THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT.
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BREAKING UP WARTIME HOUSEKEEPING

You will remember that on August 14th, the Japanese indicated that they
would accept the Potsdam terms. The shooting was practically over. That
meant that from the financial standpoint, the War Department and Navy
Department spent about six weeks worth of it's appropriations which Con-
gress had provided for the fiscal year which began on July 1, 1945. When
these appropriations were made, it was on a war basis because there was
every reason to believe at the time these bills were prepared that war
would continue. So, when war ended, the War Department found itself with
about 64 billions of cash and contract authority on hand and the Navy
with something like 23½ billion. This money was available for expendi-
ture for the year that began on July 1st. Obviously, with the war over,
the services would need such huge amounts and a sharp interest developed
in the question of just how much money and contract authority could be
turned back.

THE PRESIDENT MOVES.

The President too, was quite alert to this matter and what it would mean
to the country. On September 5th, he sent his first message on the sub-
ject in which he recom-mended that about 3½ billions of cash which had
been given to the various civilian agencies for war and defense purposes
should be cancelled. Later came his message to cut the Navy back by
about 17 billion and the War Department by 28½ billion. There you have
49 billion of dollars to be cancelled and that's not small change.

IMPORTANCE OF THIS MATTER.

This cancellation of appropriations and contractual authority is, of
course, of vital importance to every man, woman, and child in the land.
More than that, it's important to generations yet unborn for they will
be saddled with a debt which is presently about 26½ billion dollars. No
matter what money is spent by government or how it is spent, it must
either be made up in the form of taxes or it must be added to the debt.
Thus, the business of recapturing public funds becomes of the greatest
importance to everybody.

CONGRESS MOVES IN.

The President sent his message to Congress on this matter and it then
became the business of that body to determine whether the amount esti-
imated by the President to be recaptured was about right or whether it
was too much, or whether it could be increased. These messages were,
therefore, referred to a sub-committee of the Appropriations Committee
of the House for action. That sub-committee (of which the author of the
Front is a member) has been in constant session for weeks and weeks to
fully examine this whole problem. There has been a procession of wit-
tesses such as one seldom experiences before a single committee. It
included Cabinet members, generals, admirals and high administrators
in the Executive branch. The examination of these witnesses included a
variety of matters and others among other things present and future poli-
cies of government relating to national defense, agriculture, mining,
security, public works and many others. Every item was explored in
detail to determine what further economies could be made.

INTERESTING PROBLEMS.

One discovers that when war is over, expenditures do not end. While the
process of demobilization goes on, soldiers and sailors must still be
paid, clothed, fed, supplied with recreation and welfare, medical and
hospital service and so billions must be spent by both services before
the Army's emergency housekeeping job comes to an end. When contracts
for guns, munitions, planes and other items were cancelled, many of them
were incomplete and thus there was an obligation to pay the producer for
so much of the contract that was processed and turned out. Cancellations
therefore run into billions. While men are still in service, schools
must be continued for their training. In the case of the Navy, ships
must be brought back and decommissioned. They must be laid up in some
appropriate place, perishable stores and supplies must be removed,
dehumidifiers must be installed to keep them dry inside when they are
inactive and all this costs money. Research programs which began during
war days on radar, new guns, new bombs and devices must be continued
and the costs involved are very substantial. What shall be done with
scrap and surplus in foreign lands? What about ammunition which is
no longer useful. This work constitutes a kind of housecleaning before
the Army and Navy break up wartime housekeeping and it becomes a prob-
lem of real magnitude.