

September 9, 1945

Good Morning, Friends:

For the first time since December 7, 1941, the Congress of the United States met ~~on Wednesday~~ when the cannons of war no longer roared. The reconvening ^{last Wed} was entirely uneventful except that members seemed generally agreed that the most pressing problem before the government is demobilization. On Thursday, President Truman sent a very lengthy message to Congress - an exhaustive 18,000 word reconversion blueprint charting 21 steps toward a post-war better life, and he asked Congress to enact it with all speed. This message was, by and large, a business-like effort to present to the American people and to the Congress what his Administration has in mind as a prosperity-promoting program for the nation's transition to peace and future development.

~~The President made 21 major recommendations. Here, in brief, is his legislative program.~~

He wants Congress to pass a bill providing payments of unemployment compensation in a maximum amount of \$25.00 a week for 26 weeks to war workers who become unemployed. This particular program is going to have rough sledding in Congress. For instance, I heard this remark just after the President's message, ^{by} A member of Congress from Michigan said to another: "Why ¹ you can't hire anybody to do anything in Michigan now, and if we start paying them \$25.00 a week, it will just put a premium on idleness." This was ^{just} one fellow's reaction. ^{of course} But there are strong supporters of the program, also, who feel that it is absolutely necessary for the nation to maintain a high national income for humanitarian and social reasons, ^{as well as} ~~first~~, but also in order to safeguard the national economy with its tremendous national debt burden. At present, it appears ~~to me~~ that this particular part of the President's program has little

chance of passage.

Next, he recommends ^{that} the minimum wage rate of 40¢ per hour in the Wage and Hour law be raised substantially. He said that even when the law was passed, 40¢ an hour was inadequate and ^{that} it has now become obsolete. Sentiment on this proposal has not yet crystalized, but ~~what~~ indications ~~there~~ are ~~here~~ ~~thus far are~~ that when and if it comes to a test in Congress, the minimum wage rate will be increased.

The President asked also for an extension of the Second War Powers Act, which expires on the 31st of next December. In making this request, he promised that only such powers as necessary to stabilize the economy would be used. Congress, in my opinion, will be quite reluctant to extend the War Powers Act. Perhaps it will be necessary to give to the President continuing authority ^{necessary} to prevent inflation and otherwise to use the powers of government to mitigate the inequalities and inequities of the reconversion program. But I hear one member after another saying - and it sounds good to me to hear them say it - that since the war is over, Congress must begin to recapture for the people the powers ^s which have been voluntarily given to the Executive branch of the government, including the army and navy, during the war period. Now that the war is over, it can be said, ~~in fact~~, that we have been living under a quasi-economic dictatorship by consent. The government has been telling us what we could say over the radio, what the newspapers could ^{print} ~~write~~, what we could eat, what we could buy, what we could sell, where we could go and what we could pay for what we wanted. To put it that way, it sounds

at first thought.

quite uncomplimentary of our system. But, in fact, it is an evidence of the efficacy of a government of the people. During this period of unparalleled emergency, this government of the people found a way to meet the total authority possessed by the governments of our enemies. This concentration of power in our government in Washington has been used well. The nation's economy has been preserved, the war has been won, and the ~~w~~ cost of winning it has been lessened by these controls. The millions of our men in the army and navy have been supplied with food, ^{+ equipment} and our allies also have been given liberal allotments. These things would not have been possible except for rationing, conservation, ^{+ production control} and anti-hoarding programs here at home. The President recognized and said in his message that the controls over our national economy should be released as soon as possible, ~~and~~ he will certainly find that attitude reflected and ~~great~~ greatly magnified by sentiment in the Congress.

Next, the President recommended the passage of a bill giving him authority to reorganize the government. ^{About} Every president since I can remember has asked for power to reorganize the government. Only limited authority to do so has been given to any of them. Undoubtedly, the whole government's structure needs to be reorganized. And at first blush, one wonders why Congress would hesitate to give that authority. The reason for Congressional hesitancy on this is that ^{there are} ~~they have~~ certain agencies like the Interstate Commerce Commission, the Federal Communications Commission, the Maritime Commission, and many other agencies which Congress itself has created and which they do not wish to see disturbed in any way. Perhaps there is merit

in this feeling, but there is no way to eliminate duplication of effort, overlapping of authority, and multiplicity of Federal bureaucracy except in a thorough organization and rationalization of the governmental structure. But it looks doubtful now that Congress would pass the reorganization bill requested by the President.

The President recommended passage of the full-employment bill. This bill would make it the policy of the government and the Congress that the government was responsible for making a job at a decent salary available to every worker in the United States who wanted a job and who was able to do one. This is a long way from the original conception of the government's obligation to the citizens thereof. Someone said that there was once a time when the citizens felt responsible for his government, but that now the government was undertaking to be responsible for the welfare of each and every individual citizen. This bill, declaring such a policy, may well pass Congress, and perhaps it is wise. Perhaps it will be recognized as a step forward in social betterment, as a broadening and a progressive definition of the terms "equality" *opportunity* as used in our fundamental law. But the country should well recognize the meaning of such a program. It is another step toward socialization of the American economy. I do not use this word "socialization" with any intent to frighten someone away from what may be a worthwhile program.

* Catch phrases and boogey labels play entirely too great a part in American life. Certain words and phrases become either popular or unpopular, *such as* like

"regimentation", "socialized" as examples of unpopular phrases; "Americanized"

or "slum clearances" as examples of popular phrases. Such words or phrases *or labels*

may mean one thing to one fellow and something else to another and still

something else to the person who uses them. *But, nevertheless, we have*

a national weakness for whimsical catch phrases. We should
~~government programs are labeled one way or another. I have long since ceased~~

not to be influenced by what somebody else labels or calls a program or proposition.

The better way is to look at the thing square in the face and be for or

against it on what it is and not what somebody else says it is.

The President recommended that the Congress take immediate steps

to implement the support of agriculture prices. This is indeed one of the

most important points in his message, because some prices of agriculture

commodities will need support immediately. *Perhaps* You will recall ~~perhaps~~ that

Congress passed a bill guaranteeing support prices on every agriculture commodity for which the government called upon the farmers to increase production.

These floor prices are guaranteed ~~now~~ to the farmers by this law for two years

after the war ends. I hope you ~~listeners~~ will pardon me for saying that it

is the pride of my Congressional career that I was the author of this proposal.

~~As I said a moment ago, it will soon be needed.~~ *is* ~~now~~ For instance, the Army has

entered into contracts for large amounts of both dehydrated white and sweet

potatoes. Most of these orders have now been cancelled. This leaves the

~~potato~~ farmers in the predicament of having complied with the request of their

government to increase their production of potatoes and then a little later having

the agency of government which had been purchasing those ~~potatoes~~ cancel their

orders. This means that other agencies of the government, the Department of Agriculture for instance, will have to step in and support these prices through purchase, through loan, through distribution, or whatever other means are available.

It is isolated instances like this in which the program must be put into effect immediately. It is not thought that it will be needed ^{right away} on most of the basic

agriculture commodities like meat, grain, cotton, and tobacco. ^{Where ever it} ~~The President's~~ ^{is needed, though, it must be made to work.}

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The President ^{ed} ~~recommendation~~ ~~included requests~~ that Congress act upon the Veterans's Administration request for a ~~rehabilitation of the GI~~ liberalization of the G. I. Bill of Rights, making changes ~~and~~ ^{new} provisions for reemployment rights, medical care, loans, education, life insurance, social security coverage, and allowances for specific injuries. With this request, I think the Congress will comply ~~very~~ readily.

The President's message included many other things, ^a a request for continuation of the draft, limited reduction in taxes, creation of ^a Federal agencies to ~~_____~~ promote developments ~~of~~ basic sciences, and a cataloging of our natural resources, a program of housing, limited reduction in taxes, legislation on surplus property, small business, public works, U.N.N.R.R.A, Congressional pay raise, legislation for the sale at home and abroad of the unneeded portion of the great American merchant fleet; the stock-piling of strategic materials which the country does not produce in needed quantities so that the costly lessons of World War II will not be repeated.

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The legislative program that President Truman has put before Congress will certainly give the country's lawmakers a busy fall. What Congress and the government do between now and Christmas will fix the pattern for reconversion and the future economy of the country. What we do or do not do may well decide whether there shall be a ^{rather} period of runaway inflation such as followed World War I and another disastrous depression. Surely the country has learned its lesson. Surely, a country that has mobilized its strength sufficiently to win unconditional surrender from ^{all} her mighty enemies, now that peace has come, can keep her eyes on the road and her hands upon the wheel.