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THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT
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PROBLEM OF SURPLUS PROPERTY

A war which extends to every corner of the earth, over all kinds of terrain, and which was waged on land, sea and in air, and in areas which are hot and cold, wet and dry, high and low, requires supplies and equipment which fairly stagger the imagination. It requires every kind of medical care; clothing and textiles which range from the ski trooper to the paratrooper; food and rations which are adapted to every climate and condition, and ships and weapons to meet every situation. Such supplies and equipment must be ready in adequate quantities at all times and must be procured on the basis of a long war. In consequence, there will be vast quantities of such supplies and equipment left over at war's end, and then disposition presents a problem of real magnitude.

HOW MUCH WILL BE LEFT OVER

Estimates vary as to the quantity and the dollar value of goods that will be left over. A common estimate has placed it at 75 billion dollars. But a little examination will indicate that such a figure is high. From July 1, 1940 to June 30, 1944, the total value of all supplies and munitions procured for war purposes was 130 billion. One half of this was for planes and ships which are scarcely salable for civilian purposes, and one-quarter of the whole amount was for guns and ammunition. Of the remaining 30 billion plus, it is estimated that one-half or about 15 billion consists of clothing, textiles, motor vehicles, drugs, food, tools, machinery and other types of merchandise for which there would be a ready market. Considering that in normal times, sales of this type of merchandise will total about 4 billion dollars per month, it is estimated that such surplus supplies can be merchandised in the domestic market at ceiling prices without causing a market disturbance.

WAR PLANTS

Biggest difficulty may be encountered in the disposition of war plants and particularly those which were built for special purposes. In World War I, the Federal Government advanced only 600 million for war plant purposes. In this war the outlay exceeds 15 billion. Three-fourths of the plants built represent an investment in excess of 10 million per plant. One-third involve an investment of more than 50 million per plant. The size and special purpose of such plants therefore creates many difficulties in disposing of them.

THE BILL TO DISPOSE OF SURPLUS

House and Senate are at odds over the proposed law under which surplus property shall be disposed. The House believes it can best be handled by a single Administration. The Senate would entrust this job to a Board. On other objectives, the two bodies are in general agreement. Surpluses shall be widely advertised. They shall be sold in the smallest parcels practicable. Small business shall have a fair chance. Disposal shall be so handled to serve the cause of jobs and production. Prices shall be fair to buyer and taxpayer alike. And finally, the money derived from sales shall be credited against the national debt. To anyone who may be interested in surplus war goods, a letter of inquiry to the Surplus War Property Administration, Washington, D.C., indicating the type of property that may be of interest will bring details as to the kind of property, its location and quantity and other pertinent information.