

11-10-45

THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT.
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MORE ABOUT POST WAR JOBS

The so-called Full Employment Bill, which the President recommended to Congress in his recent 21-point message is bogged down in the Committee on Expenditures of the House. Many notable witnesses appeared and testified both for and against the bill. But it was making slow progress. Several members of the Committee were called to the White House. The President declared emphatically that he wanted the bill enacted at this session. Secretary Wallace appeared before the Committee and urged action. This did not help the cause much. Committee members began to berate each other firmly but politely on the floor of the House. At that stage, two of the members one Republican and one Democrat - agreed to ask for an hour apiece in which to debate the bill on the floor. This happened last week and it proved to be a rather lively discussion.

WHAT DID IT PROVE.

By way of admissions and concessions, the debate cleared the air a bit and probably established several things. First, it appeared to prove that the bill was not nearly so good as it's proponents said it was nor as bad as it's opponents said it was. Secondly, it was fairly well established that the bill itself would not create a single job. Third, it was generally conceded that it was scarcely more than a device or formula for establishing an estimated amount of money that government must spend to provide a job opportunity for all who were willing and able to work. Fourth, it seemed quite clear that for the President to estimate as much as 18 months in advance, how many persons might be jobless and how much would have to be invested to provide them with jobs was no easy matter and would become something of a wide and uncertain guess. Fifth, it was made quite evident that when the estimate had been made, it still remained for Congress to authorize the expenditure of such funds to make jobs and to actually appropriate the money. Sixth, it proved pretty well that both the President and Congress could exercise this power already and that in fact, a good many things had already been done and were being done in this direction. It is this last item which appears most important because there appears to be a belief in many quarters that nothing much has been done about creating jobs.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE.

The steps already taken and being taken to create jobs may be summarized in this fashion. (1) More than a year ago, Congress authorized a program for the construction of roads and highways in cooperation with the states to cost 1 1/3 billion over a three year period. The states must provide half of the money on a matching basis. This will mean an expenditure of more than 2 2/3 billions in three years and that program is already under way. (2) Secondly an airport construction program has been authorized to cost 650 millions over a ten year period. The states must also contribute a portion of these funds. (3) Third, about 650 millions or more has been authorized for flood control work in all sections of the country. (4) Fourth the Federal Works Agency was provided with an initial fund of 17 1/2 million to be loaned or granted to states, cities, counties to assist them in making advance plans for non-federal public works such as sewers, paving, schools and projects of like character. These advance planning funds have already been allocated and a request for an additional 50 million in cash and another 57 1/2 million in contract authority is now pending before Congress which is estimated to result in non-Federal public works which may range in total amount from 1 1/2 to 3 billion dollars. (5) Fifth, the Federal Works Agency has also submitted a program for the construction of Federal public buildings such as post offices, customs houses and other buildings to the total of several hundred million dollars. (6) Sixth, the National Housing Agency has an ambitious plan for the construction of slum clearance and other public housing projects. Finally, it is estimated that private industry will probably spend 10 billion on construction of one kind or another including hundreds of thousands of homes. Taken altogether, it is estimated that this combined program will account for 15 billions in construction. So, it is quite evident the spending of public funds to provide jobs is not a neglected field.