

THE COMMON WELFARE

On November 4, an unassuming citizen of Kansas city died at his Bell Street residence at eighty-six.

Newspapers carried editorials and half page accounts of his life, but no one will ever know the full tally of what the city owes to this modest German immigrant who always dressed in inconspicuous clothes and narrow bow tie, never owned an automobile, and chose to ride streetcars instead of taxicabs. The shade manufacturing business which he established made him the city's wealthiest man, but his real eminence was as a good citizen.

For at least forty years out of the sixty-five that William A. Volker lived in Kansas City he devoted his time, his vision, his influence, and his substantial wealth to the common welfare. In 1910, he became the first president of the first municipal welfare department in the United States. While he was in office the department carried out social research of which any city could today be proud. It established a municipal free loan agency, legal aid service, and a public recreation program in addition to the basic welfare department functions.

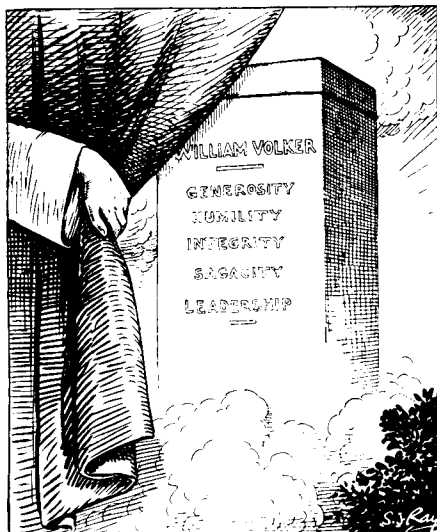
There is no record of how much of this became possible through anonymous supplementing of funds by the board's president. Some years later, when Mr. Volker was on the school board, he was asked who was financing the new children's milk fund. He answered that the Junior Red Cross was doing it. Pressing the question, "But who is giving the Junior Red Cross the money?" brought the terse comment that this "was a matter of no importance."

His sincere desire for anonymity, which was frequently thwarted by the munificence of his gifts, was not the only characteristic of Mr. Volker's philanthropy. He was remarkable for his shrewd vision, continued personal interest in the projects that he financed, and for the diversity of his interests—there is hardly a field of civic welfare to which he did not give stimulation and assistance.

The thriving young University of Kansas City was launched with his

Mr. Anonymous of Bell Street

gifts, totaling over three million dollars. He provided scholarships to scores of students and professional workers, particularly in the fields of social work and education. Thirty years ago, when the state's first road building program was bogging down because of the excessive price asked for cement, Mr. Volker purchased a large cement plant, asked the state auditor to determine the cost of pro-



Kansas City Star

"His Life His Memorial"

duction, and then contracted to fill all the state's requirements at this cost price. He established and initially financed a teachers' pension program. Other interests were the Philharmonic Orchestra, Research Hospital, and the first tuberculosis hospital. He gave essential and uncounted funds for the fight for clean and decent government, which culminated in 1940 in the defeat of machine politics.

Mr. Volker's generosity was not confined to Kansas City. His gifts to Wayne, Chicago, and other universities ran into the hundreds of thousands. For many years he was a large contributor to the National Urban League.

Survey Associates is proud of the fact that he was one of the founding members in 1912, and ever since that

time has been one of its most distinguished and generous members.

In 1932, Mr. Volk contributed one half of his holdings in his companies to a permanent charities fund. Upon his retirement five years later, he turned over the rest of his holdings to this fund.

Jacob Billikopf and the late Frank P. Walsh, who were to become national figures, were fellow members on the first welfare board. An old friend of Mr. Volker and, from a community viewpoint, his "discoverer," Mr. Billikopf tells how his spirit affected his home as well as his community.

"William Volker did not marry until late in life. He lived with his mother, a German, who could hardly speak English. How proud she was of her son William! She knew very little, if anything, of his benefactions or the character and size of his business, but whenever I would dine with them on a Sunday, she would tell me with great pride that William was a fine business man. He would sell the surplus chickens and eggs she raised at a much higher price than prevailed in the market.

"What he did was this. He would bring the eggs and chickens to his place of business, distribute them among the employes, and on his return home would make his mother happy by having sold the products at a 'good profit.'"

A favorite local quotation is Mr. Volker's definition of a rich man. "It is one," he said, "who has a roof over his head and three meals a day. All else is surplus." His life exemplified the social responsibility with which he regarded this "surplus."

On November 4, the citizens of Kansas City approved by more than a two thirds vote a bond issue of \$41,561,000, which included nearly \$5,000,000 for welfare. Most of the projects involved were ones which Mr. Volker either initiated or backed. It is peculiarly fitting that on the day its first citizen died, the people should provide for a great expansion of the services to which he was devoted.



HERE IN WASHINGTON



WASHINGTON IS A CITY OF UNCERTAIN men. That explains a lot in the city that today seems puzzling and peculiar. It just isn't possible for men so personally insecure to make effective decisions and stick to them.

That personal insecurity stems from the top down. Few men in Washington know where they will be next year, much less five years hence. The "biggies" are worried about the election, the situation in Europe, the threatened business collapse. No matter how confidently they speak for publication, they just don't know. Anything can happen politically and economically. That at least they do know but it doesn't add up to peace of mind.

The little people, those who hold the lower paid government jobs or work in various enterprises that serve the government people are worried primarily about their jobs. They do a bit of additional worrying about Europe, the war prospects, and so on, but the job comes first. The last few months have demonstrated that even old time government employes can lose the job to which they cling at present. They hope to hang on but they don't know. Wartime employes do not even hope. They hold their jobs on a day-to-day basis never knowing at what moment they may be "bumped" or their particular agency abolished.



Living costs in Washington are high—among the highest in the United States. Federal salaries have not expanded to meet increased costs, the government employe who seeks to reduce expenses finds that an almost impossible task. He just can't find a cheaper apartment or house. His food bill has been cut to the lowest possible figure. Necessary wardrobe replacements leave practically nothing left over from the bimonthly pay check. And he hears that Congress plans further cuts in government payrolls. With the loyalty checks in mind he worries about the little groups with which he was accustomed to meet maybe ten years ago or five. That group wasn't

on the Justice Department's list but . . . ! He tries to remember what they talked about. Were some of the members a little pink? Were any of them downright red? When not worrying about his job and the price of things he spends wakeful nights searching his mind about that group.

The little men, of course, do not make decisions. But they add up to the total of Washington and make a decided contribution to the state of uneasiness now prevalent in that troubled city.

Washington has been called Headache Town. It was never more true than it is today.

THE REPORT OF THE BALTIMORE Commission on Efficiency and Economy was a shock. The commission had been asked to make a study of the public welfare program in the good city of Baltimore but as the report appeared it was more of an attack on the Social Security Act itself and the curricula of schools of social work generally. Apparently, the commission advocates a return to the principles of the Elizabethan poor laws.

A second report covering the entire state of Maryland will appear in February. Governor Lane and Mayor D'Alesandro of Baltimore have indicated that action on the Baltimore report will be delayed until the second one is in.

National interest in the Baltimore report is interpreted by pessimists as indicative of bad news for social welfare programs generally. And that includes those already established and generally accepted.

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR has released some startling figures in explanation of the sorry plight of the Navaho Indians. Basically, it is a problem of too many people and too few resources. According to Interior's figures the Navaho population since 1868 has increased from something under 10,000 to 61,000 today, and may reach a possible 70,000 in 1960. Tribal resources are sufficient to support only 35,000 at a minimum standard of living.

The situation has been described as a "national disgrace" in Congress, where an emergency relief fund had been approved.

THE PUBLISHED REPORT OF THE President's Committee on Civil Rights is a magnificent document and can be had from the Government Printing Office for \$1.



The Federation of Citizens Association of the good city of Washington, however, does not like the report's comments on racial segregation in the District. "False" and "biased" is the way the federation views them.

THE HOUSE SMALL BUSINESS Committee raised a hornet's nest about its ears with its co-op hearings and now has decided not to make a report. Chairman Plooser found that his committee would not support his antio-coop views so he is dropping the whole matter and wants nothing further said about it.

PROSPECTS FOR AN EFFECTIVE anti-inflation program would seem to be dim. Leaders in both major political parties are frightened to death of present high prices but can't, or won't, get together. So no bipartisan attack can be expected.

The truth of the matter is that there are influential forces actually in favor of the "boom and bust" type of economy. They are pleased with the boom now and will be equally charmed with the bust if and when it comes. They talk of unemployment—about 4,000,000 or so—as "healthy" although admittedly unpleasant for the persons affected. The talkers, naturally, do not expect to be among those 4,000,000, which gives them a beautifully detached viewpoint.

Rose Schneider