By Edgar K. Sver

For Lehman personally, as well as for the public, his four-term, ten-year tenure as governor of New York was a Golden Age. By contrast with his present job, the strain was greater, he says. For nine out of his ten years, he had to deal with a hostile Republican legislature, but the legislative achievement then was more tangible. As Governor, he got prime credit for what the A.F. of L.'s George Meany has called "the greatest code of social legislation ever enacted by any state." On the other hand, as Senator, he can point to only two distinctively Lehman measures—an India aid bill enacted in 1951 despite the non-cooperation of Acheson's State Department, and a displaced-persons act. But his main concern, the revision of the McCarran-Walter Act, is still remote. At bottom, his technique today is the same as before, namely, "to hammer away on the same theme on every occasion." Only the times and circumstances have changed, he says. "In normal [New Deal] times, the governor of New York is a more important figure than the Senator. But today I think it is the other way around."

Lehman's ordeal began the day he left Albany. In 1942, after applying to the White House for war service, President Roosevelt assigned him to the State Department to plan and organize a worldwide refugee program. Here, characteristically, he set goals for himself which later, as Director General of UNRRA, he couldn't achieve. Compared to Herbert Hoover, who was boomed for the Presidency from a much more modest relief job in World War I, Lehman has been slighted. Yet, where an estimated 23,000,000 civilians died in Hoover's time, under Lehman's admittedly imperfect UNRRA the civilian death rate was negligible. Ironically, one reason for this is that most of the lives it saved were in the Soviet Ukraine and Poland. Among the advocates of toughness, this life-saving looks like an act of softness. However, Lehman does not regret it; because of it, he says, we have won many warm friends in those areas.

Lehman's recent attack on Dulles for his "evasive" handling of the treaty with Chiang Kai-shek was the echo of the bitter 1949 Senatorial campaign in which Lehman briefly retired Dulles to private life. During that campaign, Dulles openly claimed what the Vice-President is now claiming for himself—that he was "the most formidable single opponent that the Russians have." Highly damaging to this pretension, however, was an inadvertent remark he made to an upstate audience: "If you could see the kind of people in New York City making up this bloc that is voting for my opponent, if you could see them with your own eyes, you would be out, every last man and woman of you, voting on Election Day." To be sure, the "bloc" he referred to was not the relatively respectable Tammany Hall, but the nearly half-million voters of the Communist-dominated American Labor Party. Nevertheless, the shabbiness behind this Freudian slip was unmistakable. Not only did Lehman successfully exploit it in that campaign, but he still thinks about it sometimes as he probes the Dulles foreign policy.

Lehman's Washington office is a Mecca for Zionists, Negro leaders, and the foreign born—that is to say, for all those groups and individuals who can look nowhere else for a champion. Add their grievances to those of his 16,000,000 regular constituents of New York State, and you have the busiest office in Washington. He processes his daily 800 letters and postcards and his thirty or forty visitors, he employs a staff which includes sixteen more assistants than the allotted twelve, and which costs him an estimated $75,000 annually out of his own pocket. For his legislative work, he leans heavily on Julius C. C. Edelstein, a former wire-service reporter and White House aide, who was recommended to him by the old New Dealer, Benjamin V. Cohen. Despite the extremely able Edelstein and the others, enough of the burden remains to keep the Senator busy daily from 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. plus a few hours on Sunday. Moreover his New Deal friends still complain that he is working too much and covering too wide a range, with the result that he is "spreading himself too thin."