

THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT
By Congressman Everett M. Dirksen
16th District

PLIGHT OF PUERTO RICO.

Before the Wage-Hour Act was enacted, thousands of persons in Puerto Rico, and particularly women, made a meagre livelihood from needle work done at home. Puerto Rican women have a capacity and patience for fine needlecraft. Renumeration for this work was very small but at least it afforded a scanty living. Came the Wage-Hour Act. Enterprisers who were contracting for needle work insisted that they were ruined, stopped their businesses. Result is that unemployment in Puerto Rico today is worse than at anytime in the last decade. To meet this situation, it is proposed to set up a special committee to work with the Administrator of The Wage-Hour Division in adopting variations from the standards of the Act.

REMODELING BEGINS.

Drafting, revising, perfecting and enacting a law is like building a house. First, it is drafted and introduced. Then it goes to a committee where it is discussed by members and witnesses. It is altered and changed. Then it goes to the House where it is often amended. Then it goes to the Senate where further change and modification takes place. Then it goes to a conference committee of House and Senate. This committee in turn makes such changes as will harmonize the action of both bodies. Then it goes to the President for signature. Then comes the acid test. It is placed in operation. Weaknesses begin to show up. Complaints are made. Inequities are revealed. It's practical application to a complicated business structure is disclosed. And then - and then - comes remodeling. It's like building an additional closet, adding a room, cutting out a wall or doing similar changing after the house is built. Such is the case with the Wage-Hour bill. Administrator Andrews, after his first experiences in administering the law, now senses the need for changes to make it more workable and has suggested at least a half dozen changes which he deems necessary.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE WALSH HEALY ACT.

The Walsh-Healy Act, enacted in 1936, provides that those who contract with the Government on tangible property where the contract amount is \$10,000 or more must (1) not employ labor for more than 8 hours a day or 40 hours per week (2) must not use child labor (boys under 16 or girls under 18) or convict labor, (3) must pay prevailing rate of wages as determined by the Secretary of Labor and (4) must maintain safe, sanitary and healthy working conditions. Since the adoption of the act, about 12,561 contracts have been reported to the Labor Department for investigation. Of this number slightly more than one-third have been investigated. About 3000 violations were disclosed, most of which are alleged violations of the wage and overtime provisions of the regulations promulgated by the Secretary of Labor. Some

of the cases have been settled and others are pending. Still others are being reviewed by the courts. It has been estimated that if the contract amount of \$10,000 is reduced to \$2000 as was proposed in the last Congress, the number of contracts which would come within the provisions of the act would be multiplied by 20. The 12, 561 contracts reported under the act aggregate nearly \$900,000,000.

DENTAL WORK ON THE REORGANIZATION BILL.

The celebrated Reorganization bill which so stirred the country a year ago and which was designed to delegate power to the President to Reorganize the executive branch of the government is now law. But before it became law, it underwent some high class dental work. Most of the work consisted of extraction. In it's present form, it contains a preamble which states that continuing deficits make it desirable that government expenditures be reduced. Then follows a long and involved list of things which cannot be done by the President so that instead of being a "must" bill, it is now a "must not" bill. Among other things, it prohibits the President from reorganizing 20 assorted agencies of government with a payroll personnel of 60,000 people. But the crux of the bill is an amendment which was adopted by the Senate to the effect that the President cannot abolish any existing functions of government. All of which means that he can shuffle the agencies of government around but cannot abolish the functions which Congress created. Thus it becomes not a Reorganization Bill but a Regrouping Bill.

JUST WHO CAN BE DEPORTED

As the law stands today, aliens may be deported from the United States if they believe in, advise, advocate or teach, or if they are members of or affiliated with groups or organizations which believe in, advise, advocate or teach (1) the overthrow by force or violence of the Government of the U.S. or of all forms of law, (2) the duty, necessity, or propriety of the unlawful assaulting or killing of any officer or officers (either of specific individuals or of officers generally,) of the U. S. or of any other organized government because of his or their official character, (3) or the unlawful damage, injury or destruction of property, (4) or sabotage (5) or if they write, publish, circulate, distribute, or cause to be written, published, circulated, and printed any printed matters which advocates or teaches the things set forth above. Recently the House of Representatives amended this law and provided that advocating, teaching and advising the "making of any change in the American form of Government" shall constitute grounds for deportation. It's a far-reaching provision and its effect will be interesting to observe. Already, lawyers who are deeply interested in the broad subject of civil liberty are exploring this change to determine what constitutes the advocacy or teaching of "any change in the American form of government." This bill is now pending before the Senate.