

Washington, December 6, 1932

TODAY and TOMORROW

By WALTER LIPPMANN

The President's Message

WASHINGTON, Dec. 6. **T**HE President's message may be divided into two parts: one the recommendations on which this Congress must take some action, the other his general observations on the depression. The proposals for action deal with the budget, and will be elaborated in the budget message on Wednesday. The general observations constitute the larger part of this message.

On the economy side of the budget the President is making four principal recommendations. The first is that public works of all kinds be limited "to commitments and work in progress" except for self-liquidating projects. The second is that Federal salaries in excess of one thousand dollars be reduced by various devices approximately 15 per cent. The third is that "many abuses" in the veterans' legislation be eliminated. The fourth is that there be "grouping and consolidation of executive and administrative agencies," for which a general plan is to be announced in the near future. On the revenue side the President is recommending the substitution of a manufacturers' excise tax, excluding "necessary food and possibly some grades of clothing," for the nuisance taxes adopted last spring.

It would be unrealistic to attempt to discuss these proposals in detail at this time. The recommendations are only in the most general form and, moreover, it is plain that neither this Congress nor the next will accept the President's leadership in these matters. What will emerge from this message and from that on the budget will be a statement of the problem which Congress and the next Administration have to meet, and an outline of the principles by which the problem might be met. If the Democrats do not choose to follow Mr. Hoover's recommendations, the country will expect them to produce promptly a program of their own.

The President's observations on the depression follow the general lines of his campaign speeches.

He still feels that distress is being adequately provided for and that in spite of want "the public health is today at its highest known level." He finds support for this comforting conclusion in statistics furnished by the Surgeon General which show that the death rate this year is somewhat lower than at the height of the boom. These statistics, as Mr. Hoover interprets them, are so contrary to common sense that the public will not believe them. It will be hard to persuade the American people that destitution and anxiety are not detrimental to health, and what purpose is served by attempting to promote complacency when there is need of sensitiveness and sympathy and deep concern I do not know.

Mr. Hoover still feels, also, that the emergency measures begun last winter are promoting recovery, and that except for a reduction of government expenditures and the reorganization of our banking system, nothing else of a large nature needs to be done at home. His theory is that "our major difficulties find their origins in the economic weakness of foreign nations." Mr. Hoover has not yet become willing to admit that the post-war policies and their consequences in the inflated debt structure of the "new era" need to be revised. We are to go in for "vigorous and whole-souled co-operation with other governments in the economic field, but it is not suggested that such co-operation involves the revision of policies or domestic readjustments to make co-operation effective. Mr. Hoover stands at the end where he stood at the beginning; he hopes that prices will rise again and make it unnecessary to liquidate, reorganize, and revise what remains of the post-war era.

The best that can be said is that Mr. Hoover has remained true to his convictions.

Note on the Perfect Bureaucrat

If the Associated Press has reported the incident correctly, the American Consul General at Berlin, Mr. George S. Messersmith, has probably managed to achieve lasting recognition. For in future histories of the manners and customs of our times at least a footnote will be devoted to Mr. Messersmith. He will be remembered as the man who summoned into his presence one of the great thinkers of all times and solemnly asked him to prove that his entry into the United States would not

endanger our institutions. Mr. Messersmith has made himself famous by the mere effort to do his duty in connection with Albert Einstein's visit to the United States. If ever the law was an ass, it was when Mr. Messersmith undertook to administer the law. For his benefit and for bureaucrats like him all future laws of Congress should contain a clause saying that "this act is to be administered by men possessing at least ordinary intelligence and a grain of common sense."