

Ford's Jobs Plan Opposed on Hill

By Bob Kuttner

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One key portion of President Ford's new economic program ran into serious trouble on Capitol Hill yesterday.

House and Senate Labor subcommittees meeting jointly to hear Labor Secretary Peter J. Brennan explain the President's program for the unemployed virtually ruled out the administration's approach to public service jobs.

The "Community Improvement Corps" proposed by Mr. Ford Tuesday would take effect when the national unemployment rate reached 6 per cent for three months, no matter how high the unemployment level in particular communities. The CIC would then pay for tem-

porary work relief projects, which could not extend beyond six months. Workers would be eligible to participate only after they exhausted unemployment benefits.

Subcommittee Republicans and Democrats alike characterized the plan as a more cumbersome duplication of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), which was signed into law last Dec. 28 with bipartisan support. CETA pays for public service jobs in communities where unemployment exceeds 6.5 per cent.

Three weeks ago, the President released \$1 billion in CETA money to provide 170,000 public service jobs.

Brennan said the new program is intended to supple-

ment CETA with low-wage work relief projects for the unemployed "during this temporary crunch period."

But several legislators wondered why the President didn't simply ask for more CETA jobs. Rep. Marvin L. Esch (R-Mich.), the House Labor Subcommittee's ranking Republican, termed the 6 per cent national trigger "artificial, contrived and inequitable."

Rep. Herman Badillo (D-N.Y.) said, "All you're doing is taking the public service employment program and cutting it down to six months."

Associate Manpower Administrator William Hewett explained afterward that "people could be recycled to other projects" after the first six months.

Senate employment subcommittee chairman Gaylord Nelson (D-Wis.) complained that Milwaukee, which has 7 per cent unemployment, could get no assistance under the Ford administration bill because national unemployment has not yet reached the "trigger" level of 6 per cent. Nelson said he expected Congress to support legislation to expand the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act program rather than the administration formula.

House Labor Subcommittee Chairman Dominick Daniels (D-N.J.) said he was "disappointed" that the administration was proposing "leaf-raiding jobs."

There was no serious op-

position to the other portion of the President's program, which would extend 26 weeks of federal unemployment benefits to persons not now covered and have the federal government pay for 13 extra weeks' compensation to workers who had exhausted their benefits.

Despite the general rejection of the administration's work relief proposal, the atmosphere at the hearing was cordial, and Brennan at one point commented, "We're up here in a spirit of compromise."

The administration has been reluctant to expand the public service employment program for fear that localities will become permanently dependent on the federally funded jobs. Senate sources said the six-month limit on work relief projects in the new Ford proposal was an expression of that fear.

If Congress does reject the proposed Community Improvement Corps, which now seems likely, Mr. Ford could ask Congress to appropriate funds to increase temporarily the number of public service jobs under existing law.

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By James H. Atherton—The Washington Post
Ways and Means Committee leaders Herman Schneebell, left, and Al Ullman, right, confer with Secretary Simon.