

THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT.  
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THE ROOTS OF REBELLION ARE DEEP.

On April 17th at 10:00 am., after two days of general debate on the Price Control Bill, the House began to consider amendments. At least 40 amendments were offered. The session continued without interruption until 10:00 p.m. About two o'clock in the afternoon, Chairman Spence of the Banking Committee which was in charge of the Bill moved that all debate on the Bill and all amendments that might be offered close at 5.30 in the afternoon. That motion was adopted. That meant about 3 minutes for and 3 minutes against each of the amendments if the time were evenly divided. But the time was not divided and when 5.30 arrived, many amendments were still pending. Those were read and voted upon without discussion. Some amendments were adopted, others were rejected. About 6:15, the voting began on those amendments which had been first approved by the House sitting as a Committee. At 10:00 o'clock at night, after 7 rolls calls, 8 amendments had been adopted and the final vote on the bill scheduled for the following morning at 10:00 a.m.

NATURE OF THE AMENDMENTS.

The first one adopted fixed the termination date for OPA at March 31, 1947, nine months after the Act expires. The second provided that no price ceiling shall be fixed which fails to give producers and distributors the cost of doing business plus a reasonable profit. A third provided for the decontrol of prices when production reached a certain level. Another provided for the termination of subsidy payments on Dec, 31, 1946 by means of a gradual decrease in such subsidies. Perhaps the most important of the amendments was that which assured producers and distributors a price which would return all current costs plus a reasonable profit. It was approved by a vote of 259 to 137.

WHY REBELLION?

Adjectives are cheap and can often be thoughtless. It was said that OPA had been scuttled, crippled, emasculated, embalmed, murdered, assassinated. It was said that Congress was in "revolt"! Much of this is merely fancy talk. What does it all mean? Perhaps, it is fair to say that the House was in rebellion. And rebellion has a cause, or many causes. Let's enumerate the things which had become pretty plain to Members of Congress. They became plainer to Congressman than to any other group because the members have been on the receiving end of the complaints against OPA for four years. Moreover, they've worked closely with constituents to help them remain in business. They have been in almost daily contact with OPA officials. They are quite familiar with the attitude of some thoughtless OPA officials and employees who when a business man protested that he was being put out of business replied that "It was none of our business if you go out of business." That's not America. Congress saw the gradual destruction of the free market in America. They saw the transfer of legislative power from the Congress to Administrators. That must be pretty plain when Bills are written in the Executive branch of the government, handed to a Congressional Committee and the radio and the propaganda technique then employed to bludgeon Congress into line. (The Budget Bureau reported recently that for 1946, OPA was using about 2½ million dollars for informational, promotional and publicity work. Those are polite terms for propaganda) Congress was too well acquainted with the harassment of the citizens by OPA field offices. Perhaps the strongest indictment levelled against OPA in this respect came from Senator Scott Lucas in a speech on the Senate floor on February 26th. Also it was made fairly plain that there was an intention to keep OPA long after June 30, 1947 - perhaps several years longer - and maybe always. Who knows.

Finally it is a pretty well established fact that OPA was carrying on a widespread program to propagandize the school children of America by means of questionnaires and other literature. It would appear that the idea of government control not only of prices but of other items was being sold to the generation that will assume the responsibilities of citizenship a few years hence. You wonder about rebellion? Yes, rebellion has its causes, and the roots are deep.