

BRETTON WOODS

There is enough disagreement on the Bretton Woods proposals among the so-called experts to suggest that no one group or individual is competent to pass final judgment on these controverted schemes for rebuilding the postwar economic world.

Of these groups, for instance, which is right?

The American Bankers Association and the New York Bankers Association oppose the International Monetary Fund; independent bankers and the Philadelphia opposite numbers of the New York group favor both the Fund and the Bank of Reconstruction and Development. Economists at Duke and the University of North Carolina endorse the proposals; a similar group of economists in Eastern universities stands in opposition.

If the truth be known, few laymen are qualified to testify one way or the other. Few laymen (and not too many economists, for that matter) understand "money" in all its ramifications. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the Bretton Woods proposals are difficult for the average person to comprehend.

But the larger part of the work at Bretton Woods, certainly, must be taken in good faith. The word of our government, to be countersigned in law by Congress, stands back of these engagements entered into by forty-four nations last year.

As discussed somewhat inexpertly in these columns, the proposals have distinct application to the future welfare of the South. For the South is always interested in matters which, in principle at least, are designed to stimulate foreign trade.

The Southern Council on International Relations sets forth in an appeal for public support of the Bretton Woods proposals:

Cotton and tobacco exports have always been large, and many other products of the South find their outlets in foreign markets. If we are to have a prosperous South in the postwar period, a substantial amount of its products will have to be sold abroad. The two proposed institutions provide the complementary financial channels through which a larger volume of world trade can be financed in a mutually advantageous manner.

The enabling legislation pending before Congress doubtless can be improved upon.

The Bretton Woods agreements are not to be taken as the summum bonum of international economic arrangements. But they do have the approval of our own government and they have been cosigned in apparent good faith by 43 other nations. The burden of proof must rest with those who can demonstrate a better system at once acceptable to the rest of the world.