

A Word With You

By ROBERT CLANCY

New York—the great cosmopolis, the rendezvous of nations, the world's market place, America's answer to London — New York is on the verge of bankruptcy.

- By every sign, wealth should be pouring in, and the city administration should be so embarrassed by its riches as to offer public services to the rest of the nation.

Instead—what? New Yorkers are taxed to the point of exasperation, and city officials must attend one crisis session after another on the city's deficits. The city's transit lines, about whose efficiency much could be said, have been running deep into the red.

After foisting a three per cent sales tax on an unwilling public last year—which does not seem to have prevented recurring financial crises—the city fathers are now planning increased taxes and some new ones which are dillies; also a hundred million dollar bond issue. Against Council President Rudolph Halley's admonition, these measures are being speeded through without public hearings. After all, what does the public know about such things?

Is this an extraordinary emergency due to some grave disaster? No; this is just to keep the city going in an ordinary way! For a while. Within the year there will be another crisis.

The city's budget is now about the size of the federal budget fifty years ago, and is still rising. All the burgeoning bureaus are howling that they need more and more. And apparently the New York taxpayer has nothing to say. Just pay.

The only sign of effective organized resistance to higher taxes seems to be on the part of the real estate lobby. It is evidently easier for the city to look elsewhere than the natural source for more revenue, rather than buck this lobby too strongly.

How much longer can this go on? Isn't it obvious that the impasse is getting closer? Very fundamental, very radical treatment is needed.

The city fathers would do much better to turn the other way and start asking the citizens what services they want the city to provide and how much they want to pay for them. They'd also do much better to turn over a lot of the overgrown bureaus and "services," fat and sluggish with graft and corruption, to private competitive business.

Of course, if citizens were to pay for what they demanded, that sounds pretty much like the public collection of land rent. Well, what's wrong with that?