buildings Administration.

DESPITE SOME GRUMBLING ON THE PART of private social agencies the War Department is determined to keep recreation and welfare in the training camps in its own hands. The Division of Morale and Recreation insists, however, that private agencies have not been shoved out of the picture. There is room and need, it points out, for everything the agencies can do in the communities near the camps.

Recently to its consternation, the division saw, on the front page of a Washington newspaper, a confidential memo to commandants of corps areas regarding camp "hostesses." The story brought a deluge of applications for hostess jobs and a flood of denunciatory mail from suspicious wives and mothers who saw in the hostess idea a threat to their men folk's constancy. As a matter of fact the hostesses will be only ninety-nine in number and are to be selected for their "motherly" qualities. The commandants of the various posts will do the selecting. The memo contained merely recommendations as to age and experience.

Post commanders will have charge of recreational programs but they must submit them to Washington for approval before putting them into effect.

FRIENDS OF THE RAMSPECK CIVIL SERVICE bill will make a last stand for their measure when Congress resumes the regular order of business after election. The bill passed both House and Senate but in slightly different form. The Senate accepted the conference report, but the House returned it with instructions not to bring it back unless it carried the House-endorsed Keller-Nichols amendment on state quotas. Not so specific but equally emphatic was the notice served on the conferees that the House would not accept the Senate amendment permitting the substitution of fingerprints for photographs as means of identification on applications for civil service examinations.

The Civil Service Commission has declared the state quota amendment unworkable and there is some hope that the House may be persuaded to yield this point. There is none that it will recede on the fingerprints vs. photographs item.

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# The Common Welfare

## Opportunity Waits

THERE will be no place within the military training camps for privately supported activities designed to minister to the religious and recreational needs of the men. The decision of the U. S. Army is couched politely but firmly. The army will have its own chaplains, one to every 1,200 men; it will have its own company and regimental recreation programs, its own library services, its own service clubs and guest houses complete with hostesses.

But what of the "on leave" time of the men when, if we know our American youth, they will look for amusement away from the sight and sound of the camps? That, says the army in effect, is the "opportunity" of communities adjacent to the cantonments and of national religious, recreational, and welfare organizations. It is not clear just where a Cape Cod community like Falmouth, Mass. (pop. 4,821) would find the resources to realize its "opportunity" to serve the thousands of men who presently will be quartered at Camp Edwards now building just to the north of it. Nor is it clear how the national organizations would go about setting up in Falmouth programs equal to such numbers. There is much talk of cooperation and coordination in a "united effort," with a committee of the National Council on Education and Recreation hard at work trying to reconcile the difficulties involved, including those of finance. But so far no formula satisfactory to everyone has been found.

In 1917 and 1918, it will be recalled, various welfare bodies—the Salvation Army, the YMCA, the Jewish Welfare Board, the Knights of Columbus, for example—were established within the training camps, each operating its own program. Activities outside the camps were promoted and coordinated by War Camp Community Service organized for the purpose with the blessing of the Secretaries of the War and Navy Departments. Programs in both camps and communities were financed by popular subscriptions, totalling some \$188,000,000, raised by the United War Work Campaign.

As yet there is no indication of any leadership coming out of Washington for a program of community activities. How to evolve a unified adequate program without such leadership is a problem that now is challenging the national organizations.

## Defense and Health

"HEALTH preparedness" emerged as the theme of the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association in Detroit last month. From the presidential address of Dr. W. S. Leathers of Vanderbilt University through the more technical addresses concerning tubercle bacilli and influenza viruses, it became apparent that modern interpretation of "health preparedness" involves not just preserving the health of military forces but guarding the health of the entire population. Dr. Leathers urged the adoption of a national health program which would make available adequate medical care for indigent and low income groups; the provision of funds for "a sus-

tained fight against syphilis and gonorrhea," continued research in influenza prevention, the fullest development of immunizing agents in "every possible field," additional attention to the "new science of nutrition." Evidence of progress along some of these lines emerged in technical sessions where recent advances in research were reported. How far we remain from the goal of adequate care was indicated by Dr. Joseph W. Mountin of the U. S. Public Health Service, who presented data revealing an acute hospital shortage in large areas of the country, particularly in the poorer sections where illness is most frequent.

The association adopted a resolution emphasizing the necessity of maintaining civilian health in national defense and appointed a four-man committee on public health in the national defense with Dr. Leathers as chairman. Dr. John L. Rice, health commissioner of New York City, was elected as next president.

## Conscience and the Draft Law

NO clear-cut issue was raised by the scattered individuals and the group of eight theological students who refused to register under the Selective Service Act. Twenty students at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University, announced that because of "conscientious scruples" they intended to disobey the law. A dozen of them were persuaded, by the arguments of faculty advisers, of the American Civil Liberties Union, and of some of the 1,500 clergymen and prominent churchmen to whom they sent a mimeographed "manifesto," to abandon their extreme position. But eight held to their conviction that "conscription is a part of the war system, with which we cannot cooperate in any way." They failed to register, and are under indictment.

Unlike the protesting students, the American Civil Liberties Union made a clear distinction between refusal to register and conscientious objection to military service. In a statement issued October 12, this organization warned young Americans that those who deliberately did not register for reasons of conscience, or for any other reason, would be "in precisely the same position as draft evaders. . . . Their defense on grounds of conscientious objection would be exceedingly difficult." The faculty of Union Theological Seminary reached the same conclusions from a different approach:

We recognize that there are circumstances when individuals or groups may deem it necessary to refuse to follow the will of government because to do so would be to deny their religious conviction. But in our judgment, refusal to register in accordance with the Selective Service Act does not involve this principle. To refuse to register and supply the government with factual information is to refuse what any government has a right to ask its citizens.

While requiring all male residents of the United States between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five to register, the Selective Service Act specifically exempts theological students from military service, and also anyone "who by reason of religious training and belief is conscientiously opposed to war in any form." The local draft board is di-