

President Declares Policy On Great

Public Works Program

Asking Congress to appropriate four billion dollars for an expanded public works program President Roosevelt in a message to that body stressed the responsibility of the Government to provide for the 3,500,000 employable people who are on relief. "This group", he said, "was the victim of a nation wide depression caused by conditions which were not local, but national."

"The Federal government," he continued, "is the only government agency with sufficient power and credit to meet this situation. We have assumed this task and we shall not shrink from it in the future. It is a duty dictated by every intelligent consideration of national policy to ask you to make it possible for the United States to give employment to all of these 3,500,000 employable people now on relief, pending their absorption in a rising tide of private employment.

"It is my thought that, with the exception of the normal public building operations of the Government, all emergency public works shall be united in a single new and greatly enlarged plan.

"With the establishment of this new system we can supersede the Federal Emergency relief Administration with a coordinated authority which will be charged with the orderly liquidation of our present relief activities and the substitution of a national chart for the giving of work.

"This new program of emergency public employment should be governed by a number of practical principles.

"1. All work undertaken should be useful—not just for a day, or a year, but useful in the sense that it affords permanent improvement in living conditions or that it creates future new wealth for the nation.

"2. Compensation on emergency public projects should be in the form of security payments which should be larger than the amount now received as a relief dole, but at the same time not so large as to encourage the rejection of opportunities for private employment or the leaving of private employment to engage in Government work.

"3. Projects should be undertaken on which a large percentage of direct labor can be used.

"4. Preference should be given to those projects which will be self-liquidating in the sense that there is a reasonable expectation that the Government will get its money back at some future time.

"5. The projects undertaken should be selected and planned so as to compete as little as possible with private enterprises. This suggests that if it were not for the necessity of giving useful work to the unemployed now on relief, these projects in most instances would not now be undertaken.

"6. The planning of projects would seek to assure work during the coming fiscal year to the individuals now on relief, or until such time as private employment is available. In order to make adjustments to increasing private employment, work should be planned with a view to tapering it off in proportion to the speed with which the emergency workers are offered positions with private employers.

"7. Efforts should be made to locate projects where they will serve the greatest un-

employment needs as shown by present relief rolls, and the broad program of the national resources board should be freely used for guidance in selection. Our ultimate objective being the enrichment of human lives, the Government has the primary duty to use its emergency expenditures as much as possible to serve those who cannot secure the advantages of private capital.

“Ever since the adjournment of the Seventy-third Congress the Administration has been studying from every angle the possibility and the practicability of new forms of employment. As a result of these studies I have arrived at certain very definite convictions as to the amount of money that will be

necessary for the sort of public projects that I have described. I shall submit these figures in my budget message. I assure you now they will be within the sound credit of the Government.

“This work will cover a wide field, including clearance of slums, which for adequate reasons cannot be undertaken by private capital; in rural housing of several kinds, where, again, private capital is unable to function; in rural electrification; in the reforestation of the great watersheds of the nation; in an intensified program to prevent soil erosion and to reclaim blighted areas; in improving existing road systems and in constructing national highways designed to handle modern traffic; in the elimination of grade crossings; in the extension and enlargement of the successful work of the civilian conservation corps; in non-Federal work, mostly self-liquidating and highly useful to local divisions of government, and on many others which the nation needs and cannot afford to neglect.”