The federal relief program is now the storm-center of a political campaign.

I insist that to be legitimately criticized, it must be measured against something else - something the critics stand for. It must be what Herbert Hoover did in the three years and four months following the crash, or it must be what Alfred Landon promises to do now. I will accept either yardstick in advance and discuss them both.

For one solid year after the crash of 1929, President Hoover did nothing but circularize chambers of commerce and urge industry not to cut payrolls. At the end of that year, with unemployment double that of 1929, he said his efforts had "contributed greatly to reduce unemployment."

Then he began to appoint committees. He appointed a cabinet committee to seek the cooperation of business and industry. On it, among others, was Secretary Mellon.

Then he appointed Col. Arthur Woods of New York the head of another committee to put people back to work. Colonel Woods launched a big advertising campaign urging business firms not to reduce payrolls. This drive was seriously embarrassed by the news that the Gulf Refining Company, controlled by the Secretary of the Treasury, was firing a lot of men. Wouldn't Secretary Mellon please join the campaign and stop cutting off employees? Secretary Mellon would not. But Secretary Mellon kept his membership on the Cabinet Committee to seek the cooperation of business and industry!

President Hoover was to address Congress on December 2, 1930, concerning the state of the Union.
Colonel Woods still believed the President wanted the job done. His committee submitted a suggested message for this occasion. It was a great and a prophetic document.

Let me quote from this message which was handed, ready-made to President Hoover: "Great numbers of our fellow-citizens are facing a desperate emergency. The number of unemployed runs into the millions. It is a staggering total. We have the resources, the materials, the labor and the skill. An effort should be made to release these forces in increasing the health, safety and beauty of our communities." (unquote)

This message urged Congress to vote $220,000,000 for a joint program of public works between the Federal government and the States. Colonel Woods himself wrote a memorandum recommending that the Federal construction program be set at two billion dollars.

This is what Hoover's own employment experts wanted. What did Hoover want? What did he tell Congress about the state of the Union?

He said there were two and a half million unemployed, although experts said seven millions. He asked the inadequate sum of a hundred to a hundred and fifty million to provide further employment, and nothing for relief. How did he excuse this action? By saying the fundamental strength of the nation's economic life was sound.

Breadlines were forming. Children were out of school for lack of shoes and clothes. Hoover's own committee told him millions were desperate. But he told Congress (I quote) "In the larger view the major forces of the depression lie outside the United States." And he asked nothing for relief.

President Hoover ignored his appointed advisors. Who did he listen to?

Perhaps he listened to Secretary of Agriculture Hyde, who opposed feeding the farmers in the drought area but approved $25,000,000 to feed their livestock.

Perhaps he listened to Secretary of War Hurley, who recommended the plan of an Oklahoma utilities man that restaurants dump uneaten food into five gallon cans and that this be fed to the hungry if they would work for it.
Perhaps he listened to Irene and Pierre DuPont, who wanted a promise from Hoover that the income tax would not be raised before they contributed to local relief.

In June 1930 when Dr. John A. Ryan of the Catholic University in Washington, went to Hoover with a committee to urge a three billion dollar public works program, what did Hoover say? He said, "Gentlemen, you have come sixty days too late. The depression is over." He said that in June of 1930, while unemployment was growing steadily.

He was President for three long winters of ever-increasing misery after that. All that time the tug-of-war to avoid Federal funds for relief went on. Senator David I. Walsh of Massachusetts boiled over in March, 1931, and said, quote:

"Not a single bill for adequate relief will pass this Congress, and the country might as well know it, because of the determination of the Administration that those who pay large income taxes must not be burdened with relief obligations." Unquote.

There were two more Hoover winters to come. Federal bill after Federal bill to help the unemployed was scuttled by the Hoover leadership.

Cities and States were pleading. Farm and labor leaders joined them. Evidence of widespread desperate need poured into Washington. Men stood in soup-lines from coast to coast. Malnutrition was widespread among children. Tens of thousands lived in Hoovervilles, and frequently rioted for food. What did Hoover say? At the close of 1931 he said, quote, "Our people have been protected from hunger and cold. The sense of social responsibility in the nation has responded."

Local relief - leave it to the States - don't use Federal money. That was the Hoover chorus. File the burden on local property taxes, they said in effect, but keep it off the Federal income tax at any cost. If local property taxes can't pay it, the unemployed must go without. They did go without. That is the inescapable relief record of Herbert Hoover.

And now we come to Governor Landon. The governor has contradicted himself a good many times during this campaign. This week he ridiculed CWA. But in January, 1934, Governor Landon wrote the President, "I have felt that this Civil Works program is one of the soundest most constructive policies of your Administration, and I cannot urge too
ugly fact is that this Administration has condemned one-sixth of our people to live in a separate economic world." Less than a year ago Governor Landon said, "I am confident that the President and the WPA are doing all in their power to get the people to work". This week Candidate Landon said, "The whole program lacked any sound, practical, clear-headed planning." But two years ago Governor Landon said, "Well, if the Democrats won't stand up for their relief program and its administration, I will do it for them. I say that, considering the problems they have met, they have done a good job and I am glad to have cooperated with them."

This week Governor Landon made his big speech on relief. I don't know what to think about it. I know a candidate for the highest office in the country would not wilfully misrepresent what we are doing. So the only remaining conclusion is that he does not know. Let me point out the instances of his plain misinformation, one by one.

First: Governor Landon said he wanted local communities to determine what, if any, work relief projects will be started or continued. Perhaps he does not know that the WPA projects are now and have always been originated and sponsored by local officials.

Second: Governor Landon wants local governments to contribute part of the cost as a safe-guard against extravagance. Perhaps he does not know that nearly twenty percent of the cost of all WPA projects is contributed by local agencies for this very purpose.

Third: He talks about the number on relief. The truth is that there were 570,000 fewer families on relief in July than there were a year ago.

Fourth: He says people on relief are isolated in a separate economic world. That's ridiculous. Three percent of all those enrolled in WPA leave the rolls every month for private work -- leave with their skill unimpaired and their morale still good.

Fifth: He speaks of politics in relief. I've never been in politics in my life. That's pretty well known. Local Republican political bosses have trumped up most of these charges, and Governor Landon has dignified them by a general reference to them. How many WPA employees have been involved, even in the charges?
How many have you read about? One hundred? Two hundred and fifty?

If it is 250, the total is exactly one one-hundredth of one percent of the people in our program. That makes us 99.99 per cent pure -- without counting all the lies we have spiked.

Here are some samples: In Pennsylvania the Republicans produced a man named Green, who swore he was discharged from a WFA project for registering Republican. The truth is he never worked for us, and there was no such project as the one he swore he worked on! They also charged we had three members of one family, active in Democratic politics, on our payroll -- a family named Booker. Investigation proved that two of these people never worked for us, and the third resigned last July! These examples are typical of dozens of others.

Sixth: Governor Landon condemns a subsistence wage. Does he not know that the WPA pays the prevailing wage?

In Kansas, Governor Landon has his own State Commission to handle direct relief. We have a right to examine it as a sample of how he works.

For the first six months of this year the administrative cost of Governor Landon's own direct relief program in Kansas was 27.9 percent. For the entire nation it was 15.6 percent on a comparable basis, so his costs were nearly double the national average. For the same period, the administrative cost of WFA in Kansas was 5.4 percent.

Governor Landon says we are extravagant. Well, the best way to judge that is to compare what we have spent in Kansas with what Governor Landon asked us to spend. From 1933 to last year, he himself urged us to spend 28½ percent more than we actually did. If we had followed his signed requests, we would have spent $12,300,000 more than we did in Kansas alone!

Now let's go back and summarize the Landon national relief program very briefly. First, he will cut relief costs. Second, he will give adequate relief. Third, he will separate relief from public works. Fourth, he will grant money to the states and they will determine what work projects, if any, they will carry on. Fifth, he will require states and communities to contribute a fair proportion of the cost, thus insuring local restrictions on spending.
Where will he make the cuts in relief cost?

There are four possible places. By cutting administrative costs, by cutting relief wages, by cutting Federal participation and increasing local contributions, or by putting the unemployed on the dole.

Item 1. - The administrative cost of WP A is now less than 4 percent. Obviously, any important saving here is impossible. Item 2. - The average WP A worker earns $50 a month. Most of them have dependents. Will Governor Landon cut this, and if so, what wage does he consider adequate? Item 3. - States and local communities already pay 20% of the cost of WP A projects. They also pay the full cost of more than a million families on direct relief, one-half the cost of old-age pensions, and two-thirds the cost of widows' pensions. So far as the local communities are concerned, this burden falls upon the small property-owner, because the real-estate tax pays the bill. And the real estate tax is already stretched to the limit.

This leaves Item 4. Examine Governor Landon's words. He says the states are to choose what work projects, if any, they will operate. He leaves himself a very definite loophole to throw the whole work program overboard and put the unemployed on the dole. He hides it in two small words - the words "if any". But he can't make his big cut in relief costs any possible way except by putting able workers on the dole.

This week in Cleveland, Candidate Landon slurringly referred to the fact that WP A is producing Tourists’ Guidebooks. His reference was to the Federal Writers’ project of WP A, under which writers and research clerks, formerly on the relief rolls, are preparing the most comprehensive catalogue of the Nation’s resources, historic shrines and beauty spots ever assembled. There will be separate books for many states and many cities. Both Mr. Landon and Mr. Hoover should be delighted to know that 550 local Chambers of Commerce and 12,000 other organizations of citizens and businessmen have enthusiastically endorsed this work.

This Writers’ Project is just one small item in a tremendous program of work for white-collar workers. I wonder if Candidate Landon meant to attack our giving of work to all white-collar people? Again he did not say. But I am sure the American people would like to know if he will refuse jobs to clerical and professional and technical people. And what about women? We employ 400,000 of them. Will he get them back on
Let's consider what WP A workers have accomplished. They are increasing the national wealth by hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars in public facilities - 5,700 parks and playgrounds, 6200 schools, 5000 other public buildings, 130,000 miles of farm-to-market roads, 5,000 sewer systems, 2,500 water systems, 550 airports. They have fed millions of hungry children and clothed other millions who had no money to buy garments.

I say to you that the workers of the WP A ought to be given a vote of thanks by the people of this country instead of being lampooned and caricatured as a bunch of slow-motion leaf-rakers. Nothing could be more truly American than the way they pitched in and fought this thing through to success.

They did it because they were given a chance. We didn't ride down jobless veterans with soldiers. We gave them food and shelter. Instead of red tape, we acted. Instead of temporizing, we took an army of young people off the highways and kept them in school. Instead of garbage, we provided work. Instead of soup lines, we kept families together in their homes. Instead of business paralysis, we now have buying-power. Instead of riots and tear-gas, we have peace and rapid recovery.

For a new man came to the White House with vision and the gift of leadership. He had the courage to place the welfare of his country above any other consideration.