

N. Y. Post, 11/16/39, p. 14

Nagging Won't Help

Considerable harm and little good may come out of the musical comedy "investigation" of WPA being conducted locally by a certain H. Ralph Burton of the staff of the Woodrum committee.

The harm, of course, is not confined to the waste of public money incident to maintaining Mr. Burton at the Hotel New Yorker nor paying his salary. Nor can it be said that his daily telephone calls have disrupted the routine of the WPA offices. The members of the WPA staff, under the efficient Colonel Somervell, take it all in good part, even affectionately nicknaming Mr. Burton (among themselves) "Hiram." The annoyance of the telephone calls to the WPA offices has been reduced by the assignment of a man to answer them and run Mr. Burton's errands.

What is likely to cause the real harm is that the activities of Mr. Burton and other "investigators" of the committee will be used to blacken the reputation of WPA and—~~even worse~~—to prevent Congress from authorizing a genuine study of the whole unemployment-relief problem.

Nagging and quizzing local WPA administrators won't shed much light on the best ways of forming a stable, practical, useful government policy on this extremely important question.

Such hit-or-miss trouble-hunting expeditions won't even supply Congress with information as to the actual number of jobless men and women needing help throughout the country, let alone supply reliable data on the degree of need of specific groups, on the possibility of retraining persons thrown out of work by technical changes in industry or on the co-ordination of local and Federal programs.

It is time that Congress made a real effort to approach the national problem of unemployment not as a surprising emergency but as a phenomenon bound to exist under an advancing, changing industrial economy.

The obvious thing for Congress to do at the coming session is to authorize the President to appoint a committee clothed with broad powers of investigation, equipped with adequate funds and composed of outstanding leaders in the fields of government, economics, sociology, finance and labor to make a genuine study.

Coughlin agent
Swears witnesses (without
power to do so).
questionnaire re: union activities +
membership