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## The N.R.A.

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## The N. R. A.

The theory that a great depression always follows a great war seemed to have justification by our economic behavior after World War I. In 1920 farm land prices in Iowa were the highest in the state's history. Farmers had prospered from the heavy expenditures for food for the armed forces and gifts to our allies. But early in the 1920's land values started to decline drastically. Holders of mortgages began to foreclose.

The farm depression, however, did not seem to be reflected in the industrial field. Manufacturing plants which had devoted their energy to production for war had now started rehabilitation for normal use, and there was a tremendous demand for investment money. This, plus the low margin then required on stock investment, produced the greatest volume of selling and, eventually, the greatest relative decline in security values in the history of the world. When the crash came in 1929, millions of workers lost their jobs. Economic disruption and chaos were nationwide.

In President Roosevelt's inauguration speech he used the phrase, "There is nothing to fear but fear itself." This set the theme for the National Recovery Administration, commonly known as the



Blue Eagle Campaign. It was a plan to marshal all the business elements of the United States to lift wages and prices and create a spirit of hope.

Roosevelt appointed General Hugh Johnson to head the NRA. I received a long distance call in New York from Johnson's office. He said that he would like to get together a few of the Liberty Loan personalities. I called up Bert St. Clair, who had been my assistant in the Liberty Loan publicity, and he went with me to Washington. I was given the title of "chief of organization," and St. Clair became publicity director.

I prepared a telegram for General Johnson to send to seven thousand chambers of commerce and industrial groups asking them to set up organizations. Most industries and trades set up codes to stop price cutting and to eliminate other depression practices. In fact they followed some practices which seemed to violate the antitrust laws, and, eventually, the Supreme Court declared the NRA unconstitutional.

I made many interesting contacts in the appointment of state and local directors of the NRA. I decided to split upper New York state from the city and asked Grover Whalen and Averell Harriman to meet me at Whalen's office. Whalen agreed to head the New York City organization provided I would arrange to have the appointment made by the President. I called up Marvin McIntyre, the President's secretary, and had the ap-



pointment made from Hyde Park. Harriman took over the upstate area. In all of my associations with important personalities I never found one so willing to make sacrifices for the public good as Averell Harriman. I was later to have the pleasure of working with him when he was Secretary of Commerce and I was with the Census Bureau.

After the NRA campaign, I returned to my farm in Dutchess County, but not for long. A message from Secretary of Commerce Daniel C. Roper took me back to Washington for another campaign. Congress had appropriated \$50,000 and directed the Department of Commerce to try to induce the states to adopt uniform automobile traffic regulations.

In my new office as assistant to the Secretary of Commerce I battled with the governors and legislators in fifteen key states. The two which gave the most difficulty were Illinois and Missouri. Governor Horner of Illinois, a Democrat, had a Republican house and senate. I had no trouble in getting the Governor to support a revised traffic law, but I had very great trouble working with a Republican legislature because it was not good politics to put any feathers in the Governor's bonnet. Nevertheless, some real progress was made toward uniformity in traffic regulation.

FRANK R. WILSON