Once upon a time, the structure of government was simple in form and consisted of the Executive branch with its Cabinet departments and some regulatory agencies, the Congress and the Supreme Court. Today, the Executive branch is a vast, sprawling structure which includes a large number of government corporations to which has been delegated broad powers to carry on all manner of functions and duties. The Home Owners Loan Corporation made loans on homes; the Reconstruction Finance Corporation makes loans to business and enterprise and acts as a sort of bank for many Federal agencies; the Commodity Credit Corporation makes loans on farm commodities; a corporation known as Cargoes Incorporated carried on the experimental building of new types of vessels and helicopters; the Rubber Development Corporation promotes the production of rubber; the United States Commercial Company purchases supplies in neutral countries; the Tennessee Valley Authority operates a huge enterprise which deals with floods, navigation, the generation and sale of electric power, the manufacture of fertilizer and host of other functions. These are but some of the many government corporations which exist today.

NATURE, SIZE AND POWERS.

Some of these corporations have been chartered under Federal law, some like the Commodity Credit Corporation have been organized under state law and others like the Alaskan Railroad Corporation have been organized under territorial law. These governmental units today employ well in excess of a 100,000 people and have an annual payroll of more than $230,000,000. The borrowing power of these agencies is more than 30 billion dollars and their assets in the form of real estate, commodities, investments in Federal securities and loans will total nearly 24 billion. Some of them are exempted from audit by the General Accounting Office and some are partially exempt. In addition to the funds which they are authorized to spend for salaries and other expenses, they also have authority in many instances to spend funds for legal fees, and operating expenses which are considered as non-administrative in character and for which no report is made to the Congress.

A FEW OBSERVATIONS.

The growth in number, size and power of these corporations raises certain interesting questions. Since they have broad powers to borrow money on notes and debentures and to spend for a variety of purposes, it would appear that the power over the public purse is lodged in the Congress has been in some measure delegated to corporations created by Congress. The proposals now being made to meet post-war problems by means of the creation of other corporations to handle housing, public works and related matters would indicate that if this trend proceeds far enough, it might mean the gradual displacement of private enterprise in many fields. While these government corporations render reports to Congress as required by law, such reports are not too revealing of the activities of such corporations and in addition thereto become so huge and complex that it would tax the time of any individual to become familiar with the operations of a single one of these agencies. This might become a most fruitful field for exploration by the people's representatives.