

**Our Changing Economy**

# Unfair Distribution Marks Prosperity

*By Philip Stoddard Brown*

The backlog of authorized building and contract awards is now so great that a high rate of construction activity throughout the summer is assured. In March and April, permits were issued for over \$100 million of building in the Washington area, nearly twice as much as in the same months of last year. Permits for these two months alone included over 5000 new housing units.



**Brown**

Employment in the Washington area is higher than ever before. Allowing for a small addition in the number of workers not covered by the monthly tally made by the United States Employment Service, the increase over a year ago is probably about 20,000.

Many other indicators of local business activity are also at new highs . . . Yet, figures recently compiled by Raymond F. Clapp, a careful and experienced statistician, are a shocking reminder of how uneven the benefits of "good times" are—even in this most favored of large cities—and how destitute many of our neighbors are.

In the District alone, nearly 70,000 persons—about one in twelve—simply do not have income to buy as much food, clothing and other essentials as is provided to relief recipients under the standards now in effect.

## 'Relief Standard' in Dollars

About one in three of these 70,000 persons is receiving public assistance. Some get help from relatives and friends. Some have savings to draw on. But many are without resources and assistance and are in real distress.

The "relief standard" is one that provides less than \$40 a week for a family of four and less than \$20 for one living alone. This is a standard that enables people to exist—but

## AREA BUSINESS INDICATORS

(Per Cent Change 1958 to 1959)

April 4 Months

Employment (Metropolitan Area):		
Government (civilian) . . . . .	+ 2	....
Government (military)* . . . . .	- 2	....
Construction . . . . .	+12	....
Other Private** . . . . .	+ 2	....
Construction Authorized:		
Value of all Building . . . . .	+93	+58
Number of Dwelling Units . . . . .	+71	+41
Retail Trade:		
New-Car Registrations		
(metropolitan area) . . . . .	+17	+22
Department Store Sales		
Downtown . . . . .	- 6	+ 1
Metropolitan Area . . . . .	0	+ 8
Public Utility Services:		
Electric Power (Pepco Area)		
Commercial . . . . .	+ 8	+ 9
Residential . . . . .	- 3	+ 8
Gas Sales (Washington Gas Light)		
Business . . . . .	-10	+ 8
Residential . . . . .	-18	- 2
Telephone Service (D. C.)		
Local Calls . . . . .	+ 2	+ 6
Out-of-Town Calls . . . . .	+ 7	+ 3
Telephones in Use . . . . .	+ 5	....
Commercial Banking:		
Value of Checks Written . . . . .	+23	+24
Bank Loans Outstanding		
Commercial and Industrial . . . . .	+ 6	....
Real Estate . . . . .	+10	....
Consumer and Other . . . . .	+ 7	....
Food Prices (Metropolitan Area) . . . . .	- 4	....
Newspaper Advertising Lineage . . . . .	+15	+12
Passenger Arrivals and Departures		
at National Airport . . . . .	+11	+ 8

\*Comparison is between Mar. 1, 1958 and Mar. 1, 1959.  
\*\*Except proprietors, nonsalaried doctors and lawyers, domestics and other self-employed persons for which there is no current tally.

not much more—in an urban community where it takes a dollar to buy a pound of hamburger and a couple quarts of milk and 40 cents for a round-trip bus fare.

About one child in seven under 16 years of age, living in the District, is in a family whose income is below the public assistance budget standard. Many of these are hungry. They simply don't get enough to eat, as school teachers and welfare workers well know.

## Desertion Is Encouraged

If a man is unemployed or doesn't earn enough to care for his children, he may desert them. Only in this way, do they become eligible for public assistance. Consequently, desertion is encouraged and the District Government has to take over the entire support of such children.

It would take only \$5 million more a year to make up the deficiency of income of all District families with children, so Clapp estimates. In other words, if 1/5 of 1 per cent of the personal income of District residents were added to what is now allotted for relief, all of the 10,640 low-income families with children could be brought up to the "relief standard."

Conditions have improved in the past decade. In 1949, 16.8 per cent of persons were in "low-income" households. In 1958, by the same standard (adjusted for price changes), only 8.4 per cent were "low-income," as defined above.