

## How Much Government?

By CONSTANCE KNIGHT

In a way you can't blame the Government for considering that it had a mandate for what it was doing. For long years the socialists and communists had been shouting in its ears, demanding that it do certain things, or at any rate that it DO SOMETHING! Because the socialists and the communists very well knew that anything it did would be in the direction of more government, and they just hoped that that would go on until you came to all government, which was and is the socialist and communist aim and ideal.

And in a way you can't blame them either. They saw government—or at any rate they said they did—as just the People—all of us working together in perfect freedom and harmony. They thought the only way to that ideal was for some of us to boss the rest of us in our personal affairs—have the school teachers tell the community how much butter it could have, or send an FBI man around to count our cans of peaches. Perhaps they didn't realize how difficult it is to stop people from wanting to boss other people once they have found out how much fun there is in it. Perhaps they too are appalled to discover that bosses multiply as rapidly as guinea pigs; at any rate they haven't managed

to explain how we get from this multiplicity of bosses to that ideal state where everything is free and there are no petty tyrants.

It would be nice if we could blame everything on the socialists and communists, but we can't even give ourselves that satisfaction. My uncle Ed, for example, was an old-line conservative raised to the nth power. One of his favorite amusements, indoor or outdoor, was to express violent disapproval of the way the town officers were running things and to tell the world what he would do if he had a chance, dammit. But he could never be induced to go near a town meeting or express an opinion in any other capacity than that of private critic. One day a citizen of more than ordinary daring told Uncle Ed that he was getting just what he deserved, and if he didn't like the way the town was run he had better do something besides talk. It didn't do any good at that point—Uncle Ed was too old. However, it might suggest to us that there are more people just like him, who are dissipating their energy in fault-finding while government in its octopus-like way lays hold on more and more powers.

Most of us have been guilty simply of following the line of least re-

sistance. Unlike the socialists and communists, we haven't been fully conscious of what was going on; unlike Uncle Ed, we haven't uttered a word of disapproval (well, hardly a word). With the usual human delight at evading responsibility, we have watched the government taking over one function after another and thought vaguely that that was just fine because it would give us more time to spend on our own affairs. It comes as a slight shock to us to discover that the government is only too eager to look after our affairs too—insistent, in fact—but that is just because we weren't paying attention to what was happening.

So far this has been nothing but a description of symptoms—is there any cure? There is an old saying that turn about is fair play. The government has had its fun rationing us; now it must be almost our turn to ration the government. It would be so much simpler to cut down some of its elaborate machinery than to give it all our incomes so it could afford to hire us all to watch one another. Of course we would have to learn to tie our own shoes and get out our own clean handkerchiefs again, but there would be compensations.