Progress in Hesse
— Development during Six Months

by Dr. James R. Newman
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During my absence of nearly six months, significant developments have taken place in Hesse. I am especially impressed by the economic improvement, the popularity of public forums and educational reform.

I have visited several counties, talked with people and looked into shop windows. It is amazing to me how many more consumer goods you can buy now, compared with what you could buy when I left.

Industrial production in western Germany has reached nearly 90 percent of the 1936 level. Even last month in Hesse, nearly all branches of industry again boosted their output appreciably. I know that these are not merely figures on paper. In the shop windows I have seen a wide range of consumer goods, many of which have appeared for the first time in years. In some cases, prices appear to be fairly reasonable, while in others, too high.

The Deutsche Mark has become stronger, and the general black market appears to be approaching collapse. When I left last fall, prices were rising, and barter trade was increasing to the detriment of the Deutsche mark. This trend has been reversed. The upward spiral of prices has halted, and the Deutsche mark is stronger. People want to work for the Deutsche mark, and to put it into their savings accounts. Tobacco no longer serves as a medium of exchange.

These signs of economic recovery are also evidence that good advantage is now being taken of the substantial aid provided by the United States through ECA. German manufacturers, workers, businessmen and government officials—all who have contributed to this recovery—should be congratulated.

It is not only the improvement in the economic field that I have noted with gratification. The progress of public forum meetings, as shown by their number and by the public support they enjoy, is certainly evidence of democracy taking hold at the grass-roots level. When I am told that during March alone nearly 1,200 publics forums and such types of meetings were held in counties throughout Hesse, I realize that a truly democratic force is being established among the people of the cities, towns and community villages.

The public forum movement is showing Hessians, from all walks of life, a medium through which they exchange viewpoints on current affairs and discuss local civic questions. By making their collective wishes known they have even discovered that they can solve many local problems through public assembly.

This growing group of individuals throughout Hesse are recognizing the public forum as a democratic practice giving them the power to effect changes for the good of the community. Public forum meetings also demonstrate to the outside world that an increasing number of Germans are learning more about democratic practices. It is my hope that the public forums will continue to enjoy their rapidly increasing popularity.

I am also gratified to learn that in the field of education, the Hessian State Legislature has passed a free tuition and free textbook law. Designed to break the subtle caste system, which has so often worked against deserving students who did not belong to the right "crowd," this law represents a significant step toward a democratic system.

An educational system guaranteeing everyone equal educational opportunity is fundamental to democracy. I congratulate the members of the Hessian Legislature, the cabinet and other individuals who successfully worked to give Hesse this democratic free tuition and textbook law.

I cannot overemphasize how happy I am to learn of these encouraging developments. After the long, diffi-

Dr. James R. Newman, director OMG Hesse (left), is welcomed back to his headquarters in Wiesbaden by his deputy, Francis E. Sheehan, after six months in the US.

Children Vacation in Switzerland

The program for sending undernourished German children to Switzerland for three-month visits of recuperation continued throughout 1948. A total of 2,935 children benefited from this program, 1,320 of which were sent from Berlin.

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