

TIME FOR A LOOK

In late 1943, representatives of 44 countries met and formed a relief agency known as United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. For short it's called UNRRA (Unra). It was designed to provide food, medicines, seed, farm implements and other items to liberated countries. Money was to be obtained from the participating nations on a basis of 1% of national income. Total funds available on that basis would be a little over 1 4/5 billion dollars. Of this amount, the United States would provide slightly over 1 1/3 billion or about 73% of the whole fund. A beginning was made on March 28, 1944 when Congress appropriated 450 million dollars for this program and also authorized that when the military situation permitted, an additional 350 million of lend-lease supplies could be transferred to UNRRA. This makes 850 million available for this relief work. About 13 million dollars was allocated for administrative expenses of which the U. S. share is 7 million. As of March 31, 1945, only 7 of the 44 countries had paid their share.

HOW IT WORKS

In theory, countries in need of aid and eligible for aid present an estimate of what they need and how much. UNRRA then makes an overall estimate of these needs which are presented to a Combined Administrative Board. This Board then apportions the supplies on the basis of need and what is available. The supplies are purchased in different countries by the purchasing agencies which have been designated for that purpose. The goods are shipped in vessel space which has been made available by the various participating governments. When the goods arrive in the country of designation, an UNRRA staff is on hand to supervise and carry out the distribution of such goods in cooperation with the government of that country. This, of course, requires people. UNRRA has hired thousands of people for this purpose. They are scattered in the U.S., Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Greece, Egypt, the Balkans, and elsewhere.

SOME OBSERVATIONS

The author of the Congressional Front had opportunity to inspect UNRRA operations in Egypt, Greece and Italy. He was not impressed with what he found. Several Congressmen and Senators gained a similar impression while abroad. Since then the author of this column has conferred with Roy Hendrickson, the Executive Director of UNRRA, with Governor Lehmann, the Director General, and has had letters from a number of former UNRRA employees who served abroad and who resigned in disgust. UNRRA is about to ask for another two billion dollars. Before additional funds are provided, UNRRA should be investigated to determine how it has functioned thus far.

SOME QUESTIONS

Why does it need such a huge staff in Washington, including more than 200 persons at salaries ranging from \$5,000 to \$15,000? Why must its thousands of American employees be bonded by a British insurance company? Did UNRRA purchase typewriters in the Cairo black market at \$400 each? Why is it being investigated by British Intelligence? What were so many UNRRA employees doing in far-off Ethiopia? Why did 200 tractors set on the docks so long at Athens, Greece, while UNRRA could not make up its mind on policy? Is it necessary to transport tractors to the Balkans by airplane at enormous expense? What about the black market dealings of UNRRA staff members in gold sovereigns between Cairo and Bari, Italy? What about the cliques and jealousies and factions which have grown up in UNRRA? Why have auditors returned from overseas and reported that UNRRA accounts are so messy, they cannot be audited? What about the incompetent personnel which UNRRA hired and sent overseas? Why are 1500 UNRRA employees sitting around at Granville, France, doing nothing while waiting on the military? These and many others should be explored before more public funds are voted for UNRRA.