

This ought to happen everywhere—but doesn't. A veteran worker in an eastern navy yard instructs a Negro machinist apprentice. Liberman, OWI

FEPC—THE ALPHABET OF HOPE

Discrimination imperils full use of manpower. What the President's Fair Employment Practice Committee has done so far. A study and some proposals by Prof. Doxey Wilkerson.

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THERE are at least 36,000,000 Americans—over one-fourth of the entire population—whose race, creed, color, or

national origin present special difficulties in seeking employment in war production. They are the approximately 14,000,000 Negroes, 5,000,000 Jews, 5,000,000 aliens, 6,000,000 foreign-born citizens, 1,000,000 Orientals and American Indians, and 5,000,000 Spanish-speaking peoples, or peoples of Spanish extraction. (One might add 26,000,000 Catholics, who also, in certain areas, are discriminated against in employment.) At a time when maximum use of all available manpower is an urgent requirement of the war effort, this state of affairs represents a serious peril to the nation. It is the problem which the President's Fair Employment Practice Committee was created to tackle.

A few quotations, culled from scores of others in the records of the FEPC, illustrate the nature of this problem.

"The company is satisfied with the type of white help it has been getting. . . . There may come a time when we have to hire even women—and Negroes too—but right now we

don't have to." Thus (in January 1942) the personnel manager of the Babcock & Wilcox Co. (Bayonne, N. J.) replied to repeated protests of the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America against racial discrimination in employment.

"White Christian" is specified in all requisitions for employment filed (up to Sept. 1, 1941) by Carl Norden, Inc. (New York) and by the Fairchild Aviation Corp. (Jamaica, N. Y.) with the US Employment Service. "Gentiles," "Gentiles, Protestant," "Native-born White," and "White Girls" are among the specifications which abound in advertisements and requisitions by other firms. One Philadelphia company sent a training order to the National Youth Administration for two hundred "second generation, white" youths.

"Colored steamfitters and plumbers must be employed by colored steamfitting and plumbing contractors, and then only on such buildings as are occupied or due to be occupied by

colored owners or tenants." This is the only formula under which the AFL Chicago Journeymen Plumbers Union, Local 130, and the Steamfitters Protective Association, Local 597, will certify skilled Negro workers for employment.

"A bunch of snoopers, two of whom are Negroes, will assemble in Birmingham, June 18, for a three-day session to determine whether the South is doing right by Little Sambo." Thus the Gadsden, Ala., *Times* hailed the most recent hearings of the FEPC. Other characterizations of the committee and its hearings by a minority of the southern press include: "group of black-and-tan investigators," "halo-wearing missionaries of New Deal socialism," "Roosevelt racial experts," "three-day inquisition at Birmingham," "an instrument for political and social reform operating under a vicious disguise," and "dat cummitte fer de purteckshun uv Rastus & Sambo."

The correct frame of reference in which to view this problem was defined last February by FEPC's chairman, Dr. Malcolm S. MacLean, in opening the New York hearings on discrimination in defense training and employment: "To draw lines of employment on any basis except that of fitness is to deny ourselves the full use of our manpower . . . but even more serious than that is the fact that it impairs national morale, slows down our war effort, and increases the threat of our destruction. . . . This is an all-out war and anything that does not fall into line with that idea is very close to treason."

Dr. MacLean aptly posed the problem in its correct relationship to the war. The job of uprooting racial bars to employment can no longer be viewed merely as a question of social ethics. It is now one of the urgent and imperative requirements of victory.

ALTHOUGH the FEPC is but one of several federal agencies operating in this field (most notable among the others are the Negro Employment and Training Branch and the Minority Groups Branch of the Labor Division, War Production Board), it represents the government's chief means of combating racial discrimination in employment. And just now, when its role in the war effort is more important than ever, the FEPC is rapidly becoming a stormy petrel of the Roosevelt administration.

The immediate occasion for the establishment of the FEPC was last summer's threatened "March on Washington" by thousands of irate Negro citizens bent on dramatizing their resentment over exclusion from defense employment. The more fundamental motivation, however, lay in the political and economic necessities of the moment. The nation was rapidly approaching war. At a time when the government sorely needed the support of large masses of citizens for a foreign policy that was under serious fire, it could ill afford to risk a demonstration which might further crystallize the antagonism of 14,000,000 Negro Americans. At a time when current and anticipated war production requirements called for

the fullest possible use of the nation's manpower, some means simply had to be found to utilize the vast and essential reservoir of Negro labor. Further, at precisely this turning point in world history—late June 1941—the whole character of the war was altered by the Nazi attack upon the USSR and the resultant, although belated, forging of Anglo-American-Soviet unity against the common foe. The bold outlines of a people's war for freedom immediately began to emerge.

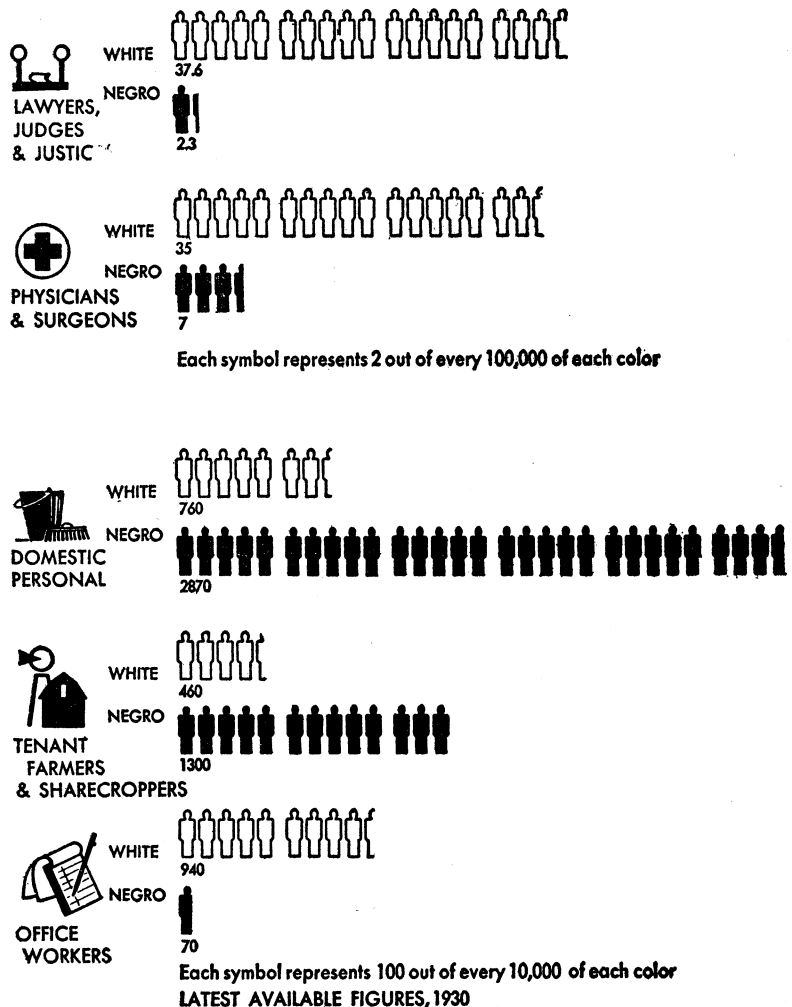
Thus, however consistent his action may have been with other motivations, the President was responding to historic necessity when, on June 25, 1941, he issued Executive Order 8802. The order declared "the policy of the United States to encourage full participation in the national defense program by all citizens of the United States, regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin, in the firm belief that the democratic way of life within the Nation can be defended successfully only with the help and support of all groups within its borders." To implement this policy the order also established the Committee on Fair Employment Practice. This historic development may properly be regarded as one of the first concrete manifestations of the progressive nature of the war.

THE FEPC was originally established in the Office of Production Management (now War Production Board) as a more or less autonomous entity, deriving its funds from and responsible directly to the President. On July 31, 1942, however, during the hornet's-nest of reactions stirred up by the FEPC's "invasion" of the South at the Birmingham hearings, the committee was transferred to the War Manpower Commission, under the supervision and direction of Chairman Paul V. McNutt, but with the provision that it would continue to operate as an organic unit.

It still is not clear just how the FEPC's transfer to the War Manpower Commission will affect its work. Heretofore, the committee had been authorized to investigate alleged violations of Executive Order 8802, to "take appropriate steps to redress grievances which it finds to be valid," and to "recommend to the several departments and agencies of the government of the United States and to the President all measures which may be deemed by it necessary or proper to effectuate the provisions of this order." It would appear, theoretically at least, that the War Manpower Commission has administrative power to take direct action which the FEPC alone has

OCCUPATIONS OF WHITES AND NEGROES

(GAINFULLY EMPLOYED WORKERS 10 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER)



PICTOGRAPH CORPORATION, FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, INC.

From the pamphlet *The Negro and the War*

lacked, and that the transfer might, in fact, operate more effectively to implement the committee's purposes.

On the other hand, by virtue of its status in the War Manpower Commission, the committee is now subject to the supervision and direction of an executive who also has jurisdiction over several other agencies (e.g., the US Office of Education and US Employment Service) against which the FEPC may find it—indeed, has already found it—necessary to take action. This structural arrangement may one day prove embarrassing to the committee—or to the chairman of the WMC. Further, although the committee and its central staff continue to maintain separate offices and to operate as an organic unit, its field representatives are to be directly responsible to the several regional directors of the War Manpower Commission. There may be WMC regional directors in certain areas who prefer a not too vigorous performance of duty by FEPC field representatives.

The original personnel of the committee, augmented by its present chairman, is aptly representative of those elements in our society which may well be expected to attack with vigor the war problem with which FEPC is concerned. Included are two white and one Negro representatives of organized labor, liberal white representatives of a famous southern newspaper and a great manufacturing concern, an able Negro lawyer holding an important elective office in Chicago, and the progressive white president of a famous Negro college.

THREE major approaches have been used by the FEPC in its effort to uproot employment discrimination based on "race, creed, color, or national origin": (1) public hearings on discriminations by industrialists and trade unions working on war production contracts; (2) private hearings on discriminations by agencies of the federal government; and (3) investigations of individual complaints alleging discriminations.

During the past year, the FEPC has held four public hearings on employment discrimination by industrial establishments: in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York City, Birmingham. Reports of the Birmingham hearings are not yet available. In the other three, responsible representatives of thirty or more industrial concerns—aircraft (more than any other), foundry, automotive, shipbuilding, radio and television, construction, etc.—were called before the committee to answer charges based largely upon investigations by field agents of the committee.

With monotonous regularity, "the committee finds that the corporation has engaged in discriminatory employment practices . . ." involving Negroes, Jews, Mexicans, Orientals, or foreign-born citizens and aliens. It then "directs" the company (in most cases): (1) to institute and establish hiring, upgrading, and promotional procedures which will insure the employment of workers in line with the principles of Executive Order 8802"; (2) to

Necessities of a People's War

THERE are still invidious cases of discrimination which cause a great deal of dissatisfaction among American Negroes and provocation to ill will. But the question of whether this is the "white man's war" or the "colored man's war" has to be displaced by the unequivocal fact that this is a people's war.

Such unprecedented events as the Anglo-Soviet Pact, the Roosevelt-Molotov agreements, worldwide sympathetic response to securing India's fullest cooperation against the Axis, and universal demands for the opening of a second military front in Europe show beyond doubt that this is a people's war. They show that the national existence and freedom of all peoples and nations, big and small, including the United States, as well as the fate of the Negro people, rest upon a people's victory of the United Nations over the fascist regimes.

The mad drive of Hitler and his vassals in the Caucasus and the Stalingrad area, with nine-tenths of the Nazi military potential concentrated in Russia, presents an opportunity—an obligatory opportunity—for the United States and Great Britain to strike in western Europe now. The Nazi hordes are pushing to a decision the fate of all humanity. The Red Army and the heroic Soviet people are fighting almost alone. We face the possibility of a prolonged and costly war in human life and resources. If we are to score a victory over fascism and avoid disaster, all liberty-loving people of the world are required to take a more active part in the struggle. An adjustment of the Negro people's policies to this stern reality is the steadfast necessity of the moment. Negro citizens, in the interests of their own freedom and in the interests of liberty for all humanity, a cause in which they have never lagged, must throw their full weight behind the necessity of opening a second front and strengthening the fight to smash Hitler now.

This national liberation war with its many-sided people's character has brought about changes of decisive historical nature in the position of the Negro people and in their potentialities for influencing the course of victory. Many limitations that prevented full "mobilization for the war" have been removed. This course of events shows that the Negro people must to the maximum extent throw their united strength behind President Roosevelt and the pro-war, anti-fascist forces to WIN THE WAR.

They must use their power to repel the defeatists and those who seek to negotiate a peace with Hitler. The defeatists are bending all efforts in the South to obstruct the war effort at its most vulnerable point, to weaken national unity as a whole, and to hold back the upward progress of both the Negro and white people of the South.

Under the pressure of the democratic demands of this war Eugene Talmadge was overwhelmingly defeated in the primary elections for governor in the state of Georgia. With that defeat, opposition to President Roosevelt's war program and Talmadge's "white supremacy" movement were delivered a smashing blow in Georgia.

Likewise under the compulsion of the people's character of the war, the House of Representatives of the United States Congress voted five to one to pass the Soldiers Vote Bill, cancelling restrictions of the poll tax against Negro and white soldiers of the South. This wedge in the armor of the defeatists and poll-tax congressmen opens the way for the abolition of the poll tax altogether. As another example, we can note the launching of the merchant ship *Booker T. Washington* and the placing of a Negro captain, Hugh Mulzac, in full charge of its operation.

These instances of the pressure of the war and achievement of democratic rights in the course of the war cut deeply into American life. They are bringing into political and social activity millions of hitherto disfranchised citizens of the South. The profound lesson to be learned from these developments is that this is a people's war, and by full participation in its victorious conclusion and the peace that will come out of it, the Negro people will see the achievement of full historical justice.

JAMES W. FORD.



"employ applicants without regard to race, creed, color, or national origin and to extend its in-plant training to all qualified employees"; (3) to "file with the committee a monthly report" on the number, classification, and racial composition of new workers and

on the upgrading of those already employed; and (4) to "give written notice to all employment agencies to which they submit orders . . . advising that the company will employ applicants for all classifications of employment without regard to race, creed, color, or na-

tional origin, copies of such notices to be transmitted to the committee."

Information as to how fully these specific "directives" are carried out is not at hand. Members of the FEPC staff are somewhat reticent on the subject. There is reason to believe that "token compliance" is all that results in many instances. Besides, the committee's authority to *compel* compliance directly has yet to be validated by the courts. Despite the limitations here apparent, there is no doubt that FEPC public hearings are having a wholesome effect upon industrial employment practices. It is noteworthy that not a single company has openly challenged the committee. None has said: "Yes, we discriminate. So what?" Rather, industrial representatives either try to "prove" that their firms do not discriminate, or they frankly admit such discrimination and promise to eradicate it from their employment practices.

One of the most significant reactions to FEPC public hearings was that of the Employers Association of Chicago. In its newsletter "To Our Members and Friends," dated Jan. 28, 1942—one week after the hearings—there was enclosed, in red print, a sheet bearing the caption "WARNING." Immediately under the caption, in bold type, is the statement: "Employers engaged in defense work, under primary or subcontracts, must not discriminate in employment because of race, creed, color, or national origin." There follows the explanation that "such discrimination is contrary to law by the terms of President Roosevelt's 'Executive Order 8802'"; then an admonition that the recent "hearings should be a warning signal for employers to guard against even the appearance of discrimination"; and finally this valid and apparently sincere analysis of the situation: "A realistic appraisal of the war emergency . . . makes it clear that the services of every brain and every muscle will be required. . . . Simple arithmetic indicates that employment discrimination will be swept aside by the acute necessity for workers, more workers, all workers." The common objection that the attitudes of employees force employers to discriminate is countered by the assertion: ". . . it is now the job of employers to influence their employees toward sacrificing such prejudices as a matter of patriotic necessity." The statement closes by listing several "specific cautions to employers to avoid violation of 'Executive Order 8802.'"

The Employers Association of Chicago, now in its fortieth year, serves nearly 2,000 employers annually. Such a call by this group for compliance with the government's policy goes far, in itself, toward validating FEPC public hearings in that area.

DURING the public hearings at Los Angeles, and in supplementary hearings in Chicago, at least five trade unions have been cited before FEPC for barring Negroes from employment by denying them membership and refusing to certify them for work under closed shop or "maintenance of membership" agreements with employers. Attention has already

been called to the plumbers' and the steamfitters' locals in Chicago. Also involved in public hearings were the International Association of Machinists, Local 68, San Francisco, and Local 751, Seattle, together with the Shipyard Workers Union, Local 802, of San Pedro, Cal.

The West Coast machinists' unions presented the first overt challenge to the FEPC's authority. They flatly refused to abrogate their traditional bar to the employment of any but "white" machinists. The committee referred their cases to the President, who acted promptly and decisively, with the result that the Negro machinists gained employment. FEPC's chairman told the recent convention of the National Association for the advancement of Colored People that "at least three local lodges of the International Association of Machinists, one of the most powerful of AFL unions, have found ways to admit Negroes into full membership, thus breaking with long, long years of tradition. In one midwestern city the machinists count eighty-five Negroes as full-fledged members; in a northeastern city there are fifteen who have held their machinists' membership cards for about two years; in the South one lodge has explored the dictionaries and come up with the discovery that being 'white' may not, necessarily, mean white of race or in color; instead, 'white' may also be defined as 'pure,' 'innocent,' 'honorable,' 'of good character,' and so forth. As a result, a Negro could be

admitted to membership without violating tradition or ritual, as long as he was a competent machinist and a man well behaved and of good character."

Spokesmen for organized labor—especially the industrial unions of the CIO—generally cooperate with the FEPC in seeking to uproot discrimination by employers. Gradually, even traditional craft union foes of Negro skilled workers are relaxing their bars. Quite apart from the patriotic motives involved, organized labor is coming to grasp the even more general application of a fundamental truth stated by a CIO representative in Bessemer, Ala.: "The labor movement in the South never will amount to a hill of beans until unions are prepared squarely to face and solve the Negro problem." There remain a few recalcitrants, however, who persist in obstructing the nation's total mobilization for war production and thus negate the best interests of the labor movement itself. The Chicago plumbers and steamfitters are an example.

APPARENTLY on the premise that dirty federal linen should not be washed in public, FEPC hearings on employment discrimination by governmental agencies have all been held in private. These hearings, however, definitely are getting results.

It is reported that in several instances department heads, themselves, were unaware of the extent of racial discrimination in the employment practices of their own agencies until



Roskam, FSA

Pulling together. Decent wages and an end to discrimination are what these Negro and white union agricultural workers want in order to produce the maximum food for victory.

confronted with FEPC findings. Corrective measures were promptly instituted. Last April, the FEPC called upon more than eighty governmental departments and independent agencies to submit periodic progress reports on the numbers and classifications of Negroes employed, together with their proportions of the total. The vast majority of the agencies have complied with this request, some of their reports revealing striking increases in Negro employment. During the past six months, for example, the Department of Agriculture increased its Negro personnel by about forty percent—at a time when total personnel decreased by nearly eight percent. (Even so, Negroes still constitute less than four percent of the Department's 12,000 or more employees.) The Navy Department reports an increase of 105 percent among Negroes, as compared with thirty-six percent among whites. From October 1941 through March 1942, Negro employees accounted for sixteen percent of the total increase in War Department personnel.

Despite such increases as these, there are still a number of departments with but negligible numbers of Negro employees. The main problem, however, lies in the occupational caste lines which generally restrict Negroes to custodial jobs. For example, in thirty-eight agencies employing over 171,000 workers, there are approximately 16,000 Negro employees (nine percent of the total), only one-fourth of whom hold clerical, administrative, or professional classifications. Whereas service employees constitute about seven percent of the total in these agencies, sixty-two percent of the Negro employees hold custodial classifications. This disproportionate and general concentration of Negro employees in custodial jobs, together with the dearth of Negro employees of any kind in certain agencies, is strikingly revealed by the incomplete tabulations in the box on this page. It is apparent that, whatever progress has thus far been made, there still remains a big job for the FEPC within the family of federal agencies.

A LARGE part of the committee's work consists of the handling of individual complaints alleging racial discrimination in employment. More than 6,000 such complaints were filed with the committee during the fiscal year ended June 30, 1942, and the committee is now receiving 700 and 800 per month. It is significant that the bulk of these individual complaints come from the North and West, where there are relatively few Negroes, and very few from the South. Out of approximately 3,300 complaints received during the first six months of 1942, more than 2,500 (seventy-seven percent) came from eight northern industrial states and the District of Columbia, as compared with only about 500 (fifteen percent) from fifteen southern states where nearly four-fifths of the entire Negro population lives. This distribution reflects, in part, the greater concentration of war production industries in the North. To a considerable extent, however, it also expresses—as many of the letters are frank to state—the greater

intimidation of Negro citizens in the southern areas. Long experience has taught Negroes in much of the South that to tell Washington about their grievances is to invite serious reprisals when the word finally gets back to the local community. Thus, the very dearth of complaints from the South is perhaps the most damning indictment of its racial discriminations.

Just what has happened to the thousands of complaints received thus far, it appears that the committee itself does not know. Although the chairman reports optimistically that "hundreds of grievances have been settled out of court," it is probable that in most cases letters of complaint are duly answered, and then filed. The small central staff now employed is hard pressed even to keep a record of such complaints, let alone to investigate them and effect adjustments. Besides, most of the complaints received merely allege employment discrimination "in general," with few if any particulars as to dates, places, names, and incidents. In themselves, they provide no adequate basis for definite action, even if sufficient staff and authority were at the committee's command.

ALTHOUGH the FEPC's program suffers from obvious limitations, the net effect of its activities during the fifteen months since the committee was appointed has undoubtedly been salutary. In all four areas of operation, some definite gains have been made. Perhaps most notable has been the focusing of attention upon a deep-rooted problem which seriously imperils the nation, and the development of a climate of opinion in which the solution of that problem becomes much more practical. Outside of the South, the *principle* that "minority" peoples should be afforded full employment in war production is pretty well established. Progressive groups which have long been concerned with this problem can now move forward with greater assurance of public support. This fact, for which the

FEPC is entitled to considerable credit, in itself marks an important gain.

It is abundantly apparent that the main job of the President's Fair Employment Practice Committee lies ahead. Despite rapid diminution of the normally "acceptable" supply of industrial workers, Negroes and other "colored" Americans still constitute less than three percent of the employees in eighteen important war industries selected for special analysis by the Bureau of Employment Security. Their numbers are especially negligible in certain industries (e.g., ship and boat building, aviation, machinery, etc.) where developing wartime shortages are particularly acute. In federal employment the record has already been set forth. And still "native white," "gentile," "Christian" remain the employment criteria of hundreds of concerns whose maximum production is essential for victory.

Just now the United Nations are on the verge of their supreme bid for victory. An offensive in Western Europe *cannot* be much longer delayed. At this crucial point in our history, stupid intolerances which imperil the nation can no longer be dealt with gently. They must be blasted by the force of a people's march toward freedom. And the FEPC must be made into an even more effective instrument to this end. To do the job which *must* be done, the committee needs much strengthening and stimulation. Its central staff and especially its corps of field workers must be greatly enlarged. Its jurisdiction—recently extended to include railroads—must be further broadened to encompass basic communication agencies, the government of the District of Columbia, and all other agencies and areas of employment which are vital to the war effort. The committee must be given clear legislative authority (such as the Marcantonio Anti-Discrimination Bill would provide) to impose sanctions which will insure that its "directives" are obeyed. Above all, the committee must be prodded into ever more militant and vigorous attack. DOXEY A. WILKERSON.

Federal Agency	Number of Employees		No. of Negroes Classified as:	
	Total	Negro	Custodial	Clerical or Above
Civil Service Commission.....	6,113	265	97	168
Bureau of the Budget.....	422	17	17	0
Civilian Aeronautics Administration..	7,567	46	44	2
Federal Housing Administration....	..	22	18	4
Department of the Interior.....	42,126	693	..	166
National Labor Relations Board....	897	12	..	..
Office of Education.....	693	32	20	12
Securities & Exchange Commission..	1,499	12	11	1
Selective Service System (D. C.)...	455	11	..	..
U. S. Maritime Commission (D. C.)	2,089	39	..	..
Reconstruction Finance Corp.....	5,073	98	..	..
Office for Emergency Mgt.....	5,283	493	..	38
Department of Commerce.....	..	412	281	131
Alley Dwelling Authority.....	..	85	68	17
Library of Congress.....	..	183	128	55
Postmaster General (D. C.).....	..	212	..	..
Social Security Board.....	..	1,050	178	872
Bureau of Internal Revenue.....	..	261	..	105
Bureau of Public Debt.....	..	467	164	303