

This dissertation has been 62-3797
microfilmed exactly as received

WALKER, Forrest Anderson, 1929-
THE CIVIL WORKS ADMINISTRATION: AN
EXPERIMENT IN FEDERAL WORK RELIEF,
1933-1934.

The University of Oklahoma, Ph.D., 1962
History, modern

University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan

Copyright by

FORREST ANDERSON WALKER

1962

THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE CIVIL WORKS ADMINISTRATION: AN EXPERIMENT
IN FEDERAL WORK RELIEF, 1933-1934

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY
FORREST ANDERSON WALKER
Norman, Oklahoma
1962

THE CIVIL WORKS ADMINISTRATION: AN EXPERIMENT
IN FEDERAL WORK RELIEF, 1933-1934

APPROVED BY

Robert C. Rife

John D. Ezell

Rufus L. Hall Jr.

Herbert J. Ellison

W. L. Woodward

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

PREFACE

The Works Progress Administration, Public Works Administration, Tennessee Valley Authority, Civilian Conservation Corps, and Agricultural Adjustment Administration are only a few of the many New Deal agencies that are well known to students of recent American history. Much has been said and written about them, both in praise and condemnation. Each has its interesting history, revealing various aspects of the Roosevelt era. The Civil Works Administration, commonly known as the CWA, has been, however, largely overlooked by many writers on the Great Depression. Neglect of this early New Deal enterprise is understandable, for it existed only four and a half months, and, although nearly a billion dollars were spent in its short operational period, it was soon dwarfed by the expenses and achievements of ensuing New Deal measures. Nevertheless the CWA merits a closer analysis than is usually given to it. A bold experiment, it was the first attempt by the federal government to give work to the unemployed instead of aiding the states in the problem of relief. It served as a precedent for later and larger federally sponsored work programs. A closer study of its objectives, as well as its shortcomings and successes, is

worthwhile for the insight afforded into many aspects of the domestic policies of Franklin Roosevelt.

The writer wishes to thank his supervisor, Dr. Gilbert C. Fite, for his constant encouragement and suggestions. Thanks are also expressed to the members of his committee who read the dissertation and made suggestions for its improvement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	iii
Chapter	
I. BACKGROUND	1
II. ESTABLISHMENT	38
III. ORGANIZATION	64
IV. LABOR	89
V. PROJECTS	120
VI. SLINGS AND ARROWS	153
VII. CURTAILMENT	192
VIII. CONCLUSIONS	224
BIBLIOGRAPHY	245

THE CIVIL WORKS ADMINISTRATION: AN EXPERIMENT
IN FEDERAL WORK RELIEF, 1933-1934

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

Establishment of the CWA

A cold front which had descended from Canada to the Great Lakes reached New York on November 15, 1933, and continued unabated through the northeastern section of the United States. Although the snowfall was confined to a light flurry in New York City, the temperature dipped to fifteen degrees and the weather bureau stated that it was the coldest November 15th ever recorded in that city. In Washington, D. C., the thermometer plunged on the same day to twenty-two.¹ Although only the middle of November, it was apparent that winter weather would come early that year.

Snow and icy winds were not the only problems facing the nation that autumn. The United States was about to experience the fourth winter of the Great Depression. By November, 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt had been president

¹New York Times, November 16, 1933, p. 1. Washington Post, November 15, 1933, p. 1.

eight months, but for millions of Americans "happy days" were not here again. The optimism of the President, the recent creation of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, the Civilian Conservation Corps, and the National Recovery Act, as well as the enactment of banking reform laws, had given business a mild stimulant in the summer of that year, but the economic upswing was only temporary. As the thermometer began to fall, so did the indexes of business activities. To many, the early cold wave was very likely an ominous sign of another winter of increased unemployment, hunger, and cold.

On that same cold November 15th over a thousand local, state, and federal officials met in the ballroom of the Mayflower Hotel in the nation's capital to consider a new program for victims of the depression. This meeting marked the official inauguration of the Civil Works Administration. The objective of putting four million people to work within a period of a month was revealed by Harry L. Hopkins, Federal Emergency Relief Administrator and recently appointed Civil Works Administrator. The new program was the first attempted by the federal government specifically to provide work for the unemployed.

Federal Relief Before 1929

Although the establishment of the CWA was the first endeavor by the national government to sponsor a work relief program, the history of assistance dates back to the early

period of American history. Examples of federal help to veterans and educational foundations can be found to pre-date the Constitution. Aid to specific groups of people in distress began in 1803. On February 19th of that year Congress gave assistance to the "sufferers from fire" of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, by extending time within which to discharge bonds given for custom duties. In March, 1804, Congress made a similar extension of time to the citizens of Norfolk, Virginia, who had likewise suffered from a devastating conflagration. In 1815 the persons who had sustained property damages as a result of the earthquake in New Madrid, Missouri Territory, were awarded public land as compensation for their loss. And in January, 1827, Congress allotted \$20,000 to the victims of a fire at Alexandria, Virginia. This was the first monetary aid to the distressed given by the national government.

Between 1803 and 1932, Congress passed 112 acts which rendered help by grants, loans, or by special concessions in the form of limited extensions of time for payment of internal revenue taxes. Allocation of public lands or the issuing of tents, food, clothing, or seed to destitute farmers also occurred.²

²U. S., Congress, Senate, Subcommittee of the Committee on Manufactures, Hearings on S. 5125, Federal Aid for Unemployment Relief, 72nd Cong., 2d Sess., 1933, Part 2, pp. 548-53. A table entitled "Relief Legislation, 1803 to 1931 . . ." appears on these pages. Cited hereafter as Senate Subcommittee of Committee on Manufactures, Hearings on Federal Aid for Unemployment Relief, 1933.

Before the depression of the 1930's, however, there was no established and regular policy for giving relief. A proposed sum of \$30,000 for distribution of seed among farmers who had suffered from the ravages of grasshoppers during the 1880's was vetoed by President Grover Cleveland. In his veto message, Cleveland acknowledged the plight of the stricken farmers, but asserted that such benefits would be "indulging a benevolent and charitable sentiment through the appropriation of public funds."³

Not only did the national government render relief to victims of disaster, it also awarded grants-in-aid to several states for the welfare of handicapped persons. In 1819, by act of Congress, the Connecticut Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb received a few acres of land. Seven years later a Kentucky school for the deaf also received a small tract.⁴ Nevertheless, as in the case of aid to sufferers of catastrophe, no general practice was established. In 1820 Congress refused a request for relief by the New York Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb.⁵ In 1848 Dorothea Dix began lobbying in behalf of federal land grants to enable states to care for the insane. A bill incorporating her requests

³U. S., Congressional Record, 49th Cong., 2d Sess., 1887, XVIII, Part 2, pp. 1875-76.

⁴U. S., Statutes at Large, VI, pp. 222 and 224.

⁵Edith Abbott, Public Assistance, Vol. I: American Principles and Policies, in Five Parts: with Select Documents (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1940), p. 646.

was passed, but it was vetoed by President Franklin Pierce.

In his message to Congress, Pierce stated:

Whatever considerations dictate sympathy for this particular object, apply, in like manner, if not in the same degree, to idiotcy [sic], to physical disease, to extreme destitution. If Congress may and ought to provide for any one of these objects, it may and ought to provide for them all.⁶

Such action by Congress, Pierce feared, would cause the states to surrender to the national government their constitutional obligation to care for the social wants of their citizens.

There were, thus, examples to be found of federal aid before 1930. Generally speaking, however, before that date it was the universal consensus that it should be the duty and function of the states to provide for the relief of the destitute and welfare of the handicapped. In reference to the poor, county and other local governments were traditionally the agencies for care of these unfortunates.

The system and practice of poor relief was transported from Elizabethan England to the English colonies of North America. For example, Virginia as early as 1641 invested her parishes with the responsibility of caring for paupers and the unemployed, and it was not until 1785 that the State designated the county unit to care for indigents. The idea of community obligation was conveyed by settlers to the frontier. In 1790 the Northwest Territory adopted a

⁶U. S., Congressional Globe, 33rd Cong., 1st Sess., 1854, XXVIII, Part 2, p. 1061.

similar procedure of caring for the poor, and in 1815 the Territory of Missouri passed a law which likewise made local units responsible for relief.⁷ A similar custom was espoused by other territories and states and, in fact, became the universal practice in all portions of the United States. Local responsibility blended harmoniously with the American ideal of individualism.

A form of community aid, in use as early as 1857, was work relief. In that year Mayor Fernando Wood of New York City proposed the issuance of public construction bonds to provide work for the unemployed. In every major depression since then, cities and towns frequently resorted to some form of public works program.⁸ It should be remembered, however, that until the 1930's such schemes to alleviate distress of the jobless were entirely the undertakings of local agencies. In the nineteenth century the national government never seriously entertained the notion of adopting a nation-wide public relief program.

Federal aid to the destitute, however, was at least debated in the last decade of the nineteenth century as a result of the Panic of 1893. On October 6th of that year a Populist Senator, William Peffer of Kansas, introduced a

⁷Josephine C. Brown, Public Relief: 1929-1939 (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1940), p. 5.

⁸Don D. Lescohier, Working Conditions, Vol. III of History of Labor in the United States, 1896-1932, ed. John R. Commons (4 vols.; New York: Macmillan Co., 1935), pp. 169-70.

bill in the Senate to enable the federal government to employ labor for the purpose of restoring prosperity. Senator Peffer himself did not view this measure with any degree of seriousness. ". . . I do not regard its provisions as practicable or even desirable at this time," he remarked, "but a number of gentlemen . . . regard it as very important that the committee on Finance should consider it." The Peffer Bill, S. 1050, was read twice by its title and referred to the Committee on Finance, where it quietly died.⁹

One of the more outspoken advocates of federal assistance for the unemployed was Jacob Coxey of Massillon, Ohio. "General" Coxey, with a motley army of jobless men, descended on Washington in the spring of 1894. Before he could read his address from the Capitol steps, as he had planned, he was arrested for walking on the grass. Populist Senator William V. Allen of Nebraska, who confessed that he had no sympathy for the Coxey movement, insisted nevertheless that Coxey had the right to be heard and that the address must be placed in the Congressional Record.

General Coxey wrote:

We are here to petition for legislation which will furnish employment for every man able and willing to work; for legislation which will bring universal prosperity and emancipate our beloved country from financial bondage to the descendants of King George. We have come to the only source which is competent to aid the people in

⁹U. S., Congressional Record, 53rd Cong., 1st Sess., 1893, XXV, Part 2, p. 2184.

their day of dire distress. We are here to tell our Representatives, who hold their seats by grace of our ballots, that the struggle for existence has become too fierce and relentless. We come and throw up our defenseless hands, and say, help, or we and our loved ones must perish.¹⁰

Coxey's band was not the only one which attempted to move on Washington in the critical spring of 1894. Lewis C. Fry of Los Angeles, with nearly 1,000 men, left California in March and headed for the nation's capitol, but only half of his group ultimately reached its destination. In Montana a ragged army of 500, comprised mostly of jobless miners, dramatically stormed a roundhouse at Butte, Montana, and captured a locomotive for the purpose of traveling to Washington. Their endeavors were quashed by a detachment of Army infantry. Charles Kelly, leader of a destitute group of 1,500 from San Francisco, likewise attempted to reach Washington but was plagued with such vicissitudes while on the way that by the time he reached Ohio his followers had completely disbanded. The practice of "marching on Washington" reached a crescendo by the summer of 1894.¹¹ But this action had no effect on Congress.

As late as 1897, Ben O. Flowers, editor of The Arena and ardent spokesman for federal aid for the unemployed, made the following statement:

¹⁰ Ibid., 53rd Cong., 2d Sess., 1894, Part 5, pp. 4511-12.

¹¹ Harold U. Faulkner, Politics, Reform, and Expansion: 1890-1900 (New York: Harper & Bros., 1959), pp. 167-68.

A few years ago, when I wrote a brief paper on the menace of the unemployed, I was assured that the deplorable condition then present was temporary, that in a few months at most it would be a thing of the past, and that therefore it was not a problem calling for the intervention of the government; but today there are far more unemployed than there were then.

While almost unlimited sums can be raised for the building of battleships, we have not a dollar to aid honest industry to maintain self-respecting manhood by engaging in works which would add immensely to the real wealth of the nation.¹²

Flower, Coxey, and other outspoken advocates of public works at federal expense were inflationists; they favored the issuing of paper money for the purpose of financing such enterprises. The editor of The Arena went on to suggest that ". . . bonds on the land to be reclaimed be issued to the amount of the national notes used for these great works in redeeming the now useless land. The bonds issued against these lands could be cancelled as the lands were sold."¹³ This idea was basically in harmony with Coxey's earlier proposal that the Treasury of the United States issue \$500,000,000 in legal tender notes to be used for the construction of roads throughout the country. Flower, however, was in this instance primarily interested in developing public reclamation projects on otherwise useless land.

¹²Ben O. Flower, "How to Increase National Wealth by the Employment of Paralyzed Industry," The Arena, XVIII (August, 1897), p. 207.

¹³Ibid., p. 208.

In the 1890's organized labor was not in the forefront of the fight for government-sponsored relief. Unions during this period were more interested in acquiring a shorter work day. Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor stated in his presidential address in 1893: "The only method by which a practical, just and safe equilibrium can be maintained in the industrial world for the fast and ever increasing introduction of machinery, is a commensurate reduction of the hours of labor."¹⁴ Gompers and other labor leaders assumed that the unemployment problem could be mitigated by reducing the daily working hours. Although at their convention of 1893 the American Federation of Labor did go on record as favoring Coxey's Good Roads Bill, the union made no concerted effort to push this means of alleviating the plight of the unemployed. George W. Perkins, president of the Cigar Maker's International Union, asserted in 1900: "It is a positive and absolute necessity that the hours of labor be curtailed to that point where all men have an opportunity to work. That is, chiefly and primarily, the object of shortening the hours of labor, to give opportunity to work."¹⁵ Labor's position was challenged by Professor John R. Commons who in 1900 told the Industrial Commission that a reduction of hours would be no solution

¹⁴Lescohier, Working Conditions, p. 122.

¹⁵Ibid.

to the employment problem.¹⁶ Such criticism had little effect on labor leaders of that day.

In the twentieth century there was less interest in bimetallism and fewer attempts to march on Washington by armies of the unemployed. Renewed prosperity by the turn of the century doubtlessly discouraged or rendered unnecessary such extreme action. There was, however, a gradually increased interest by the federal government in the welfare of the workingman. The Report of the Industrial Commission of 1900 contained testimony by fourteen business and labor leaders concerning unemployment, a fact which reveals that by the turn of the century the government had begun to devote some consideration to the problem.¹⁷ In 1903 the Department of Commerce and Labor was created and given cabinet status. In 1913 it was divided into two separate units: the Department of Labor and the Department of Commerce. At the same time there was some indication that the leaders of organized labor had begun to view the employment problem somewhat differently. In 1902 Gompers wrote an article for The Federationist in which he outlined a plan for work relief closely resembling the salient features

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷U. S., Industrial Commission, Report of the Industrial Commission of the Relations and Conditions of Capital and Labor Employed in Manufactures and General Business, Including Testimony So Far Taken (November 1, 1900), and Digest of Testimony, Vol VII (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1901), pp. 174-801.

of the Civil Works Administration thirty-one years later.¹⁸

With the advent of the brief depression of 1914-1915, during the administration of Woodrow Wilson, there again occurred a moderate amount of interest in launching public relief programs. In May of 1914 "General" Coxey was again on the march to Washington demanding that Congress establish an employment program. According to the New York Times, "an asthmatic bugle and rattle of army drums announced the approach of the army." This time his band numbered only nine. Coxey, who was not molested by the police, was thus finally able to make his speech on the steps of the Capitol, but the crowd that gathered was mostly curiosity seekers. The address drew little attention. The New York Times account was tucked away on page sixteen.¹⁹

Another veteran of the hard times of the 1890's, Charles T. Kelley, also organized a return descent upon Washington. He was arrested and subsequently gave up his objective. It is interesting to note that the Socialists and leaders of the International Workers of the World, instead of marching on Washington, began organizing marches

¹⁸Harry L. Hopkins, Spending to Save: The Complete History of Relief (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1936), p. 116. See below, pp. 45-46.

¹⁹New York Times, May 22, 1914, p. 16.

on city governments.²⁰ Apparently, not even all the so-called radicals of the day regarded relief as a responsibility of the national government.

A characteristic measure used to meet unemployment during this relatively brief depression was an increased reliance on private agencies to stimulate exchange of ideas and information on a nation-wide scale. Concerted efforts were made to aid and direct the activities of local agencies, especially those concerned with publicity and statistical studies. As a means of developing better programs for regulating industry and public works, the American Association for Labor Legislation compiled unemployment data obtained from 115 urban areas.²¹ The federal government during this period became increasingly interested in collecting unemployment data and distributing it to employment agencies throughout the United States. The Department of Labor reported in January of 1916 that between May and December, 1915, 110,500 applications for work were received and 41,000 places of employment offered. Of the number of applicants, 37,000 found jobs through the services of the Labor Department.²² Nevertheless, it was not until January,

²⁰Leah H. Feder, Unemployment Relief in Periods of Depression: A Study of Measures Adopted in Certain American Cities, 1857 through 1922 (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1936), p. 224.

²¹Ibid., p. 231.

²²New York Times, January 17, 1916, p. 5.

1918, when the depression had already ended, that the Federal Employment Service was created as a bureau of the Labor Department.²³

As in earlier depressions no steps were taken in 1914-1915 to secure federal aid. Relief was still considered a duty of local agencies. There were, however, a few articles in magazines such as the New Republic which carried on the spirit of Ben Flowers, advocating various schemes for federal public works programs.²⁴ But none of these suggestions received serious public consideration.

The post-World War I depression, which began in the fall of 1920 and ended in 1922, was more severe. In many larger urban areas, as a result of the migration of both Negroes and whites to the industrial centers of the Northeast and Midwest, unemployment became especially acute. The amount of city relief and public works during the winter of 1921-1922 exceeded all previously recorded.²⁵ In September, 1921, Warren G. Harding called the President's Conference on Unemployment for the purpose of encouraging a concerted, nation-wide effort to analyze the effect of

²³Feder, Unemployment Relief in Periods of Depression, p. 276.

²⁴"Federal Use of the Unemployed," New Republic, II (April 10, 1915), pp. 250-51. F. A. Kellor, "Out of Work: A Study of Unemployment," ibid. (April 17, 1915), pp. 12-13. F. A. Kellor, "Salvaging the Unemployable," ibid., IV (October 2, 1915), pp. 221-23.

²⁵Lescohier, Working Conditions, p. 221.

the economic crisis and to discuss what action should be taken to mitigate it. The President selected Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover as chairman and Colonel Arthur Woods, former New York City police commissioner and more recently Assistant Secretary of War, as assistant chairman. This was the first meeting ever called by the national government which was devoted to the problem of unemployment. It shortly became evident that the conference would shun the idea of possible federal assistance. Rather, the delegates clung to the traditional belief that relief must be administered by local authorities and that the task of recovery must be handled by private initiative and individual enterprise. The delegates were predominantly businessmen. Leaders from other fields, including social workers and representatives of labor unions, had no voting privileges, and their recommendations apparently had little influence on the results.²⁶ In an address to the group, Harding declared:

I would have little enthusiasm for any proposed relief which seeks either palliation or tonic from the public treasury. The excess of stimulation from that source is to be reckoned a cause of trouble rather than a source of cure. We should achieve but little in a remedial way if we continued to excite a contributing cause.²⁷

The prevailing spirit of the meeting was in harmony with Harding's point of view. Nevertheless, although the

²⁶Feder, Unemployment Relief in Periods of Depression, p. 296. Lescohier, Working Conditions, p. 134.

²⁷New York Times, September 27, 1921, pp. 1 and 13.

meeting did not advocate the use of federal aid for the unemployed, it served to focus attention on the existence of this perplexing problem and to suggest possible involvement by the federal government.

The Harding Administration appointed a number of national committees to carry out the recommendations of the 1921 conference. One such organization was the Committee on Civil and Emergency Work which was established as a clearing house for local relief activities and which was to advise and encourage city governments to tackle the unemployment problem.²⁸

During the mid-1920's Secretary of Commerce Hoover sought to regulate public works. He believed they should be resorted to primarily in times of economic slump. Governmental divisions were discouraged from initiating new work in periods of prosperity. In 1928 a bill was introduced to stabilize public works along the lines of Hoover's plan.²⁹ This proposal, known as the Jones Bill, did not receive sufficient support and was never enacted. It was not until February, 1931, with the passage of the Wagner Act establishing the United States Employment Stabilization Board, that regulatory measures were adopted by the federal government.³⁰

²⁸Lescohier, Working Conditions, p. 137.

²⁹U. S., Congressional Record, 70th Cong., 1st Sess., 1928, LXXI, Part 2, p. 1299.

³⁰New York Times, February 11, 1931, p. 12.

Although not directly related to the question of unemployment, several laws which provided aid for distressed persons were also passed by Congress in the 1920's. As early as 1921 the Sheppard-Towner Act, providing \$900,000 for maternity and infant hygiene care, was enacted. In 1929 it was allowed to expire. Notwithstanding its short duration, the Sheppard-Towner Law was noteworthy as a clear instance of federal activity in the field of public relief before the Great Depression. Furthermore during the 1920's Congress also passed seven measures which provided sums totaling \$4,512,253 for the purpose of supplying seed loans to drought-stricken farmers and two flood relief acts which together amounted to \$9,000,000.³¹

Despite the apparent prosperity of the 1920's, expenditures by cities for relief remained astonishingly high.³² The public still generally opposed assistance by the federal government or even by the state. Archaic relief laws continued to be the only statutes on such matters.

In summary it may be stated that before the 1930's neither federal nor state governments had accepted any lasting obligation to provide relief to the poor. There

³¹Senate Subcommittee of Committee on Manufactures, Hearings on Federal Aid for Unemployment Relief, 1933, Part 2, pp. 550-51.

³²Ralph Hurlin, "The Mounting Bill for Relief," Survey, LVIII (November 15, 1926), p. 207.

were, however, indications of a growing recognition of the problem. State and federal agencies were established to provide data and in some cases advice. The federal government had instituted some limited aid such as that provided by the Sheppard-Towner Act, by regulating public works, and by continued Congressional appropriation of special aid to disaster areas and to such specific groups as farmers.

Federal Relief During Hoover's Administration

At the outbreak of the depression in 1929 care of the unemployed was basically the same as it had been since the Elizabethan Era. State laws referring to relief had such titles as "poor relief," "care of the indigent," "support of the poor," "pauper laws," and other similar nomenclature. In thirty-three of the states, counties were still responsible for care of the needy, while in the remaining fifteen states the townships, cities, or villages were in charge.³³ In the wake of the crash of 1929, the burden of relief became overwhelming. A new attitude and approach was urgently needed.

Early in November, 1929, President Hoover consulted with the leaders of American business in a series of White House conferences. Hoover stressed his concern that the collapse of the stock market might possibly generate a descending economic spiral and urged the assembled leaders

³³Lescohier, Working Conditions, p. 224.

to make renewed and voluntary efforts to stabilize production and employment.³⁴ Throughout the conference there was no hint that the national government would or even should help fight the depression by direct relief or increased public works. Hoover continuously expounded the thesis that the burden of responsibility must rest with individual initiative, local government, and private agencies.

Aside from attempting to goad business leaders into a more benevolent policy, Hoover was reluctant to allow federal aid to be used. Yet the economic conditions throughout the United States continued to deteriorate. According to a census taken by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, approximately 4,500,000 to 5,000,000 persons were out of work in April, 1930.³⁵

To carry out his ideas, Hoover created in October, 1930 the President's Committee for Employment and named Arthur Woods, who had served with Hoover in the unemployment conference of 1921, as chairman.³⁶ It was shortly evident that the President had no intention of letting this committee function as an opening wedge for federal aid. In referring to demands for an extra session of Congress as well as to the newly created "Woods Committee," Hoover asserted:

³⁴New York Times, November 10, 1929, p. 1.

³⁵Hopkins, Spending to Save, p. 25.

³⁶New York Times, October 22, 1930, p. 1.

No special session is necessary to deal with employment. The sense of voluntary organization and community spirit in the American people has not vanished. The spirit of voluntary service has been strong enough to cope with the problem for the past year and it will. I am confident, continue to full measure of the need.³⁷

The actual purpose of the President's Committee for Employment was to supplement and bolster the efforts of states and communities to meet the emergency. Part of its duty was to advise the President on the nature and scope of unemployment. The Committee favored a large federal works program, and Colonel Woods informed Hoover personally that he believed a \$2,000,000,000 appropriation for public construction should be approved by Congress.³⁸ Such a gigantic undertaking was not acceptable to the Administration. Yet in his annual address to Congress on December 2, 1930, Hoover did request a moderate public works program costing \$150,000,000. At the same time, he emphatically reiterated his conviction that the depression was temporary and warned against fiscal commitments of longer than six months. He elaborated on the causes of the depression and the economic conditions prevalent in the United States, stating his firm belief that the nation's economic vitality was unimpaired and that the depression was attributable to chronic

³⁷Ibid., October 18, 1930, p. 1.

³⁸Brown, Public Relief: 1929-1939, p. 15. Lescohier, Working Conditions, p. 158. E. P. Hayes, Activities of the President's Emergency Committee for Employment, 1930-1931 (Concord: The Rumford Press, 1936), p. 54. Hopkins, Spending to Save, p. 25.

world-wide problems of overproduction and foreign political vicissitudes.³⁹

Although Hoover still maintained his earlier ideas, his December message indicated that he had at last recognized the need for at least limited federal action. From the beginning of December, 1930, the harassed President began reluctantly to approve moderate relief programs. This did not mean that he had altered his fundamental concept of the duties of federal, state, and local governments, his explanation of the depression, or his ideas on the economic order. In the face of continuing economic malaise, Hoover, a man with a rigidly consistent point of view, found it necessary to resort to measures which he did not like. He was deeply fearful that reliance on the federal government would in the long run bring harm to the United States.

At five minutes past midnight on Sunday, December 21, 1930, Congress adjourned after having passed a \$116,000,000 emergency construction bill. A few days earlier it had approved a \$45,000,000 relief bill for needy farmers in areas of drought, and an additional \$150,000,000 for use of the Farm Board.⁴⁰ The bills were promptly signed by the President. Thus by the end of 1930, the federal government had taken several moderate steps to

³⁹New York Times, December 3, 1930, p. 1.

⁴⁰Ibid., December 21, 1930, p. 1.

counteract the emergency. This did not, of course, signify a sharp point of departure from the earlier views of either the President or the large portion of the American people. Not only Hoover, but a substantial number of his countrymen as well, still adhered to sixteenth-century ideas on charity. An editorial in the New York Times on January 24, 1931, asserted that the "voluntary spirit" was an established tradition and that national relief should therefore be administered only by the Red Cross or the people themselves.⁴¹

An interesting sidenote on the times was the abortive attempt by Jacob Coxey to stage a third march on Washington in the fall of 1930. On November 25th the venerable Coxey issued a call in New York City for volunteers. Perhaps because of the cold winds or a general lack of confidence in Coxey's methods, none of the expected followers appeared in Columbus Circle for the march on the Capitol.⁴²

In the meantime the states began taking action to aid local governments and private agencies in administering relief. Although before the Great Depression the states had not provided assistance to the unemployed, many had in a moderate degree rendered aid to the blind, the aged, veterans, and widows with children. By February, 1931,

⁴¹Ibid., January 24, 1931, p. 8.

⁴²Ibid., November 26, 1930, p. 4.

thirty-four states had established committees on unemployment, and by December, 1933, every state had such an agency. Many of these were ineffective while others eventually evolved into efficient organizations. New York, the first state to provide specific financial means for relief, established an Emergency Relief Administration in September, 1931, and appropriated \$20,000,000 for its use up to June 1, 1932. By that date, three additional states had begun providing funds for relief within their own boundaries. In the following twelve months, seven more states took action and by June, 1933, a total of thirty-three gave at least some financial help to the unemployed.⁴³

During January, 1931, Congress defeated an attempt to give \$25,000,000 to the Red Cross for drought and unemployment relief. In April, 1931, Hoover declared the drought to be at an end. Yet in the ensuing months the nation experienced a continued plunge into the economic doldrums.⁴⁴ By December, 1931, the National Industrial Conference Board estimated that 10,500,000 workers were out of a job.⁴⁵ To meet the crisis, Hoover established

⁴³Lescohier, Working Conditions, p. 230. Edward A. Williams, Federal Aid for Relief (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), p. 19. Federal Emergency Relief Administration, Monthly Report of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, December, 1933 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1933), pp. 1-5. Henceforth these documents will be cited as FERA Report, month, year.

⁴⁴Hopkins, Spending to Save, pp. 36-37.

⁴⁵Williams, Federal Aid for Relief, p. 19.

the President's Organization on Unemployment Relief on August 19, 1931, and named as head Walter S. Gifford, president of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company.⁴⁶

The purpose of the new committee was to mobilize national, state, and local relief and recovery agencies in a concerted effort of renewed, vigorous action. Again it was not the intention of the Administration to employ federal funds for the struggle. The President's Committee for Employment, which had been under the direction of Arthur Woods until he resigned from active participation in April, 1931, and later under Fred C. Croxton, became incorporated into the new, so-called "Gifford Committee."⁴⁷

There existed little difference between the Woods and Gifford committees. Both opposed federal financial aid and favored local and state responsibility. Because it came on the scene earlier, however, the President's Committee for Employment devised methods for increasing jobs while the Gifford Committee, established nearly a year later, placed its chief emphasis on goading local government and private relief agencies into aiding as many distressed persons as possible.⁴⁸ It vigorously backed the Red Cross and Community Chest drives. The Committee on

⁴⁶New York Times, August 21, 1931, p. 1.

⁴⁷Williams, Federal Aid for Relief, p. 30. Colonel Woods continued as an unofficial advisor after his resignation.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 31.

Mobilization of Relief Resources, a subsidiary of the Gifford Committee, conducted a national drive for contributions to private and public community agencies. Thirty-five thousand billboards in over 17,000 cities and towns proclaimed "Of Course We Can Do It!" Benefit football games were staged and motion pictures shown with the proceeds going for local relief purposes. The drives to encourage support of local relief organizations resembled wartime bond drives in 1917 and 1918.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, neither these endeavors nor the earlier efforts of the national administration were able to engender sufficient local support for the care of the unemployed.⁵⁰

State and local governments, according to the Russell Sage Foundation, had become less and less able to cope with the problem. In a survey of eighty-one cities, the Foundation found that only 28 per cent of the relief load was handled by private funds while the remaining 72 per cent came from local tax sources.⁵¹ Gross total debts of local governments, which had been \$8,689,740,000 in 1922, had jumped to a staggering \$17,589,515,000 in 1932.⁵² States,

⁴⁹Hopkins, Spending to Save, p. 62. Williams, Federal Aid for Relief, p. 31.

⁵⁰Senate Subcommittee of Committee on Manufactures, Hearings on Federal Aid for Unemployment Relief, 1933, Part I, p. 132.

⁵¹Hopkins, Spending to Save, p. 53.

⁵²U. S., Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1934 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1934), p. 207.

as well as communities, were finding it increasingly difficult to finance the growing burden.⁵³

Demands for direct federal funds became louder and more frequent in 1931. In August, Senator James Couzens of Michigan sharply condemned the Administration's relief policy and demanded federal financial aid for the unemployed. "We've played ostrich long enough," he declared. "Families cannot be allowed to starve and Red Cross and community funds will be insufficient. . . ." ⁵⁴

The divergent views of President Hoover and New York Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt were vividly paralleled at the ceremony in memory of Clara Barton at Dansville, New York, on September 9, 1931. The President, in a radio address from Washington which was amplified to the 10,000 people gathered for the ceremony, reaffirmed his confidence in the ability of local and individual initiative to care for the destitute. Governor Roosevelt, while likewise endorsing state and community responsibility, declared that the national government must assume more of the burden.⁵⁵

Among the members of Congress, Senator Couzens was not the only outspoken advocate of federal aid. On December

⁵³Senate Subcommittee of Committee on Manufactures, Hearings on Federal Aid for Unemployment Relief, 1933, Part I, pp. 216-41.

⁵⁴New York Times, August 5, 1931, p. 20.

⁵⁵Ibid., September 10, 1931, p. 1.

14, 1931, Senator Robert Wagner of New York introduced a resolution requesting a public works program which would cost \$2,000,000,000.⁵⁶ On the following day, Senator Hugo Black of Alabama proposed another plan calling for a \$1,000,000,000 works program.⁵⁷ Both resolutions were tabled. In the same month Senator Edward Costigan introduced a bill to set up a fund of \$400,000,000 to be given to the states as grants for relief activities.⁵⁸ Senator Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin presented two separate measures which, like the Costigan Bill, would have provided financial aid to state relief programs.⁵⁹ These proposals suffered the same fate as those introduced by Black and Wagner.

Demands for federal aid continued to increase in the winter of 1931-1932 and in the following spring and summer. The downward spiral of the Depression gained momentum and a presidential election was approaching. As a result of the growing aura of alarm, Congress passed a joint resolution which the President approved on March 7, 1932, authorizing the Federal Farm Board to release 40,000,000 bushels of wheat to the Red Cross for distribution.⁶⁰ With this

⁵⁶U. S., Congressional Record, 72nd Cong., 1st Sess., 1931, LXXV, Part 1, pp. 445-46.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 542.

⁵⁸Ibid., Part 2, p. 1997; Part 4, p. 4052.

⁵⁹Ibid., Part 1, pp. 192 and 1126.

⁶⁰New York Times, March 11, 1932, p. 2.

precedent established, Congress approved another resolution on July 5, 1932, allowing the Federal Farm Board to deliver 45,000,000 bushels of wheat to the Red Cross and to disperse 500,000 bales of cotton through the Cotton Stabilization Corporation for relief.⁶¹

While enacting the "aid-in-kind" measures, Congress also considered another means of assistance. Hearings begun before the Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Manufactures on December 28, 1931, and concluded two weeks later, clearly indicated that because of the increasing unemployment millions of citizens were in great need of public relief.⁶² On January 15, 1932, Senators LaFollette and Costigan combined their respective bills into a new one calling for an expenditure of \$375,000,000 in outright grants to the states.⁶³ Although the measure was defeated in February, the spokesmen for more federal help did not give up. After the President vetoed the Garner-Wagner Bill on July 12, the way was cleared for a compromise.⁶⁴ The result was the Wagner-Rainey Bill, signed by Hoover on

⁶¹Williams, Federal Aid for Relief, p. 542.
Hopkins, Spending to Save, p. 30.

⁶²Williams, Federal Aid for Relief, pp. 36-37.

⁶³U. S., Congressional Record, 72nd Cong., 2d Sess., 1932, LXXV, Part 2, p. 1997.

⁶⁴New York Times, January 12, 1932, p. 1. The Garner-Wagner Bill authorized loans to individuals and private corporations as well as to states and municipalities from a proposed sum of \$1,500,000,000.

July 21, 1932. Title I of the Emergency Relief and Construction Act, as it was entitled, authorized the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to loan \$300,000,000 to the states for relief purposes at 3 per cent interest. The loans could be made either to the governors or directly to cities and counties upon recommendation of the governors. Since many of the communities had already exceeded their legal borrowing power, a majority of the loans were made to the states. Another section of the Act provided an appropriation of \$1,500,000,000 for self-liquidating public works. Until the creation of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration in May, 1933, loans totaling nearly \$280,000,000 were made under the Emergency Relief and Construction Act to forty-two states and two territories. An additional \$19,600,000 was loaned to local governments within six states.⁶⁵ The Emergency Relief and Construction Act marked the entrance of the United States government into the field of unemployment relief.

By the beginning of 1933, according to testimony by Fred C. Croxton, Director of the Emergency Relief Division of the RFC, almost one-half of the \$300,000,000 provided by the Wagner-Rainey Act of 1932 already had been loaned. He further stated that little of this appropriation would be

⁶⁵U. S., Statutes at Large, XLVIII, Part 1, pp. 195-200. New York Times, July 22, 1932, p. 1. Brown, Public Relief: 1929-1939, pp. 125-26.

left by June, 1933.⁶⁶ Even before Croxton's testimony, Senator Wagner and other advocates of federal aid became convinced that more national funds would have to be provided. During the "lame duck" session of the 72nd Congress, Wagner, LaFollette, and Costigan introduced a bill to provide \$500,000,000, half of which would be made available for loans and half for outright grants to the states.⁶⁷ This proposal was not enacted, but it foreshadowed the Federal Emergency Relief Act which was passed in the first hundred days of the Roosevelt Administration.

Federal Relief from May, 1933 to November, 1933

On March 4, 1933, the day that Franklin D. Roosevelt became President, a bill providing relief assistance to the states was under debate in the Senate and in the House Committee on Banking and Currency. It passed in the Senate on March 31st, but because of a technicality it failed to receive approval by the House.⁶⁸ Almost immediately, however, an identical measure was introduced in the House and approved by that body on April 21st. This version, known as the Wagner-Lewis Bill, passed the Senate on May 1st and was signed by President Roosevelt twelve days later. It

⁶⁶Senate Subcommittee of Committee on Manufactures, Hearings on Federal Aid for Unemployment Relief, 1933, Part I, pp. 332-33.

⁶⁷U. S., Congressional Record, 72nd Cong., 2d Sess., 1933, LXXVI, Part 4, p. 4414.

⁶⁸New York Times, April 4, 1933, p. 9.

established the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and provided an appropriation of \$500,000,000 in direct aid to the states for the task of coping with the relief load. One-half of this amount was distributed to the states on a matching basis: one dollar from federal funds for every three dollars raised by the states. The remaining \$250,000,000 was to be used for outright grants to the states without any matching stipulation. By this means, states that had depleted their funds could likewise receive federal aid.⁶⁹ Under the FERA, local, state, and territorial governments still managed their own relief programs. Roosevelt, in a press release on May 13, urged local governments not to relax their duties in respect to the unemployment problem.⁷⁰

On May 22nd, Harry L. Hopkins, director of the New York State Temporary Relief Administration, became Administrator of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration.⁷¹ On the day of his appointment Hopkins was the only member of the staff. An office force and field organization had to be set up immediately. Grants were made to the states while the program was still in the process of organization. Distribution of the money was largely made in response to

⁶⁹Ibid., May 2, 1933, p. 2; May 13, 1933, p. 3.
FERA Report, May 22 through June 30, 1933, p. 2.

⁷⁰New York Times, May 13, 1933, p. 3.

⁷¹Ibid., May 20, 1933, p. 5; May 23, 1933, p. 21.

requests urgently telegraphed by governors. By August 31st grants, totaling \$150,135,478, had been made to all forty-eight states and the District of Columbia, Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.⁷² At the time the FERA was established there were nearly 4,250,000 families on relief which meant that approximately 19,000,000 people were depending upon public funds for support.⁷³

Despite the relatively generous FERA grants, nearly all relief continued to be administered by local and state governments in accordance, generally, with attitudes common to the poor laws of Elizabethan England. The purposes and functions of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration did not change this situation although, with its launching, the United States government definitely committed itself to aiding the unemployed.

Yet the Roosevelt Administration had no intention of using the FERA as an instrument for gradually relieving the states of their control over relief. At the White House Conference of June 14, 1933, the President urged better organizations within the states and warned that public works programs must not be "a lot of useless projects in

⁷²U. S., Congress, House, Subcommittee of House Committee on Appropriations, Hearings on H. R. 7257, Federal Emergency Relief and Civil Works Program, 73rd Cong., 2d Sess., 1934, p. 2. Cited hereafter as House Subcommittee of Committee on Appropriations, FERA and CWA Hearings, 1934. FERA Report, August, 1933, p. 6.

⁷³FERA Report, December, 1933, p. 1.

the disguise of relief."⁷⁴ The FERA was designed only to aid existing state and community agencies until the economic crisis could be brought under control.

The Public Works Administration was not a part of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. It was created under the provisions of Title II of the National Industrial Recovery Act which became law in June, 1933. Its purpose was to revive the economy by construction of roads and public buildings, and by other activities of a similar nature. For such endeavors it received an initial appropriation of \$3,300,000,000. Harold Ickes, who carefully and methodically managed the PWA, launched no project with the sole objective of taking up the slack in the number of unemployed. The PWA was not created primarily to give work to the unemployed but rather to prime the economic pump.⁷⁵

Yet the Administration held out hope that, besides aiding the over-all economy, the PWA would be an important factor in reducing unemployment. It was estimated that the PWA would put 1,000,000 men to work by the first of October. Hopkins on more than one occasion expressed the prevailing optimism. In September, 1933, he remarked:

The Relief Administration is planning its operations on the assumption that the recovery program is

⁷⁴New York Times, June 15, 1933, p. 8.

⁷⁵Harold L. Ickes, Back to Work: The Story of PWA (New York: Macmillan Co., 1935), p. vii.

going to work. We are therefore not making appropriations to States for more than two months at a time; we believe that no one can say what the actual needs will be sixty days hence. The encouraging decline in unemployment, we believe, will continue, and on this premise there should not be as many families on relief next winter as last.⁷⁶

Hopkins's statement is notable not only because it conveyed a belief that the slight upturn would continue, but also because it suggested a significant opposition to long-range planning.⁷⁷

Unfortunately, the PWA did not become as vital a factor in recovery as hoped. Because of Ickes's desire to guard against graft and waste, the program got off to a slow start. The Department of Labor revealed that by November only 251,851 men were working on PWA projects.⁷⁸

In addition to the inadequacy of the Public Works Administration, other Administration measures failed to sustain the recovery trend. Regardless of the launchings of the National Recovery Administration, the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, banking reform laws, and other New Deal measures, the economic upswing that had appeared so promising in mid-summer began to subside by early fall. The Department of Commerce index of manufacturing production, which reached

⁷⁶New York Times, June 17, 1933, p. 20; September 24, 1933, X, p. 2.

⁷⁷See below, pp. 220 and 242.

⁷⁸New York Times, February 20, 1934, p. 1.

102 in July, 1933, had slid to 74 by October. According to reports of the American Federation of Labor, approximately 10,076,000 persons were out of work in October, an increase of 11,000 over the September figures.⁷⁹ The Literary Digest reported that in the last week of September one-third of the economic gain between March and July had been wiped out and that business was 29 per cent below the normal seasonal average. On the stock market industrial shares had lost 20 per cent of their previous gains, rail shares had fallen 43 per cent, and utilities had dropped 65 per cent. The price of wheat, which had increased by forty-two cents per bushel between March and July, lost twenty-three cents in the ensuing recession. Similar losses occurred in other farm products during these early fall days.⁸⁰ Although human anxiety and misery cannot be measured as accurately as the number of unemployed or the price of wheat, there was evidence of increased distress. Later in the same month the Literary Digest related that 250,000 men were out on strike to the accompaniment of "shootings, bombings and the guarding of mills and mines by deputies and state police."

Every month since May has shown an increase in strikes and industrial controversies reported to the Labor Department. In consequence buying power is

⁷⁹Statistical Abstract, 1934, p. 748. New York Times, November 27, 1933, p. 25.

⁸⁰Endicott G. Rich, "The Week in Business Summarized," Literary Digest, CXVI (October 9, 1933), p. 40. Milton Eisenhower (ed.), Yearbook of Agriculture, 1935 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1935), p. 364.

diminished, production is seriously hampered and bad blood is created between employer and employee when the crisis calls for the fullest cooperation and understanding.⁸¹

In December the National Association of Manufacturers released a statement revealing that most of the strikes of 1933 had occurred in the last half of the year. The peak was reached in September with 348, but the number had declined to forty by December 16th.⁸²

In October, an FERA report stated that the relief load had again increased to a total of 3,000,000 families, which meant that approximately 13,000,000 individuals were subsisting on government handouts.⁸³ A low point had occurred the previous month when 2,995,000 families registered for relief. By October, the FERA estimated, 10 per cent of the families in the United States and 11 per cent of the total population were receiving government aid. Federal funds for assistance to the unemployed increased from \$59,273,000 in September to \$64,800,000 in October. In its November report, the FERA revealed that the total number of families on relief ranged from 2 per cent in Wyoming to 20 per cent in Oklahoma. From the middle of May, 1933, until the beginning of November, a total of \$294,609,571 was given to the states and territories by

⁸¹"Handling the Strikes that Menace Recovery," *ibid.* (October 28, 1933), p. 9.

⁸²*New York Times*, December 23, 1933, p. 4.

⁸³*FERA Report*, December, 1933, p. 13.

the federal government.⁸⁴ Yet bitterness and resentment, hopelessness and hunger still stalked the nation. The efforts of the new administration had helped, but "happy days" were not here again, nor did it seem that prosperity was "just around the corner." A new approach was needed, one that would at least be of use during the approaching winter months. In November, 1933, the United States government launched a new program which was to be known as the Civil Works Administration.

⁸⁴Ibid., November, 1933, pp. 2 and 4.

CHAPTER II

ESTABLISHMENT

On the Saturday afternoon of October 28, 1933, the football team of the University of Michigan overwhelmed the Maroons of the University of Chicago, twenty-eight to zero. The game, played in Chicago, was climaxed in the fourth quarter by a sensational pass from Michigan quarterback Bill Renner to Louis Westover, who, catching the ball over his shoulder, raced across the goal line for the final Wolverine touchdown.¹ Harry Hopkins, attending the game as a guest of the president of the University of Chicago, Robert Hutchins,² no doubt had more on his mind that fall afternoon than touchdowns. One can easily imagine that, in spite of the excitement, he was intermittently preoccupied with the grim problem of the welfare of millions of depression victims. That October had not been an encouraging month. The statistics released by the FERA alone were enough to worry the most optimistic, even at a football game.

¹New York Times, October 29, 1933, p. 55.

²Letter from Frank Bane to the author, May 31, 1961, in possession of the author.

Inadequacy of Existing Relief Programs

By mid-November when the Civil Works Administration was launched, approximately 2,000,000 persons were employed on local and state work projects. Yet reports from FERA field representatives, state administrators, and local agents increasingly expressed concern over the shortcomings of the relief program. One complaint concerned the state-regulated pay scales which tended to be extremely low. Many workers did not receive adequate assistance. "The good book states that the poor are always with us," one Connecticut official allegedly commented, "but now they are against us."³ In August, 1933, the FERA issued an order which specified that grants would henceforth be made only to projects in which a scale of thirty cents an hour or more was maintained. The order further limited work to eight hours a day, or no more than thirty-five hours per week.⁴

Another shortcoming which greatly disturbed the FERA officials was the poor quality of the projects. Accusations filtered into Washington that many were little more than "leaf-raking" enterprises. Speaking at a rally dinner

³Jacob Baker and Arthur Goldschmidt, Conversation on the Civil Works Administration, tape recorded for the author in May, 1961, in possession of the author. Cited hereafter as Baker and Goldschmidt, Tape Recording.

⁴FERA Report, December, 1933, p. 2. The usual practice had been to pay relief workers less than the average wage rate of the community, Lescohier, Working Conditions, p. 248.

of the 1933 Mobilization for Human Needs, Hopkins expressed the general dissatisfaction:

In some places the heads of families who have earned that family's living for years at hard, respectable, useful work, have been sent out to carry leaves from one side of a park to another. The wind blew them back, and the work-relief crew kept on returning them until they had put in hours. That is work relief at its worst. No wonder you hear complaints. In such circumstances there is loafing. It all depends on who is managing the projects and how much resourcefulness is used in finding the right kind.⁵

Indeed one of the chief critics of "leaf-raking" was the FERA administrator himself. Despite the problems involved, however, Hopkins and his staff favored work relief over any other method. They regarded direct assistance, whereby money, clothing, or grocery slips were doled out to the unemployed as degrading to the recipients.⁶

Equally degrading in their opinion was a policy known as the "means test," which was almost universally employed by state relief organizations. The term referred to the inquiries made into the financial status of applicants. "Have you a mortgage? Have you back taxes? How much do you owe the grocer? How much were you able to put

⁵Hopkins, Speech at the Campaign Rally Dinner of the 1933 Mobilization for Human Needs, Stevens Hotel, Chicago, October 30, 1933, Papers of Harry L. Hopkins, Group 24, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York. Because all references to this manuscript collection may be found in Group 24, subsequent citations will be, simply, Hopkins Papers.

⁶Hopkins, Speech, Kansas City, October 29, 1933, Hopkins Papers. Baker and Goldschmidt, Tape Recording. Aubrey Williams, Unpublished Manuscript, 1958, in Williams's possession.

in the bank? What do you need in the way of clothes to keep the children warm? What food have you got in the house to put in their stomachs? Have you any coal?"⁷ No one could obtain a job on a work project or even receive direct relief unless he answered these and similar questions. In short, an individual had to show that he was virtually a pauper before becoming eligible for assistance. "If we had not become so accustomed and, in a sense, so hardened to the fact of poverty," wrote Hopkins some years later, "we should even now be astounded at our effrontery."⁸ Of course, exactly how many victims sensed the sting of the test, or how many of their contemporaries viewed them with disdain cannot be determined. But to Hopkins and his staff the test indicated that the stigma attached to relief still survived and brought needless indignity to those subjected to it. Indeed the desire to avoid it became still another motivating force in the formation of the Civil Works Administration.

Besides the unfavorable features outlined above, the relief program simply was not competently administered in several states. This was especially true in the South. Mississippi had organizations only in the larger cities and virtually none in rural areas. State, county, and city agencies had ceased operation in Arkansas for lack of

⁷Hopkins, Spending to Save, p. 101.

⁸Ibid.

funds.⁹ In Kentucky, because of a deadlock over levying additional taxes, the state legislature failed to take appropriate action. On July 10, 1933, the federal authorities warned that they might have to take control of the Kentucky program. On November 22nd, the President issued an executive order which authorized the FERA administrator to assume control of relief in any state when "more effective and efficient cooperation between the state and federal authorities" could possibly result.¹⁰ By that date the Kentucky legislature had still come to no agreement. Hopkins therefore immediately federalized the Kentucky program. Similar action was taken in six other states during the existence of the FERA.¹¹

Precursory Plans for the CWA

One person who was particularly disturbed by the inadequacies of the relief program was Arthur Goldschmidt, an assistant to the director of the FERA Work Division, Jacob Baker. During a trip to study existing activities

⁹Mississippi Civil Works Administration, "Program of the Civil Works Administration in Mississippi" (n. d.), n. p., National Archives, Washington, D. C. Arkansas Civil Works Administration, "Federal Civil Works Administration, State of Arkansas" (May 15, 1934), pp. 14-15, National Archives. After the first reference, all state reports are cited as "Final Report."

¹⁰Executive Order, No. 119-04, November 22, 1933.

¹¹FERA Report, June, 1936, p. 134. Relief was federalized in Oklahoma, North Dakota, and Massachusetts in 1934 and in Ohio, Louisiana, and Georgia in 1935.

and devise plans for new ones, Goldschmidt found conditions to be much as reports had indicated. The projects were too often insufficiently financed, incompetently administered, and of little intrinsic worth. If they were to be improved, he realized, more money would be needed than was available through the FERA. After talking over the dilemma, Baker and Goldschmidt developed an idea whereby a sum, possibly from the NIRA appropriation for the PWA, would be "borrowed" or set aside for a number of work programs to be planned and directed by the federal government.¹²

At approximately the same time, others in the FERA were discussing possible solutions to the problem. One such official was Aubrey Williams, a hard working and dedicated humanitarian. Through his activities as field representative, Williams became convinced that a work program must be effected which would have neither the prohibitive costs nor the long periods of time consumed in planning that were characteristic of the PWA. While on a trip to Oklahoma, Williams began to dwell on the problems that would be encountered. He was aware that millions needing work lived in highly concentrated urban areas. Simple road work would not provide enough jobs. A more diversified program was needed. According to Williams, the idea then struck him that the federal government might undertake broad activities in which unemployed architects, actors,

¹²Baker and Goldschmidt, Tape Recording.

writers, musicians, teachers, contractors, foremen, draftsmen, and so forth would be hired and allowed to work at their accustomed occupations. As in Baker's and Goldschmidt's plan, the federal government itself would devise, contract, and supervise the projects without going through the customary procedure of making private contracts. After his arrival in Oklahoma, Williams telephoned Harry Hopkins and enthusiastically outlined his ideas. Hopkin's response was cordial.¹³ Williams hurried back to Washington.

In the meantime, Arthur Goldschmidt called on his former Columbia professor, Rexford Tugwell, who was then Assistant Secretary of Agriculture. Tugwell was favorably impressed with Goldschmidt's plan for a federally sponsored work program, and agreed that it should be undertaken. When he left the Assistant Secretary's office that fall day in 1933, Goldschmidt recalls, he was so elated he "felt like a bird dog walking on air." Goldschmidt reported Tugwell's enthusiasm to Baker, and the two began to discuss the problem of money.¹⁴ The question of an appropriation was a crucial one. Obviously without adequate funds no program could be evolved.

Shortly after Aubrey Williams's return to Washington, Hopkins held a meeting at which Williams, Tugwell, and

¹³Williams, Unpublished Manuscript.

¹⁴Baker and Goldschmidt, Tape Recording.

Jerome Frank, recently appointed general counsel for the Federal Surplus Relief Corporation, were present. Before Williams could fully explain his plan, Tugwell rose from his chair and began to walk about the room exclaiming "Harry this is it!" The remainder of the day was spent in discussion. They urged Hopkins to go to Roosevelt with the proposal, but Hopkins was reluctant. He knew that the President would be under attack not only from conservatives but also from union leaders who were skeptical of government-sponsored "made jobs."¹⁵ With this problem in mind, Hopkins instructed Williams to go immediately to Madison, Wisconsin, to consult the foremost authority on labor in the United States, Dr. John R. Commons.

Williams has written a vivid description of his meeting with Commons:

When I went in, the Doctor, as usual, was drinking his cup of coffee. He was an incessant drinker of coffee, rising early in the morning and working at his desk in the corner of a high-ceilinged room. . . . at least 40 x 40 with shelves of books covering the entire walls. . . . After I had explained my mission, he said, with a sparkle in his eye, "I think I have exactly what you want." He went over to one of the corners of the room and began digging down under a great pile of published material. Finally he came up with a big armful of magazines that bore the title "The Federationist," [sic] long the official publication of the American Federation of Labor. . . . there, in this publication of the A. F. of L. was the exact idea that I had proposed to Hopkins, written out and proposed by none other than Samuel Gompers himself in 1901. . . . You can imagine the elation I

¹⁵Robert E. Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins, An Intimate History (rev. ed.; New York: Grosset & Dunlop, 1950), p. 51.

experienced when I read the words from the great Samuel Gompers, who was second only to God Almighty in the estimation of organized labor.¹⁶

Williams telephoned the good news to Hopkins, whose reply was "That is wonderful, that is wonderful!" Scheduled to deliver a speech in Kansas City the next day, Hopkins instructed Williams to meet him after the conclusion of the conference. On the following night, while riding in a Pullman to Chicago, Williams and the FERA chief discussed ideas which were soon to form the rudiments of the Civil Works Administration. H. L. Mencken described it as "the most expensive Pullman ride that the American people ever took."¹⁷

When they arrived in Chicago, Hopkins gave Williams orders to put their ideas down on paper. "Keep in mind," he said, "that you are writing it to be presented to the President. . . . don't misrepresent anything, but don't scare him." Williams obtained room 1514 in the Stevens Hotel and called upon Frank Bane, director of the American Welfare Association, to lend him a stenographer.¹⁸

Just before going to Wisconsin to consult Commons, Williams had asked Bane and Louis Brownlow, director of the Public Administration Clearing House, to meet him in Chicago at the railroad station. He told them about the

¹⁶Williams, Unpublished Manuscript.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

dire need for a government-sponsored work relief program and asked them to urge Hopkins to go to the President at once. Their opportunity to talk to Hopkins came on the day of the Chicago-Michigan football game. While Williams was busy drawing up the proposal, therefore, Bane and Brownlow joined Hopkins and Robert Hutchins for lunch at the Quadrangle Club. Brownlow relates that Hopkins had become quite alarmed by the situation but, as usual, displayed little outward emotion. Their conversation was preoccupied with speculation about how best to meet what all agreed was "a rapidly onrushing catastrophe of proportions never before experienced or contemplated in the United States." They discussed the nature of the newly proposed work program and where the necessary money could be obtained. Hopkins stated that it might come from the general appropriation for the PWA. According to Brownlow, they recognized the possibility of a struggle with Harold Ickes.¹⁹

Later that afternoon Williams completed the requested memorandum and presented it to Hopkins. "Fine," remarked the FERA chief after reading it. "What are your plans?" Williams replied that he was scheduled to make a speech before a community fund organization in New Orleans. They agreed that Williams would go to New Orleans and

¹⁹Louis Brownlow, A Passion for Anonymity: The Autobiography of Louis Brownlow, Second Half (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 286-87.

Hopkins would return to Washington and present the proposal to Roosevelt.²⁰

When he arrived in Washington, and before discussing the proposal with the President, Hopkins held an important conference with officials of the Public Works Administration who agreed that the money for the new program could be allotted from the \$3,300,000,000 appropriated under the National Industrial Recovery Act. Following the suggestion of Baker and Goldschmidt, Hopkins first tried to get \$600,000,000 but, according to Baker, was "chiseled down" to \$400,000,000.²¹ However, the assurance of even this smaller sum was a major triumph for the FERA chief.

Hopkins and his aids estimated that about four million people could be given jobs with the \$400,000,000 promised. Half this number could be quickly filled, they decided, by transferring to civil works projects the two million men employed in the state work relief programs. Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins suggested that it would be diplomatic to follow PWA policy and select the remaining workers at random from the millions of unemployed, not necessarily from those on relief rolls.²² In this way the

²⁰Williams, Unpublished Manuscript.

²¹Baker and Goldschmidt, Tape Recording.

²²Ibid. Press Release, Wednesday, November 8, 1933, Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Group 13, Official File 444-B, Roosevelt Library. Since all references to this manuscript collection may be found in the same Group and File, subsequent citation will be, simply, Roosevelt Papers.

policy of disregarding need as a basis for hiring was adopted by the CWA.

By Thursday, November 2, Hopkins was ready to present the plan to the President, who granted him a luncheon appointment at one o'clock. Roosevelt was not averse to the idea of work for the unemployed. Getting people off the relief rolls would, he believed, "add to the self-respect of the country."²³ Generally speaking, however, as Aubrey Williams has explained in the following quotation, Roosevelt was apprehensive of the "wide variety work idea."

His political sense saw danger in such projects as putting artists to work at their profession, painting, landscaping, etc., or putting actors to work at acting in plays. . . . That was where Hopkins came in, with his ability to persuade the President that the idea was a sound one and a necessary one. Roosevelt was, of course, a fully civilized human being and had a proper appreciation of the arts; however, there is not the slightest doubt that had it not been for Hopkins, and Mrs. Roosevelt, for she was a powerful influence in support of width and variety in work projects, the work program would have been much more limited in its variety and character. . . . So Hopkins had his work cut out for him when he got back to Washington. But as usual in those days he came out of the pack that surrounded the President with the bacon. I have more than once thought that the happenings around Washington were not too dissimilar to those one saw at Frank Buck's Monkey Villages which he had on display at the New York World's Fair. At these villages when visitors would throw a banana over the wire fence, the monkeys would make a dive for it and after a short but furious scramble, one would shoot his arm up out of the pack

²³Engagements, May 22, 1933 to December 31, 1934, H. L. H. Diaries, 1932-1935, Appointment Diaries, Hopkins Papers. "The Sixty-Sixth Press Conference (Excerpts)," The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, with a Special Introduction and Explanatory Notes by President Roosevelt, ed. Samuel L. Rosenman (5 vols.; New York: Random House, 1938), II, p. 446.

with the banana firmly held in his hand. . . . Well, Hopkins came out of the pack next day with the banana.²⁴

The lunch and ensuing conference between Hopkins and Roosevelt lasted approximately two hours. Hopkins explained the program and assured the President that \$400,000,000 could be taken from PWA funds. Roosevelt ordered him to begin immediately. "I looked at the clock, and the day of the week," Hopkins recalled several months later, "and before I could opine how long it would take, he told me, 'Thirty Days!' Well, I didn't see any sense in saying forty, or forty-five. . . . I knew it was just a little way to the Union Station, and I could go back to New York. So I said, 'All right.'"²⁵

Hopkins returned from the White House to his office. By five o'clock that afternoon the Public Works Board approved the transfer of \$400,000,000 to the newly proposed program. A little later a slip of paper with the familiar "F. D. R." was delivered informing him that the action of the Board had been approved.²⁶

That same evening Aubrey Williams made his speech to the community fund-raising organization in New Orleans. In the midst of it "someone came into the back of the

²⁴Williams, Unpublished Manuscript.

²⁵Hopkins, Speech to the National Emergency Council, February 1, 1934, Hopkins Papers.

²⁶Ibid.

auditorium and called out over the audience" that he was wanted on the long-distance telephone.²⁷ Williams, somewhat startled, asked the informer to get the number and tell the caller that he was making a speech. In a short time the man returned and boomed out that it was a call from Mr. Hopkins "and he says he doesn't care what you are doing, come to the telephone." Williams recalls:

The audience roared, and I dutifully left the platform and went to the telephone. Harry said, "I just wanted to tell you that the President has just given us \$400,000,000 for the work program we proposed. Now you can go back and finish your damned speech, but don't say anything, let Steve [Early, Roosevelt's press secretary] give it out for the President."²⁸

Williams said he had a hard time finishing that speech.

On the following day, November 3rd, Roosevelt held his sixty-sixth press conference. One of the reporters asked him if he knew anything about a "very big or special relief program." Roosevelt, after enigmatically hedging, "that is true and it is not true," replied that the press might simply "say that it is under discussion at the present time."²⁹

Establishment of the CWA

Hopkins, Baker, Williams, Frank Bane, Louis Brownlow and others of the FERA staff met Saturday night in the

²⁷Williams, Unpublished Manuscript.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹"The Sixty-Sixth Press Conference (Excerpts)," The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, II, pp. 444-45.

Washington Powhatan Hotel in the first of a series of weekend conferences. The meeting continued into the early hours of Sunday. Preliminary plans for a decentralized program which would give work within thirty days without the "means test" and other red tape were outlined. Later that day, through most of the night, and Monday morning the group continued discussion in Hopkins's unheated office in the Walker-Johnson building, which at that time served as temporary headquarters for the FERA. The sessions were free and open, but each decision ultimately rested with Hopkins.³⁰ A minor but perplexing problem was the selection of a name. "Public Works" obviously could not be used. Baker relates that once when he returned to his office it struck him that "civil works" would be a plausible title. He "ran upstairs and told Hopkins," who approved the choice.³¹ Monday afternoon Frank Bane, Aubrey Williams, and the FERA administrator went to Bane's room at the Powhatan where they worked out the authorization statement by which the states could put the plan into operation.³²

While Hopkins and his advisers were formulating policy and organization, the first official press announcement of the newly created Civil Works Administration was

³⁰Brownlow, A Passion for Anonymity, pp. 287-88.

³¹Baker and Goldschmidt, Tape Recording.

³²Williams, Unpublished Manuscript.

released on Wednesday, November 8th. It reported that four million men who were out of work would soon be given jobs, and that half this number would be hired from among the unemployed who were not on relief. Harry Hopkins's appointment as Federal Administrator was also revealed.³³ The effect was electrifying. According to another release on the following day the switchboard at the new CWA offices was "swamped." Congressmen and local officials pleaded for specific projects. Unemployed persons, many of whom had been out of work for nearly three years, made desperate appeals for jobs.³⁴ Little actually was known of the program by the public or by government officials, but these two articles engendered a new wave of optimism throughout the United States.

Executive Order 6420-B, officially establishing the Civil Works Administration, was dated November 9, 1933. The President, however, did not actually sign it until the following November 25th. The delay was caused by Attorney General Homer Cummings's dissatisfaction with the wording of the original draft. After revising it in accordance with sections 202 and 203 of the NIRA, Cummings advised Roosevelt to backdate the document to November 9th.³⁵

³³New York Times, November 9, 1933, p. 1.

³⁴Press Release, Thursday, November 9, 1933, Roosevelt Papers.

³⁵Executive Order, No. 6420-B, November 9, 1933. Louis M. Howe to Hopkins, November 27, 1933; Hopkins to Roosevelt, November 8, 1933, Roosevelt Papers.

Delay of the executive order did not impede the speed of launching the new organization. On Friday, November 10th, telegrams were sent to all state and territorial agencies designating them as civil works organizations and in most states appointing members of the state, county, and city relief administrations as CWA officials. The following message to the State Emergency Relief Administrator of North Dakota was typical:

The State Emergency Relief Administration is hereby constituted the Civil Works Administration for the state of North Dakota with yourself as chairman. It will be charged with responsibility for the execution of the Civil Works Program in your state under the Federal Civil Works Administration. The present emergency relief committees in each county of your state are hereby constituted the Civil Works Administration for that county.³⁶

In a conference on November 11th, Hopkins and Ickes agreed that municipalities able to finance their own programs, even in part, would not be allowed to participate in the CWA. They further agreed that Hopkins's organization would not undertake large-scale building construction but would be confined to smaller undertakings which could be carried through without time consuming contracts. This conference was clearly an attempt to avoid any overlapping or conflict between Public Works and Civil Works. "As far as the PWA is concerned," Ickes smilingly told reporters

³⁶Telegram, Hopkins to Judge A. M. Christianson, November 10, 1933, Records of the Civil Works Administration, Record Group 69, State Series, National Archives. Cited hereafter as CWA Records, series title.

after the meeting, "this does not offer an opportunity for any municipality . . . to crawl under Mr. Hopkins's tent."³⁷ Ickes agreed to the necessity of the CWA and permitted money to be taken from the PWA. Hopkins assured him that, in addition to the allotted \$400,000,000, he would also finance the program from FERA funds and limited contributions by state and local governments.³⁸

There remained the task of presenting to the hundreds of state, county, and municipal relief administrators throughout the United States the purpose, objectives, and procedures of the new program. To expedite this task a series of conferences was scheduled in Washington. Invitations were sent to governors, county officials, mayors, and relief administrators. Over a thousand people assembled in the ballroom of the Mayflower Hotel at ten o'clock on the morning of November 15, 1933. There for nearly three hours Hopkins explained the purpose and organization of the new agency, and outlined the duties of the officials present.³⁹ The general meeting was followed by six

³⁷New York Times, November 12, 1933, II, p. 3.

³⁸Harold L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes: The First Thousand Days, 1933-1936 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), pp. 116-17.

³⁹Federal Civil Works Administration, Proceedings: General Meeting, Washington, D. C., November 15, 1933, pp. I-35, CWA Records, Group 69, C. W. A. Publications, Vol. II, National Archives. These proceedings are cited hereafter as CWA Proceedings, November 15, 1933. The publications will be cited as CWA Publications, volume number.

regional luncheons with ensuing discussions. At four-thirty, all members of the conference were invited to the White House where they were greeted by President Roosevelt. Roosevelt spoke extemporaneously, disregarding a speech prepared for him by Hopkins. He emphatically stated that the Administration would not try to gain political advantage from the new enterprise and that he expected the same non-partisan spirit from state and local officials. "I would like to have the general rule adopted," he told the group, "that no person . . . needing relief or work be asked whether he is a Republican, Democrat, Socialist, or anything else."⁴⁰ The members of the conference were in a festive mood; zeal and high spirits permeated the atmosphere. In true Jacksonian fashion, several stood on chairs and couches in order to see and hear the President and Harold Ickes, who also made an appearance. Again Ickes revealed no antagonism toward Hopkins or the program. On the contrary, he expressed warm approval of the CWA.⁴¹ If the enthusiasm and good wishes expended on that mid-November day could have been transformed into action and results, the CWA would have been successful far beyond expectation.

The November 15th conference ended with an executive meeting at 8:30 p. m. in the Garden Room of the Mayflower,

⁴⁰"Extemporaneous Speech to C. W. A. Conference in Washington," The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, II, pp. 468-71.

⁴¹New York Times, November 16, 1933, p. 1. Washington Post, November 16, 1933, p. 1.

called to order by Hopkins. Most of those present were state administrators. Hopkins informed them that each state would be sent federal money for approved projects; that such funds would be disbursed by federal, bonded disbursing officers of the Veterans Bureau. The number of persons to be employed by each state and territory was then read publicly. State quotas were to be determined on the basis of 75 per cent for population and 25 per cent for relief load. These, Hopkins indicated, might be altered in the near future.

The last portion of the meeting was devoted to questions and answers. Hopkins, who attempted to answer most of the inquiries, displayed much confidence. He resorted to occasional sarcasm, but apparently no one was offended. Nor did anyone show any fears that the federal government might infringe on state rights. Just before the meeting closed, Governor Ben Moeur of Arizona expressed appreciation for the opportunity of attending such a gathering and commended Hopkins for the manner in which he conducted the session. This amiable gesture was followed by a tribute from New Orleans Mayor T. Semmes Walmsley. The response of the conferees no doubt reflected the desperate need of the states for more assistance. Probably the delegates agreed with Mayor James M. Curley of Boston who said the aid had come "in time to prevent revolution."⁴² They

⁴²CWA Proceedings, November 15, 1933, pp. 1-35.
Washington Post, November 16, 1933, p. 1.

evidently had come to believe that national action would have to be relied upon to a greater extent than ever before.

Late November 1933

The gratitude of the delegates mirrored the sentiments of the people. The economic downturn of September and October had continued steadily into November and December. Unemployment, according to A. F. of L. President William Green, increased more rapidly during November than in any other single month since Roosevelt's inauguration.⁴³ The White House and the Civil Works Administration headquarters in Washington were deluged in late November and in December with letters and post cards from all sections of the country and all strata of society. There were pleas from semi-illiterates, such as the two following, which anonymously but vividly described the despair and misery endured by many that somber autumn:

Dear President- Please do something for the city of Youngstown specially the mill men as they only getting 1 and 2 days a week work, cant pay rent and live of this, and were are not allowed no help of the city if you dont do something we wont have no christmas make it that were average \$60 a month we can live pay rent if under it see that we get help of some kind pleas pleas do something.

* * * *

⁴³New York Times, December 29, 1933, p. 8. According to an A. F. of L. survey the number of unemployed jumped from 10,222,000 in October, 1933, to 10,702,000 in November, New York Times, December 29, 1933, p. 8. The Department of Labor index of manufacturing production dipped in the same period from 76 to 71, Statistical Abstract, 1934, p. 730.

Dear Mr. President why dont you put the jobs of 30 a week so we can live a little decent. but please do it in a Hurry because we are staving. to look at our children cry because they cant have the proper food & clouth. why dont you do something instead of put it in the paper's that you are going to do this & going to do that but instead our men get laid off. Dear president I'm soory if I sound crude but I can't help it if you were in my place I guess you would be the same. . . . I wish you a Happy Thankiving & hope I will have somethig to be Thankful for to.⁴⁴

The destitute were not always people with little or no education. A lawyer wrote:

I need a job. I am . . . forty years of age, admitted to the bar in Illinois in 1922 and have been in the general practice of law since that time.

. Was for five years office manager for one of the largest law firms in Chicago and for another four years was in the Law Department of the N. K, Fairbank Company.

Clients have not the money to pay now like they used to have. There is an abundance of law business, but there is a dearth of clients sufficiently financed to pay for litigation.

Can you use a man of my experience in your organization, or refer this to the proper department?⁴⁵

Nearly all the letters were pathetic, desperate, and bitter. The ray of hope created by the announcement of the CWA had been partially dispelled by unfounded rumors and a certain amount of bureaucratic confusion. A Chicago skeptic complained:

I read in the Daily News for the last three weeks that 2,000,000 men now on the relief pay roll

⁴⁴Anonymous to Roosevelt, December 6, 1933; Anonymous to Roosevelt, November 23, 1933, CWA Records, General Subject Series. No attempt was made to indicate errors in these two letters or in those that follow.

⁴⁵Earl V. Cates to Howard Hunter, November 18, 1933, CWA Records, General Subject Series.

will be put to work by November 16, I went and inquired about it and I was told not to believe what I read in the paper.

What should we believe if not what we read in the paper. Is it possible that what the newspapers print are false statements? I have been out of work over three years, until lately I have been put on the relief payroll working only (3) three days a months.⁴⁶

Of the thousands who sent letters to Washington, there was at least one, a real estate dealer of Pelham Manor, New York, who had not entirely lost his sense of humor:

Dear Mr. Hopkins,
Alms for the love of Allah,
well not literally alms but
work for the love of Mike.
My morale is badly bent,
Just another broke Broker.
Optimistically yours,
P. O'Malley Jennings⁴⁷

People were hungry, bitter, despairing, and frightened. They were frightened not only about what was in store in the coming winter months, but also about their entire destiny. Action was needed.

To put four million men to work in thirty days would have been a tremendous job under the most favorable circumstances, but no plan had been worked out during the summer for such an operation. In mid-November there was no time for time-consuming preparation.

Federal, state and, for the most part, local leaders were eager to undertake the tremendous task of providing

⁴⁶John C. Kenny to Hopkins, November 27, 1933, CWA Records, General Subject Series.

⁴⁷Jennings to Hopkins, November 26, 1933, CWA Records, General Subject Series.

jobs and wages. But policy and a pattern of action had to be quickly set up. By December, 1933, all states had relief agencies of one type or another. Hopkins, as explained earlier, therefore decided to designate them as civil works administrations. This saved the great time and effort that would have been expended in establishing an entirely new administrative network. The FERA had conducted relief through these state and local units. Hopkins and his staff were familiar with them and with the officials in charge. Time-saving measures were used whenever possible. For example, instructions, regulations, and orders were dispatched by telegram or orally by telephone.⁴⁸ Time was a precious commodity which could not be wasted by conventional procedures.

The states were quick to respond. Within a few days after the Washington conference of November 15, meetings similar in purpose were held in the various state capital cities. These were generally conducted either in a local hotel or the capitol building and were called by the governor or state relief administrator. City and county officials gathered to hear the state administrator answer questions pertaining to the purpose, procedures, and duties of the local offices. Usually, right after the

⁴⁸House Subcommittee of Committee on Appropriations, FERA and CWA Hearings, 1934, p. 21. Interview with John M. Carmody, April 5, 1961.

close of the last session, they would begin submitting applications for CWA projects, which in most cases received immediate approval by the state administration.

Thus while administrative policies were still in process of formulation, projects were being approved and undertaken. By Monday, November 20th, work actually had begun in many places. By the first payday, November 23rd, 814,511 workers received CWA checks.⁴⁹ The fact that state work relief projects were simply transferred to the CWA along with their workers accounts for the large pay rolls during the first week of operation. Speed was the essence of the program. Every day counted.

The Civil Works Administration was a unique attempt on the part of the federal government to give help to the unemployed. The very fact of its difference made it extremely precarious. Although state relief organizations were automatically placed under the CWA, there was no precedent for a federally-operated work program. There was not even a previously drafted plan to draw from a filing cabinet and put into action. Until the month before its establishment, no one in Washington had seriously considered such an enterprise. There were, nevertheless, two assets that weighed heavily in its favor. First of all

⁴⁹Works Progress Administration, "Analysis of Civil Works Program Statistics," June, 1939, CWA Records, General Subject Series. Jacob Baker, "Report Upon the Civil Works Administration," December 30, 1935, CWA Publications, Vol. II.

there was a need for a new approach to the problem of unemployment. It was evident to both proponents and opponents of the Roosevelt Administration that earlier attempts to foster recovery had fallen short of their objectives. Federal action seemed mandatory. A second asset of the CWA lay in the quality of its administrators. Officials in Washington, and in most of the states as well, were highly competent and dedicated men and women. Those in the national organization were professional social workers, engineers, businessmen, or lawyers. Without the excellent quality of their leadership the CWA would have suffered greater difficulties than it did. Not only did these people possess outstanding competence in their fields, they generally shared a humanitarian zeal for the new adventure. To them it was more than a program that would provide jobs for four million; it was an opportunity to better the social welfare of the entire nation. It was more than repairing roads and streets and building sanitary privies; it was a chance and a stimulating challenge to improve living conditions. It was the fulfillment of many dreams.

CHAPTER III

ORGANIZATION

On February 3, 1934, Harry Hopkins appeared before the House Subcommittee on Appropriations which was conducting a hearing concerning supplemental funds for the relief and civil works programs. During the session John Taber, a subcommittee member and outspoken critic of the New Deal, inquired whether the CWA made any attempt to "check up" on applicants for jobs in regard to their need for employment. Hopkins replied that no formal investigations were made.¹

Taber's question raised an important point, one that involved the very nature of the Civil Works Administration. The Federal Civil Works Rules and Regulations stated: "The purpose of the CWA is to provide regular work on public works at regular wages for unemployed persons able and willing to work."² The earlier state programs

¹House Subcommittee of Committee on Appropriations, FERA and CWA Hearings, 1934, p. 37.

²Federal Civil Works Administration, Rules and Regulations No. 1, November 15, 1933 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1933).

had devised jobs for people on relief, but the work was often irregular and valueless. The CWA attempted to provide a limited amount of work to "take up the slack" in unemployment. Never a pure relief measure, it made no formal attempt to establish severity of need before granting a job.

"I should like to clarify here the difference between the work relief and a job on a work program such as CWA and WPA," wrote Hopkins some years later.

To the man on relief the difference is very real. On work relief, although he gets the disciplinary rewards of keeping fit, and of making a return for what he gets, his need is still determined by a social worker, and he feels himself to be something of a public ward, with small freedom of choice. When he gets a job on a work program, it is very different. He is paid wages and the social worker drops out of the picture.³

The civil works experiment embodied the first attempt by the Roosevelt Administration to circumvent what many officials considered the degrading practice of prying, through well-meant questions, into the private lives of people who needed work. It was an endeavor to respect human dignity.

Representative Taber was not the only American who failed to grasp the purpose of the CWA. Throughout its four and a half months of existence, editorials and letters frequently expressed concern that it failed to give work to the most needy. People persistently regarded it as a new form of relief "to be criticized if it seemed to deny

³Hopkins, Spending to Save, p. 114.

employment to persons in distress, and afford it to others not so needy.⁴

The misunderstanding did not stem from failure of officials to present the purpose of the program. During the November 15th conference, Hopkins frequently referred to the fact that the CWA would be primarily an employment, not a relief, program. The transfer of the nearly two million men then on relief work, he announced, would begin on November 16th, and the conversion process would be completed by December 1st. After that date, regardless of their need, only those who applied at local employment offices would be hired.⁵ Because half the workers were taken from state work projects, the CWA maintained a relationship with the general relief program. But its primary objective was to provide jobs, not to aid the destitute. Unfortunately, the distinction between the CWA work program and direct or work relief was never clearly understood.

Speed was also an essential part of the CWA's purpose. People were not only unemployed, they were frightened and restless as well. Winter was at hand. If the CWA were to achieve its objectives it had to do so immediately. President Roosevelt himself made the decision that

⁴Joanna C. Colcord, "Right-About Face," Survey, LXX (April, 1934), p. 111.

⁵CWA Proceedings, November 15, 1933, pp. 1-35. See below, pp. 92-93.

the four million employees must be hired and at work by December 15th.⁶

Yet no matter how essential speed might be, Hopkins and his aids did not want to sacrifice quality. They were disgusted with the "leaf raking" activities that, even with FERA assistance, existed under the direction of many states.⁷ This was one reason for undertaking the CWA. Their ultimate goal, therefore, was to provide useful and desirable jobs of benefit to the public without sacrificing the haste necessary for success.

Administrative Organization

Stating the objectives of the new program, although not a simple task, was easier than converting the ideals into an operating organization. As previously stated, the CWA did not create an entirely new administrative network.⁸ Instead the national FERA office and state and community relief administrations became the newly appointed civil works agencies. In most cases they retained their former duties. Administering the CWA became simply an additional task. Yet the CWA existed as a separate and distinct program. A review of newspapers and the letters sent to

⁶Hopkins, Speech to the National Emergency Council, February 1, 1934, Hopkins Papers.

⁷Jacob Baker and Arthur Goldschmidt, Tape Recording. See above, pp. 39-42, for description of inadequacies of the relief program.

⁸See above, p. 61.

governmental officials reveals that the FERA and CWA were often confused. When a federal, state, or local administrator spoke publicly, it was sometimes difficult to tell if it was in his capacity as CWA or FERA official. Expediency resulted in confusion.

As Administrator of the CWA, Harry Hopkins chose men to assist him who had been associated with the FERA. In the beginning, the highest administrative eschelon was composed of an Executive Secretary, two Administrative Assistants, and seven Field Representatives.

The position of Executive Secretary, occupied by Bruce McClure, was never clearly defined, although apparently McClure relieved Hopkins of routine administrative duties. According to Baker, McClure was a nephew of the "great magazine man," S. S. McClure. He had, quite early in life, worked for his famous uncle and later became editor of the Elks Magazine. Hopkins originally brought McClure in to handle publicity for the FERA, but Steve Early, Roosevelt's press secretary, had "preempted all publicity jobs for his own appointees." As a result Hopkins made McClure secretary for the FERA, and later for the CWA. While the CWA existed, McClure thus occupied two positions.⁹

The two original Assistant Administrators were Jacob Baker and Corrington Gill. From 1923 to 1931 Gill, a

⁹Baker to the author, November 27, 1961, in possession of the author.

graduate of the University of Wisconsin with a degree in economics, worked for the Washington News Service. In 1931 he became a statistician for Hoover's Federal Employment Stabilization Board. Upon the establishment of the FERA, Hopkins placed Gill in charge of all statistical affairs. Five sub-offices--Economic Analysis, Statistics, Accounting, Disbursement, and Workmen's Compensation--were under his direct command. In addition, he supervised six so-called Field Accountants who made periodical financial and statistical investigations throughout the United States. Gill performed the same duties for the CWA.¹⁰

Jacob Baker, a heavy set, pleasant man, had a varied background before he became associated with the CWA. He had taught science and agriculture in rural high-schools, had been employed as a superintendent of mines in Mexico and a personnel expert for Bethlehem Steel, and in 1926 had helped organize what became known as the Vanguard Press. Shortly after Hopkins became FERA administrator, he placed Baker in charge of the FERA Work Division. It was while he occupied this position that Baker became so vividly aware of the need for a better work program. As Assistant CWA Administrator, Baker was responsible for all

¹⁰Searle Franklin Charles, "Harry L. Hopkins: New Deal Administrator, 1933-1938" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Dept. of History, University of Illinois, 1953), p. 56. Federal Civil Works Administration, Chart of Organization, CWA Publications, Vol. II. Memorandum, Hopkins to All Department Heads, November 27, 1933, CWA Records, General Subject Series.

non-financial problems connected with the state administrations. Three subdivisions were under his jurisdiction, the most important of which was the office of Chief Engineer, held by John Carmody.¹¹

Just prior to assuming his duties with the CWA, Carmody, an industrial engineer, had served as an assistant to Senator Robert Wagner on problems connected with the National Labor Board. Carmody had several duties. He gave engineering advice to state and local units, collected engineering data, and supervised all problems related to labor relations. Assisting Carmody were ten Regional Engineers who made direct contact with the state and local projects.¹²

The second subdivision under Baker's administrative supervision was the office of Director of Federal Projects. Not all CWA activities were initiated by state or local administrations. Certain so-called federal projects were planned and initiated by the national CWA headquarters.¹³ The Director of Federal Projects was Julius Stone, who had a Ph. D. in chemistry. He had been connected with relief in New York state for a number of years. Prior to the establishment of the CWA, Hopkins brought Stone to the

¹¹Charles, "Harry L. Hopkins: New Deal Administrator," p. 56.

¹²Interview with Carmody, April 5, 1961. Federal CWA, Chart of Organization.

¹³See below, pp. 137-43.

Washington office to serve as one of Baker's assistants in the Works Division of the FERA.¹⁴

The Civil Works Service, the third subdivision responsible to Baker, included all projects designed to give work to women and to professional people such as teachers, musicians, artists, and actors. In September the Women's Work Division had begun functioning under the FERA with Mrs. Ellen S. Woodward as director. According to Baker, Mrs. Woodward was a friend of Mississippi's Senator Pat Harrison and received her position in the FERA largely through political influence. Regardless of the reason for her appointment, Mrs. Woodward proved to be so competent that Hopkins decided to put her in charge of the CWS.¹⁵ Funds for CWS came from the FERA and all applicants had to submit to the "means test" required under state work programs. But in all other respects the CWS was operated under regular CWA policies.¹⁶

Although Hopkins originally planned to have only two administrative assistants, the tremendous number of problems which soon developed caused him to appoint a third Assistant Administrator. The man he selected was Aubrey

¹⁴Baker to the author, November 27, 1961.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Baker and Goldschmidt, Tape Recording. Telegram, Hopkins to All State Administrators, November 25, 1933, CWA Records, General Subject Series. A description of the background and projects of the CWS follows, pp. 143-51.

Williams who, until his appointment, had served as an FERA field representative. Williams's new task was large. It involved supervision of state officials in reference to work projects, labor policies, and general administrative problems.

In addition to the Executive Secretary and three Assistant Administrators another important component in the top federal eschelon were the Field Representatives. Seven such agents traveled constantly, in a specific number of states assigned to each, with the object of promoting a more effective operational relationship among federal, state, and local organizations. They were Hopkins's "watch dogs" and were directly responsible to him. Their recommendations were generally followed by the Washington office. If, for example, a field representative reported that a particular local administrator performed ineffectively, that official could be removed by Hopkins's order without the approval of the state administration.¹⁷

Unlike the FERA, the CWA had ultimate control over all aspects of its program. The field representatives were an effective device for exerting that control.

Although controlled and largely financed by the federal government, the Civil Works Administration could not have operated without effective state and local

¹⁷Aubrey Williams to the author, June 26, 1921, in possession of the author.

organizations. The accomplishments as well as the shortcomings of the entire enterprise rested with them. Hopkins was fully aware of the pitfalls involved when he decided to utilize the existing relief network. Inadequate as many agencies were, they existed in every state and in a majority of the 3,000 counties throughout the country. Hopkins and his associates were familiar with them through the FERA, and, as previously pointed out, there was no time to establish a new network. Furthermore many state and local officials had expressed dissatisfaction with the existing program and seemed eager to work under the auspices of the CWA.¹⁸

No universal administrative pattern was common to all the states and territories under the FERA. All, however, had a state or territorial relief administrator who later served both the FERA and CWA. In larger states, such as Illinois and California, separate administrators were appointed shortly after the launching of the civil works program.¹⁹ In Pennsylvania the state FERA-CWA administrator appointed an assistant who supervised only civil works. As operations expanded it became desirable

¹⁸Senate Subcommittee of Committee on Manufactures, Hearings on Federal Aid for Unemployment Relief, 1933, Part 1, pp. 9-10. See above, pp. 61 and 67.

¹⁹Illinois Civil Works Administration, "Report of the Federal Civil Works Administration for Illinois" (March 31, 1934), p. 26, National Archives. Ray Branion to Harold Chase, December 20, 1933, CWA Records, State Series.

to further decentralize the Pennsylvania organization. Accordingly, six regional offices, with an Assistant Administrator in charge of each, became intermediate agencies between the state headquarters and local offices.²⁰

In all cases a state relief commission served as an advisory group for the state administrator.²¹ As a rule the governors had appointed the members before the CWA began operation. By orders issued on November 10th their duties were expanded to include CWA affairs. Problems occasionally arose regarding the specific duties and status of these commissions. Sometimes their policies were overruled by the federal CWA with resulting confusion and resentment. This problem, serious in Tennessee and Texas, became so acute in Illinois that on January 26, 1934, the entire Emergency Relief Commission resigned in protest against a federal appointment that had been made without its consent.²² Upon suspicion of graft or inefficiency the federal office removed not only individual state administrators but, as in Kentucky and Georgia, the entire relief commission as well. The state organizations were subordinate

²⁰Pennsylvania Civil Works Administration, "The Civil Works Program in Pennsylvania, November 15, 1933 to March 31, 1934" (April, 1934), p. 56, National Archives.

²¹Jacob Baker, "Report Upon the Civil Works Administration," p. 13.

²²Inter-office Memorandum, Hopkins to Baker, February 19, 1934; Aubrey Williams to B. E. Giesecke, December 18, 1933, CWA Records, State Series.

to the Washington headquarters, and apparently the federal Administrator did not hesitate to use his authority.²³

Like the FERA, the federal CWA demanded no single administrative pattern. A considerable amount of freedom prevailed in the formation of state systems. Nevertheless, a general organizational structure fairly common to all did evolve. The New Jersey Civil Works Administration, a typical establishment, had four major divisions: the departments of Appropriations, Finance, Operations, and Personnel Service. California, with fourteen divisions, had a more diversified but similar organization.²⁴ Again it should be stressed that the introduction of the CWA did not create another bureaucratic network; it merely saddled additional duties and responsibilities upon an already existing and in many cases overworked relief system.

Decentralization may thus be seen as the key to the organization of the CWA. Essentially the state administrations were relay stations between the source of power

²³See above, p. 42, for federalization of the Kentucky program. In Georgia, on January 4, 1934, Hopkins discharged not only the relief commission but also dismissed the whole state relief and CWA systems and subsequently replaced them with officials appointed without consent of the governor. Relief was also federalized in Oklahoma, North Dakota, Massachusetts, Ohio, and Louisiana. See pp. 161-62 for further discussion of this problem.

²⁴New Jersey Civil Works Administration, "Report of the Civil Works Administration Program in New Jersey, November 15, 1933 to March 31, 1934" (July, 1934), p. 32. California Civil Works Administration, "Summary Report: Civil Works Administration Activities, State of California, November 27, 1933 - March 29, 1934" (n. d.), n. p.

emanating from CWA headquarters in Washington and the county and municipal units which ultimately carried out the program. The local offices planned, initiated, and supervised the majority of CWA projects throughout the nation.²⁵ In states where local relief systems did not already exist, they had to be improvised. The Civil Works Administration utilized existing relief machinery where it could, but in a number of cases it had to resort to other means.

In Connecticut, for example, the county played a small part in the management of local affairs, including relief. To amend the situation, the state administration established thirty-three CWA boards in towns with populations of 10,000 or more. In smaller towns it appointed the Board of Selectmen to serve as the civil works office, with the First Selectman as administrator. The other members of the Board, plus a few outstanding civic leaders, served as directors of specific departments. In New Hampshire, which had no relief offices in many towns and cities, committees composed of three volunteers were selected by the state officials and designated local CWA's. Selectmen, as in Connecticut, served as civil works agents in all towns smaller than 10,000 and in eleven of the larger communities. A similar situation developed in Minnesota where not all counties received FERA funds. The

²⁵See below, p. 123.

problem was solved by declaring the county Board of Commissioners to be the Civil Works Administration in communities without previously organized relief units.²⁶

State authority was superior to local authority. Soon after inauguration of the CWA in Nebraska the state officials discovered that the overworked committees in many counties performed inefficiently. Hence ninety-three counties were placed under the control of seventy-five directors. The local relief committees still gave advice and supervised projects, but final decisions of policy rested with the state-appointed agents.²⁷ The state administrations could intervene at any time in the affairs of subdivisions in much the same way that the federal CWA could supervise the affairs of a state organization.

In the South local relief agencies were especially poorly organized and frequently non-existent. Mississippi's Board of Public Welfare, the only functioning relief agency until the establishment of CWA, was formed only in order to distribute FERA funds. Relief offices had been set up in larger cities, but their funds had been almost entirely

²⁶Connecticut Civil Works Administration, "Review of C. W. A. Activities in Connecticut," Vol. I (1934), p. 9, National Archives. New Hampshire Civil Works Administration, "The Federal Civil Works Program: State of New Hampshire, 1933 - 1934, Final Report" (n. d.), pp. 20-21, National Archives. Minnesota Civil Works Administration, "Review of CWA Activities in Minnesota" (n. d.), p. 63, National Archives.

²⁷Nebraska Civil Works Administration, "Review of Civil Works Administration in the State of Nebraska" (n. d.) n. p., National Archives.

depleted. In Mississippi the task of organization therefore embraced the entire state. Similarly acute conditions prevailed in Arkansas. By mid-November all relief facilities, with the exception of the Red Cross and the state relief office, had ceased operation. Even before the Great Depression, relief had been a serious problem in Arkansas. In 1927 devastating floods followed by a series of localized disasters made assistance necessary two to three years before other states required it. Yet the organizations giving aid proved inadequate and in many cases a spirit of laxity and indifference had seeped into the attitudes of the people connected with the program. Lack of local relief facilities also handicapped Virginia, Georgia, and Alabama.²⁸

As illustrated above, the CWA had to utilize existing relief institutions whenever possible. If none was in operation, then other agencies such as highway departments, county or city commissions had to be pressed into service. The Civil Works Administration was a product of improvisation.

²⁸Mississippi, "Final Report," pp. 18-19. Arkansas, "Final Report," pp. 14-15. Alabama Civil Works Administration, "Review of Activities, November 18, 1933 to March 31, 1934" (n. d.), pp. 4-38, National Archives. Virginia Civil Works Administration, "A Review of CWA Activities in Virginia, November 15, 1933 - March 31, 1934" (July, 1934), p. 89, National Archives. Georgia Civil Works Administration, "A History of the Georgia Civil Works Administration, 1933-1934" (n. d.), p. 13, National Archives.

Materiel

A successful work program demanded immediately an assortment of equipment and building material. According to regulations governing such matters, purchasing of nearly all material was to be handled by state and local agencies. Orders of \$100.00 or more were to be made by state offices; purchases under that amount could be made by city and county units. In nearly all cases purchases, whether by state or local offices, came from the fund granted by the PWA. In order to expedite the process, the Veterans's Administration was designated supervisor of all payments for material, as well as all financial matters.²⁹ In this way purchasing was centralized, the rigid requirements of the federal government were met, and the CWA avoided the time-consuming task of erecting a separate procurement network.

Furniture, typewriters, and office supplies were to be rented or borrowed for sixty days. After that, if still needed, they were to be purchased.³⁰ Communities were encouraged to furnish as much equipment and building material as possible. The citizens of Macon, Georgia, carried a bond issue of \$193,000 for CWA materiel, but such cases

²⁹Minutes of the CWA Staff Meeting, November 27, 1933, Washington, D. C., Hopkins Papers.

³⁰Corrington Gill to All State Administrators, March 3, 1934, CWA Records, General Subject Series.

were rare. Most localities provided little if any financial assistance. At a staff meeting on November 27th the CWA leaders agreed that expenses which could not be handled by cities would have to be met from the PWA appropriation. Under the FERA system only 10 per cent of total costs went for supplies, whereas according to a report released in February, 1934, the Civil Works Administration spent between 30 and 40 per cent for such necessities.³¹ This caused the original \$400,000,000 to be depleted much faster than had been anticipated.

In order to fulfill purchasing obligations, each state and territory created a special department within its administrative system. Since these offices were required to make all purchases of \$100.00 or more, many found themselves overwhelmed with orders. This was the case in Michigan where, despite 304 Department employees, the task became so gigantic that federal regulations could not be followed. Confronted with the same problem the New Hampshire CWA allowed contracts of less than \$300.00 to be made by telephone. The state purchasing agent in Georgia established ten regional offices which directed all purchases within their respective districts. The Oregon CWA used a similar method, establishing regional purchasing

³¹Georgia, "Final Report," p. 46. Minutes, Staff Meeting, November 27, 1933. Hopkins, Speech to the National Emergency Council, February 1, 1934, Hopkins Papers.

assistants throughout the state who "in all matters except contracts took local bids and commitments."³²

The multitude of problems which developed immediately upon the formation of the Civil Works Administration made it difficult for federal policy to keep up with needs. As soon as one set of instructions could be drawn up and dispatched to the states it would become obsolete. The federal Rules and Regulations were revised ten times during the four and one half months of the CWA's existence. The effects of the lag in publication were more pronounced in the heavily populated states where, as in Illinois and Michigan, regulations sometimes could not be followed.³³

Bids presented another annoying problem. Because prolonged periods of negotiation had to be avoided, they were usually secured by posting advertisements in newspapers or public places, or by notifying venders by letter or telephone. If there were insufficient time to file requests in the usual manner, they were received verbally.

³²Michigan Civil Works Administration, "Civil Works Administration in the State of Michigan, November 17, 1933-March 31, 1934: A Report of Activities and Accomplishments" (May 31, 1934), p. 100, National Archives. New Hampshire, "Final Report," p. 58. Georgia, "Final Report," p. 46. Oregon Civil Works Administration, "Outline of Civil Works Administration Activities Between November 8th, 1933 and March 31st, 1934, within the State of Oregon with Complete Data in Regard to Work Performed, Financial Statement Showing Costs and Summary of Conditions Preceding the Establishment of the Work and the Effect in General Upon Business and Social Life Within the State Under the Program" (n. d.), p. 27, National Archives.

³³Illinois, "Final Report," p. 107.

When, as happened frequently, bids on standard products were identical the venders's names would be written on a slip of paper and placed in a hat. A disinterested person would draw out a slip and the contract would be awarded to the firm whose name appeared there.³⁴ Any organization transacting business with the CWA had to abide by the NRA codes.

Scarcity of tools was one of the most serious problems to beset the CWA. Tools were borrowed and in some cases purchased from the armed forces and from various state highway departments. Skilled workers in Mississippi and many other localities provided their own tools. Trucks and teams were hired in much the same manner as employees.³⁵ Still the shortage of shovels, picks, wheelbarrows and other equipment persisted. Arthur Goldschmidt recalls that in November, 1933, he contacted representatives of the tool industry and informed them that a great amount of tools would be needed within thirty days. "They just laughed and said that there would be enough tools in the stores and warehouses to take care of the need."³⁶ The tool industry underestimated the mobilization ability of

³⁴Ibid., p. 108. Missouri Civil Works Administration, "A Review: November 15, 1933 to March 31, 1934" (n. d.), p. 86, National Archives.

³⁵Telegram, Howard Hunter to Thornton Wilder, December 8, 1933, CWA Records, State Series. Mississippi, "Final Report," p. 21.

³⁶Baker and Goldschmidt, Tape Recording.

the CWA. By early December manufacturers could not keep up with the demand. Twenty-five thousand wheelbarrows were being produced daily but more had to be supplied. When the manufacturers at last realized the situation, they sent representatives to Washington to try to get the NRA production restriction removed at least temporarily.³⁷ The shortage of equipment caused many projects to be delayed and created emergencies such as that in Los Angeles County, California, where men actually went to work on several projects without tools.³⁸ The scarcity precipitated odious remarks from those prone to seek fault with the program. The blame, if any, should have fallen on the leaders of the tool industry who skeptically refused to heed the CWA's November requests. Certainly the problem did not develop from any oversight by the Civil Works Administration.

Finance

As pointed out, civil works proved to be more expensive than anticipated. In November, 1933, the average cost of cash relief per person was \$4.25 a week whereas during the CWA's peak the average cost in wages alone amounted to \$15.04.³⁹ By mid-December the CWA officials

³⁷Minutes of the CWA Staff Meeting, December 12, 1933, Washington, D. C., Hopkins Papers.

³⁸For further discussion of the problem in Los Angeles, see pp. 172-78.

³⁹Baker, "Report Upon the Civil Works Administration, p. 3.

became aware that the money would not last as long as they had thought and would probably be depleted several weeks sooner. Hopkins had planned to request additional funds for both the CWA and FERA in the next session of Congress, but this money could not be expected until sometime in February. He suggested that an extra \$80,000,000 might be taken from the PWA to tide the CWA over for a few weeks in case it should run out of money. But Ickes opposed the idea. While convalescing in the Naval Hospital from a broken rib, Ickes wrote to the President saying:

I think this C. W. A. idea was one of the best yet and I believe further that Hopkins is doing a perfectly splendid job. However, to take \$80,000,000 more of our funds at this time would cramp our style terribly. We are making a heroic effort for a better showing in those States that ought to have more allotments and \$80,000,000 means a lot of money to us just now. I hope you can withhold final decision on this matter until I have had a chance to talk it over with you.⁴⁰

Ickes soon recovered, and no further money was taken from the PWA appropriation. Hopkins and his staff had to look elsewhere.

By early January it was estimated that existing funds would last only until February 3rd. When Hopkins informed the President of this, Roosevelt became greatly disturbed. According to Aubrey Williams: "When Harry talked to the President and told him we had enough money to last until the 3rd of February, he hit the ceiling. He just blew up.

⁴⁰Ickes to Roosevelt, December 14, 1933, Roosevelt Papers.

He understood that it would last and it has to be made to last."⁴¹

On January 18th the Civil Works Administration began to curtail its entire program, but this move alone did not suffice. The problem of acquiring more money persisted.⁴² Earlier that month a plan was devised whereby governors of states in greatest need might use FERA funds to pay salaries of CWA employees who had been transferred from relief work. Under this plan the governors could request specified sums of FERA money which were then transferred by a bookkeeping device to the United States Treasury and drawn upon in preference to the original sum.⁴³ In January and February a total of \$88,960,000 was dispatched from the FERA to the governors and thus to the CWA.

On February 15, 1934, Roosevelt approved a Congressional appropriation of \$950,000,000 for the Federal Emergency Relief and Civil Works Administrations. He specified that \$450,000,000 would be earmarked for the CWA.⁴⁴

⁴¹Telephone call, Aubrey Williams to Allan Johnston (Memorandum), January 12, 1934, CWA Records, State Series.

⁴²Discussion of curtailment follows, pp. 192-223.

⁴³Telephone call, A. Williams to Johnston.

⁴⁴Executive Order, No. 6603, February 15, 1934. Actually the CWA used only \$350,000,000 of the Congressional appropriation before its termination. The Bureau of the Budget impounded \$25,000,000 to cover future payments upon CWA employees compensation. The remaining \$75,000,000 was transferred to the FERA by Executive Order, No. 6689, April 24, 1934.

With this sum and the money diverted from the FERA, the CWA was able to continue operations until the end of March.

Altogether expenditures of the Civil Works Administration totaled \$933,950,000. Of this amount, \$740,000,000 was expended in wages. CWA advances to the states amounted to \$825,000,000, most of it to a relatively small number of states. Five states--New York, Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Michigan--received \$284,000,000 or 34 per cent of the total. Six states--California, Indiana, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Texas, and Wisconsin--received \$184,000,000. Altogether these eleven states collected \$468,000,000 or 57 per cent of the total.⁴⁵

Under the federal Rules and Regulations, CWA workers received compensation for injuries sustained on civil works projects. The provisions were similar to those of the United States Employees' Compensation Act of 1916, but benefits were in fact based solely on the CWA regulations. Injured workers obtained compensation up to 66 2/3 per cent of their monthly earnings, providing their wages had not exceeded \$175.00. In case of death, benefits were awarded according to the relationship of the surviving dependents

⁴⁵U. S., Congress, Senate, Document No. 56, Expenditures of Funds: Federal Emergency Relief Administration, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., 1935, p. 56. FERA Report, April 1, 1934, p. 2. Corrington Gill, "The Civil Works Administration," The Municipal Year Book, 1937: The Authoritative Resume of Activities and Statistical Data of American Cities (Chicago: The International City Managers' Association, 1937), pp. 421-29.

up to the maximum of 66 2/3 per cent of the victim's wages. Civil Works Service employees, who were paid from FERA funds, were not entitled to compensation.⁴⁶ The expense of awarding benefits disturbed some congressmen and particularly Director of the Budget Lewis Douglas. Opposition reached a peak in February during the Congressional debate over the additional appropriation. As a result moderate restrictions became effective after February 15, 1934.⁴⁷

While utilizing the Veterans's Administration as a disbursing agency, the Civil Works Administration nevertheless maintained its own accounting system. Each state and territory had an accounting office which collected statistical data on all phases of the local program. Usually accounting offices of previously organized relief administrations merely assumed the added task of the CWA duties. Federal accounting regulations attempted to provide a general policy for the entire program. Six field accountants made continual trips through the various states to examine first-hand the procedures used.⁴⁸ Their recommendations plus periodic reports made by the state accounting offices enabled the federal CWA to maintain administrative control.

⁴⁶Federal Civil Works Administration, Rules and Regulations No. 5, December 12, 1933 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1933). New York Times, November 24, 1934, p. 6.

⁴⁷See below, pp. 203-05.

⁴⁸Pennsylvania, "Final Report," pp. 56-60. Illinois, "Final Report," pp. 163-64.

In conclusion, it should be reiterated that the CWA's vast administrative network enabled it to function with a maximum amount of local autonomy, yet provided needed central direction and control. The purpose of the Civil Works Administration, although often misunderstood by the public, was to employ four million persons at work of intrinsic value with all possible speed. Never purely a relief measure, it avoided tests aimed at establishing the relative need of those who applied for jobs. In order to realize its objective of rapid mobilization, the CWA superimposed its own administrative network upon existing local relief agencies and the Veterans's Bureau. The result proved to be far from perfect. Confusion, inability to follow instructions accurately, and general administrative inefficiency were common. But the conditions of the times denied the CWA the advantage of long-range planning. Immediate action was necessary.

CHAPTER IV

LABOR

In Ohio, when a certain CWA employee became ill, his wife donned overalls, reported to his place of employment, and worked several hours before being detected.¹ Although unusual, this incident illustrates the spirit that prevailed among Americans--the overwhelming desire to work. People wanted jobs, not handouts. Filling CWA quotas never became a problem; indeed the opposite occurred. So many needed and wanted work that difficulties arose when regulations and restrictions had to be enforced.

Labor Policies

From the beginning the question of whom to employ and how to manage applications confronted the Civil Works Administration. In one of their first conferences, Hopkins and his staff decided to transfer to the CWA the two million men then estimated to be on work relief.² This

¹Ohio Civil Works Administration, "The Civil Works Administration in Ohio, November 15, 1933 to April 1, 1934, A Brief History Based on Facts Available" (May 1, 1934), p. 60, National Archives.

²FERA Report, December, 1933, p. 6.

would fill half the CWA's quota of jobs. The transfer, Hopkins ordered, should begin immediately and be completed by no later than December 1st. After that date the hiring of unemployed persons not on relief rolls would begin. Hopkins hoped to have the entire quota of four million people at work by December 15th, as he had promised Roosevelt.³

As the process of registering and assigning workers got under way, however, the states began to find it impossible to specify arbitrarily that half their quotas must come from relief rolls and half from the self-sustaining unemployed. During the period immediately preceding December 1st the lists had become swollen with new applicants who, Hopkins commented, had hitherto kept themselves off relief "to the point where it was unhealthy for them to do so."⁴ Many relief offices thus found themselves overwhelmed with applicants. Although in Pennsylvania somewhat less than 35 per cent of CWA workers were transferred from work relief, many states had so many registered for relief that their entire original CWA quota was filled from these lists alone.⁵ Only replacements could be made from any

³Federal Civil Works Administration, Rules and Regulations, No. 1. See above, p. 50.

⁴Hopkins, Spending to Save, p. 116.

⁵Pennsylvania, "Final Report," p. 63. Kansas Civil Works Administration, "Review of the Civil Works Program, November 17, 1933 to March 31, 1934" (n. d.), p. 35, National Archives.

other source. Furthermore, the process of transferring workers did not progress as rapidly as planned. Several weeks after December 1st, many local civil works agencies were still hiring from relief rolls. "It is now absolutely inadmissible," wrote Jacob Baker on December 27th, "to fill any Civil Works jobs except from the ranks of the self-sustaining unemployed. . . ." ⁶

Following the same formula used by the federal CWA, state work quotas were allotted to each county on the basis of 75 per cent for population and 25 per cent for relief load. This system worked well in such sparsely populated states as New Mexico, where unemployment prevailed equally in all sectors. In the more industrialized state of Connecticut, however, the plan of distribution absorbed most of the unemployed in smaller towns and cities but could not adequately accommodate the great number of jobless in larger urban areas. A similar dilemma existed in Delaware. Wilmington and its surroundings constituted the most heavily industrialized portion of the state and contained a majority of the unemployed. The quota system, although allotting most of Delaware's CWA employees to Wilmington, proved inequitable. Many remained jobless in the industrial section, while downstate some of the quotas were actually in excess of the number of unemployed. In

⁶Baker to All Civil Works Administrators, December 27, 1933, CWA Records, General Subject Series.

Georgia, where eleven counties had never established relief organizations, officials found it necessary to cut quotas throughout the state in order to give the unorganized counties a portion of the allotted jobs.⁷ On November 21, Hopkins sent a letter to all state CWA administrators warning that in no case must they exceed their share of workers. An increase for all states was ordered in early December. Nevertheless, quotas were frequently exceeded, particularly in industrial areas.⁸ This problem did not inordinately worry the federal officials until diminishing funds made it necessary to curtail the entire program commencing in mid-January.⁹ At least a portion of the unemployed had found work, and that fulfilled the main tenet of the Civil Works Administration.

Registration and Classification

Registration and classification of unemployed applicants not listed on relief rolls began officially on

⁷New Mexico Civil Works Administration, "Review of the State Civil Works Administration Activities in New Mexico" (n. d.), p. 4, National Archives. Connecticut, "Final Report," p. 16. Delaware Civil Works Administration, "Revised Review of CWA Activities in the State of Delaware" (May 1, 1934), pp. 8-9, National Archives. Georgia, "Final Report," p. 42.

⁸Hopkins to All State Administrators, November 21, 1933, CWA Records, General Subject Series. Minutes of the CWA Staff Meeting, December 12, 1933, Hopkins Papers. Baker and Goldschmidt, Tape Recording.

⁹Discussion of curtailment follows, pp. 192-223.

December 1st. Applications were handled by local employment agencies under the direction of the National Reemployment Service, or by recognized union locals. In order to manage the additional burden the Reemployment Service expanded and on January 1, 1934, had 3,270 offices in operation.¹⁰

Despite public announcements that applications would be handled only through employment agencies, literally thousands made appeals for work by letter, postcard, or telegram directly to Hopkins, to Congressmen, or to federal and state CWA officials. Written in the wake of statements by Hopkins and Roosevelt that the CWA must be free of political favoritism, these requests, many quite touching, reflect a conviction clung to by many American citizens that partisanship would always be an asset in securing work. The following letters to Hopkins were typical:

I am appealing to you to give me a job in your new Civil Works Program, besides being a Life Long Democrat, I am also an Ex U. S. Navy Service Veteran I need a job to Properly Provide for my family this Winter. I can give you some of the Leading Democrats of Forsyth (North Carolina) County for References besides

¹⁰Federal Civil Works Administration, Rules and Regulations, No. 1. The U. S. Employment Service was established by the National Employment System Act on June 6, 1933. It was based on cooperation with states maintaining similar agencies and required matching of state appropriations. In July, the National Reemployment Service was established to serve the PWA and other forms of employment stimulated by recovery agencies. Because the CWA called for projects in each county, the employment service was correspondingly expanded, "First Year's Work of the United States Employment Service," Monthly Labor Review, XXXIX (October, 1934), p. 847.

Both U S Senators from North Carolina. I want clerical work or Time Keeper or any Job soon as I can get it the sooner the Better with me. . . .¹¹

* * * *

I was certainly surprised on reading in today's paper that you were Harry Hopkins of Grinnell, Iowa. I knew you in school there and used to bowl with your father "Dad Hopkins". You may remember me as "Cat" Lane. You sure have made your way up and left the rest of us guys way down. I am glad to know there is someone to whom I can write this letter and perhaps it will be read.

It's about this C. W. A. work. We have a boy in the C. C. C. stationed at Des Moines. He has served six months and signed up for another six months. You know, of course, that these boy's parents receive \$25 a month of their wages. This all we have to live on. I haven't had steady employment for three years. Just off jobs I've been able to pick up. Now they have put about all the unemployed men to work but I must not be considered unemployed. They say the fathers of these boys in reforestation cannot be employed. I did get on for half a day and then the head of the CWA in this county, A. M. Schanke of Mason City came over and took me off.

. . . I will appreciate a letter from you very much and I hope you can take this matter up soon with good results.¹²

The reply in all cases was a mimeographed letter from the federal CWA office informing the writer that he must apply through the National Reemployment Service, or through his union local.¹³

Not all job-seekers attempted to secure CWA employment quite so directly. Many followed the advice of CWA announcements and, even before December 1st, flocked by the

¹¹J. J. McManus to Hopkins, November 18, 1933, CWA Records, General Subject Series.

¹²Roy T. Lane to Hopkins, December 10, 1933, CWA Records, State Series.

¹³For example, Bruce McClure to Adolph Frank, December 20, 1933, CWA Records, State Series.

thousands to local employment offices. On the chilly morning of November 27th, 15,000 people swamped the offices throughout New York City. According to the New York Times:

From tenements, furnished-room houses, Bowery "flop" and mission hall benches the hungry and unemployed poured forth to stand in long lines outside the Manhattan office at 124 East Twenty-eighth Street. Some 5,000 of them assembled there, beginning with a thin line shortly after midnight and ending in long files extending to Fourth Avenue and below Twenty-seventh Street before the morning was far advanced.¹⁴

Because not all the seekers could be accommodated, officials went out to the sidewalk and distributed addresses of branch registration offices. By noon the line had shrunk to approximately 2,000. Sandwiches and coffee were given to those who still remained.

On the same day, another 5,000 people including 100 women braved the cold to stand outside the Brooklyn reemployment station, awaiting their opportunity to fill out applications for a coveted CWA job. The wind was cold, no doubt numbing hands, ears, feet, and hope. Restlessness developed. The half-dozen police detailed to the area could not cope with the situation. After a plate glass window had been broken, injuring two people, an additional force of twenty policemen was hurriedly sent to quell the disturbance. Emergency steps had to be taken to meet the crisis of registering workers. Herbert Lehman, Governor of New York, made the National Guard Armories in New York

¹⁴New York Times, November 28, 1933, p. 26.

City available to the unemployed while they waited at reemployment centers. By the following day, November 28th, twelve additional branch offices had been opened to help with the rush of job seekers.¹⁵

Applicants were classified in the following order. Ex-servicemen with dependents, who were bona fide residents of the county or state in which the work would be performed, and who were otherwise qualified, received first consideration. Next in priority were non-servicemen with the same qualifications, followed by able-bodied ex-servicemen with no dependents. Unmarried men who had not seen military service occupied the lowest position. After being grouped within the foregoing categories, applicants were further classified according to their skills or specialized training. In Illinois, it is interesting to note, white labor received priority over Negro.¹⁶

A uniform policy was difficult to maintain. In some states labor unions aided employment offices in selecting applicants, but not to the extent that might have been possible in view of the Administration's friendly policy toward labor. Although newspaper reports in New York claimed that union members would receive special favors,

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Federal Civil Works Administration, Rules and Regulations, No. 2, November 15, 1933 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1933). House Subcommittee of Committee on Appropriations, FERA and CWA Hearings, 1934, p. 54. Illinois, "Final Report," p. 33.

actually few workers were selected directly from union lists. In neighboring New Jersey, on the other hand, CWA offices in larger cities relied heavily on unions for recommendation of skilled workers. About one-third of Mississippi's skilled workers likewise acquired jobs with the aid of labor unions, which relayed approved lists to the employment office. In Montana, 3,000 CWA workers were employed by the U. S. Employment Service and 1,500 through unions.¹⁷

A number of complaints arose over alleged hiring irregularities. Many grievances resulted from failure of some localities to give preference to veterans.¹⁸ Representative Charles V. Truax asserted that this was particularly true in Ohio.¹⁹ Still other objections were made by people who forgot, or were unaware of, the purpose of the Civil Works Administration. Charges were made that people in "comfortable" circumstances had obtained work, and occasionally that several members of one family received jobs with the CWA while others with no means of

¹⁷Only 901 workers from eleven locals were hired. New York Civil Works Administration, "Review of C. W. A. Activities in New York State" (1934), pp. 16-17, National Archives. New Jersey, "Final Report," p. 43. Mississippi, "Final Report," p. 2D. Montana Civil Works Administration, "State Civil Works Administration for Montana" (n. d.), p. 21, National Archives.

¹⁸Idaho Civil Works Administration, "Review of Civil Works Activities in the State of Idaho" (n. d.), p. 14, National Archives.

¹⁹U. S., Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 2d Sess., 1934, LXXVIII, Part 2, p. 1940.

support were registered but never placed.²⁰ Massachusetts Representative Charles Gifford complained that "many wealthy communities . . . promptly jumped in and grabbed a lot of this relief money, spending it on things which they . . . should never have spent it for. The same is true of individuals. Possibly a million men have been placed on C. W. A. rolls who would not have had a job even in good times."²¹

Now and then unscrupulous politicians attempted to create the impression of granting job preferences. If an individual approached them for assistance, they would write to the employment office requesting that the person be given a job. If, in the normal course of events, the applicant were selected the politician would take credit, and the rumor of political preference would begin. In Pennsylvania the CWA discouraged the practice by threatening to publish such letters.²²

Some basis for the claims of discrimination probably existed. With only four million jobs to offer ten million people, it is reasonable to assume that many worthy individuals did unaccountably fail to obtain work while others no more qualified were put on the payroll. However, it is

²⁰Mrs. Thomas O'Berry to A. Williams, January 10, 1934, CWA Records, State Series.

²¹U. S., Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 2d Sess., 1934, LXXVIII, Part 2, p. 1190.

²²Pennsylvania, "Final Report," pp. 65-66.

possible that in many cases chance, aggravated by the need for haste, rather than outright discrimination on the part of either CWA officials or the National Reemployment Service, accounted for the discrepancies.

Hours and Wages

Although short of its goal of employing four million people by the middle of December, the Civil Works Administration was well under way after its first month of operation. By the end of the first week 1,108,692 persons received CWA checks, and by the 21st of December 3,418,431 were on the payroll. The four million mark was reached in the week ending January 11, 1934. A week later the peak of employment was reached with 4,263,120 workers.²³ The process, once underway, was difficult to halt. Indeed this became a pronounced problem after the beginning of 1934.

Hours of labor and wages on civil works projects were fixed in accordance with regulations established by the Public Works Administration. The CWA adopted a thirty-hour week with a maximum eight-hour day for all occupations except administrative and supervisory positions. These were set up as thirty-nine-hour-a-week jobs.²⁴ In order to provide maximum employment, the CWA Rules and Regulations

²³U. S., Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 2d Sess., 1934, LXXVIII, Part 2, p. 1940. FERA Report, June, 1936, p. 37.

²⁴FERA Report, December, 1933, p. 6.

ordered that human labor must be used in lieu of machinery whenever practical. No one under sixteen could be hired.

The Rules and Regulations also stated that CWA employees should receive "just and reasonable wages, which shall be sufficient to provide . . . a standard of living in decency and comfort." For the purpose of determining minimum rates, the United States was divided into three zones as follows:

Southern zone	
Skilled labor	\$1.00 an hour
Unskilled labor40
Central zone	
Skilled labor	1.10
Unskilled labor45
Northern zone	
Skilled labor	1.20
Unskilled labor50 ²⁵

Salaries of those employed under Civil Works Service were paid from relief funds and were not based on the minimum zone scale. On November 25th Hopkins sent the following telegram to all state administrators in reference to pay for CWA employees:

²⁵Federal Civil Works Administration, Rules and Regulations, No. 1. The states were divided as follows. Southern zone: South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Arkansas, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arizona, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico; Central zone: Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Tennessee, Colorado, Utah, District of Columbia, California, North Carolina, West Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, Kansas, and Nevada; Northern zone: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington.

Effective at once wage rates for all persons employed on projects directly relating to relief offices such as nursing services, interviewing, and investigating, work in sewing and canning centers, etc. and all persons employed on projects such as vocational education, adult education, nursery schools, etc. shall be paid the prevailing wage rate in the particular community for the type of work done and in no circumstances less than thirty cents an hour. Wages for these workers must be paid from local, state, or federal relief funds and not from CWA funds or through CWA disbursing officers.²⁶

These rates, relatively high for the depression year of 1933, were based on an identical scale established by the Board of Public Works prior to the formation of the CWA. Because funds for the Civil Works Administration had been derived from the PWA, Hopkins believed himself obligated to adopt the same scale.²⁷ However, exceptions were made. Where prevailing union wages exceeded the amount for either skilled or unskilled work, the CWA correspondingly paid rates above the minimum. On the other hand, the minimum for unskilled work was abandoned on highway projects when other rates already had been agreed upon by the Bureau of Public Roads.²⁸ In Puerto Rico, where skilled

²⁶Telegram, Hopkins to State Administrators, November 25, 1933, Hopkins Papers.

²⁷U. S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Appropriations, Hearings on H. R. 7525, Federal Emergency Relief and Civil Works Program, 73rd Cong., 2d Sess., 1934, p. 13. Cited hereafter as Senate Committee on Appropriations, FERA and CWA Hearings, 1934.

²⁸Minutes of the CWA Staff Meeting, December 6, 1933, Hopkins Papers. FERA Report, June, 1936, p. 35. Hopkins, Speech to the National Emergency Council, February 1, 1934, Hopkins Papers.

workers at first received forty cents an hour and unskilled employees 16 2/3 cents, the scale was reduced on March 2nd to thirty cents for skilled and 12½ cents for unskilled workers. A strike among Puerto Rican laborers followed which was unsuccessful because of the termination of the CWA program at the end of March.²⁹

The wage scale resulted in one of the biggest headaches of the Civil Works Administration. Almost as soon as it had been adopted, complaints from all sections of the country poured into CWA headquarters. A report from New York disclosed that opposition to "too high wages" came from every county in that state. The Literary Digest reported that workers in Ohio, as well as cotton mill workers, farm hands, and road laborers in the South, were quitting their regular jobs in order to get the higher pay for unskilled labor offered by the CWA.³⁰

Rural areas and small towns were possibly the most vehement in their denunciations of the wage policy. In Colorado, for example, there was little reaction in cities to the wages paid, but in many of the rural counties where rates for unskilled labor rarely exceeded twenty cents an

²⁹Puerto Rico Civil Works Administration, "Report of the Activities of the Civil Works Administration up to March 31, 1934" (n. d.), p. 19, National Archives. New York Times, March 9, 1934, p. 4.

³⁰New York Civil Works Administration, "Review of C. W. A. Activities in New York State" (1934), pp. 38-39, National Archives. "Crisis in Civil Works," Literary Digest, CXVII (February 3, 1934), p. 10.

hour, complaints from small industries and farmers were common.³¹ In the South CWA rates materially exceeded those customary for menial and tenant farm labor which in some instances had dropped to five cents an hour. In predominantly rural Alabama, white land owners accused the CWA of enticing Negro farm laborers away from the farms.³² A resident of Winter Park, Florida, complained that because of the CWA hourly rates "the golf courses here are even short of caddies."³³

Worried by the number of protests, Hopkins brought up the subject at one of his staff meetings:

Another thing is that I think we may readily expect, and we are getting it now: telegrams on wages. I have now this morning from Texas, a pretty determined attack on our wage scale. I don't think anything could be done about it now, but just clear it in our own minds it is coming. Probably there is some merit in it. I personally thought that some of these wages rates [sic] were too high, but people approved those wages who were far more conservative than I am, and put their names on those wage rates. I am inclined to think no matter what the public relation will say to us, we have got to use those rates.³⁴

³¹Colorado Civil Works Administration, "Review of Civil Works Administration Activities in Colorado" (n. d.), p. 38, National Archives.

³²Maryland Civil Works Administration, "Civil Works Administration Activities in Maryland" (n. d.), p. 169, National Archives. Walter Wilber, "Special Problems of the South," The Annals, CLXXVI (November, 1934), p. 53. Alabama, "Final Report," p. 138.

³³Arthur M. Harris to Hopkins, December 11, 1933, Hopkins Papers.

³⁴Minutes of the CWA Staff Meeting, December 6, 1933, Hopkins Papers.

During hearings by the Senate Committee on Appropriations in mid-February, Administrator Hopkins publicly stated that he did not believe the CWA should revise its rates as long as funds from the PWA were used. He did, however, declare that if Congress appropriated the funds requested the scale could then be changed. He even suggested that Congress might establish the pay rate.³⁵ Although granting the funds, however, Congress took no action in reference to this acute problem.

Meanwhile pressure upon President Roosevelt to abandon the supposedly high CWA pay grew in intensity. General Hugh S. Johnson, NRA director and one of the most outspoken critics of the CWA policy, attacked the program for paying higher wages than demanded by many of the NRA codes. According to the Washington Post, General Johnson described the CWA scale as "ridiculous," and "practically a dole." In this row with the vitriolic NRA administrator, Hopkins received the President's support. Roosevelt discussed the wage question with Hopkins at a White House luncheon on December 22nd. At a press conference later in the day, the President said there would not "likely" be any alteration in the CWA scale.³⁶

³⁵Senate Committee on Appropriations, FERA and CWA Hearings, 1934, p. 58.

³⁶Washington Post, December 23, 1933, p. 1. Baker and Goldschmidt, Tape Recording. Atlanta Constitution, December 23, 1933, p. 2. Washington Herald, December 23, 1933, p. 1.

No decrease occurred until March 2nd. By that time the CWA was operating on the \$450,000,000 appropriation provided by Congress in February and was no longer indebted to the PWA. This fact, plus the continued public dissatisfaction with the scale, caused Hopkins to consent to a reduction.

As in the case of the Civil Works Service, the new policy provided that prevailing rates in each locality would determine CWA wages provided that the pay would in no instance fall below a minimum of thirty cents an hour.³⁷ The new ruling had varying effects on the states. As early as February, the Alabama and Iowa administrations had replaced the official scale with scales of their own. In Indiana, on the other hand, many local units refused to abide by the March 2nd order with resulting confusion.³⁸ Wage scale difficulties continued throughout the CWA's existence.

Undoubtedly the CWA, operating on limited funds from the beginning, should have scaled down its wages much earlier. The criticism that Hopkins feared would result if the Civil Works Administration ignored the rates established by the PWA would likely have been small.

³⁷FERA Report, June, 1936, p. 39.

³⁸Alabama, "Final Report," p. 138. Iowa Civil Works Administration, "Report," Vol. I (1934), n. p., National Archives. Indiana Civil Works Administration, "A History of Indiana State Civil Works Administration, November 15, 1933 to March 31, 1934" (1934), p. 50, National Archives.

Instead the criticism that did occur because of the adherence to PWA regulations did much harm to the program. Many businessmen and farmers would doubtlessly have reacted more favorably if the CWA had not maintained the high wage level. A certain amount of idealism was common to the CWA officials and influenced their reluctance to lower the pay rates. They felt sincere sympathy for the plight of the workingman. Even when they later reduced the rate to thirty cents, it remained relatively high. Obviously they wanted to see laborers making wages which would afford them more than a subsistence level of living, or as the Rules and Regulations stated, "a standard of living in decency and comfort." But no matter how valid the basis for their compassion may have been, the high wage rate drew the CWA into a vortex of wrath that did much to cast the whole program in an unfavorable light.

The reaction of the federal CWA staff to the altered wage policy may be illustrated by an amusing incident recalled by Baker and Arthur Goldschmidt. Upon hearing of the reduction Goldschmidt stormed into Baker's office sharply criticizing him for the decision. Baker, Goldschmidt remembers, retorted that he had no right to address him in such a manner. Angrily, Goldschmidt set to work drafting a letter of resignation only to receive a summons from Baker a short time later. To his amazement, Goldschmidt found the Assistant Administrator in a jovial mood. Shortly

after their meeting, Baker relates, he went to Harry Hopkins's office and scolded him for abandoning the minimum wage scale. Hopkins in his turn curtly informed Baker that he had no business speaking to him that way. Then, regaining his composure, he confessed that he had fallen into the same pattern of reaction and had only a short time earlier roundly berated Roosevelt for abandoning the scale. He was coolly reminded that he had no right to address the President in such a manner.³⁹ Regardless, however, of the dissatisfaction that Hopkins and his assistants privately felt over the new ruling, a moderate reduction of the minimum wage scale was brought about.

In addition to the problems of selecting employees and establishing wage and hour policies, the Civil Works Administration was also confronted with the dilemma of assuring each worker that he would receive his weekly pay. A reliable system whereby wages could be computed and checks written had to be established in the first week of operation. The Veterans's Administration, with its network of offices throughout the country, was pressed into service as distributing agent. The Treasury Department was given the mammoth task of printing the CWA checks, up to that time the largest single order that it had handled. The first checks had to be printed within a matter of days. Almost at the last minute the Treasury procured a sufficient

³⁹Baker and Goldschmidt, Tape Recording.

number of check-writing machines and enough paper and ink. With the aid of trains and Army airplanes the checks arrived in time. Meeting the payroll continued to be a problem because of the multitude of hindrances that seemed constantly to arise. In mid-December a shortage of paper and ink occurred.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, somehow the payroll was met each time.

Assistant disbursing officers in each state were designated to sign the checks and the amounts were drawn in their names on the United States Treasury. The Treasury Department furnished the forms. Weekly reports from the state administrations concerning the number on the payroll and total wages were given in telegraphic reports followed by more detailed analytical forms.⁴¹ The state administrations were expected to keep close tab on all activities of the local agencies, including payment of salaries.

In order to dispel any doubts that bankers and merchants might have concerning the CWA checks, Roosevelt gave public assurance that they might be cashed without hesitation. In one instance a large advertisement appeared in an Atlanta newspaper appealing to businesses to honor the CWA checks.⁴²

⁴⁰Ibid. New York Times, November 21, 1933, p. 1.

⁴¹Federal Civil Works Administration, Rules and Regulations, No. 2. Gill to All Civil Works Administrators, January 11, 1934, CWA Records, General Subject Series.

⁴²Frank Neely to Hopkins, November 24, 1933, Roosevelt Papers. Atlanta Constitution, November 25, 1933, p. 5.

A story circulated among CWA officials in Washington in which the workers themselves allegedly exhibited skepticism concerning the checks. According to this tale, employees on a certain project in Missouri, convinced that the checks given them by a local paymaster were of no value or at least only a form of devalued scrip, became so angered that they put a rope around the paymaster's neck. Fortunately, a few "cooler" heads prevailed and the men were persuaded to see if a merchant would honor the questionable pieces of paper. They sent a committee to the local grocer, who agreed to cash them. The paymaster was not hanged, but he had to remove the rope himself.⁴³ Apocryphal though this story may be, it illustrates the unfamiliarity of many citizens of that period with federal government checks, which were much less common than they became later.

Safety

One of the problems which confronted the CWA concerned the promotion of safety. John Carmody, Chief Engineer of the Civil Works Administration, became immediately interested in the development of a safety organization. In fact, the morning Carmody first reported to work he inquired about such a program. None existed. Carmody, who had worked ten years in the steel industry, in which the safety-first movement received its initial impetus, demanded that

⁴³Baker and Goldschmidt, Tape Recording.

something be done. That same day he telephoned W. H. Cameron, National Safety Council Director, urging him to come to Washington. At Carmody's insistence, Cameron and his "top safety engineer," Sidney Williams, arrived in Washington on the following day. At two o'clock that afternoon Cameron, Williams, and Carmody presented the outline of a safety plan to Hopkins who approved the suggestion and urged that a director be found at once. Carmody persuaded Cameron to spare Sidney Williams for the job.⁴⁴

Williams immediately began a concerted effort to establish safety programs throughout the network of CWA projects. Within two weeks he had set up safety departments in thirty states and within an additional 10 days had completed the organizational task in the remaining states. The number of safety directors and assistants totaled nearly 18,000. The Washington office acted in a coordinating and advisory capacity.⁴⁵

Notwithstanding the early delay, campaigns promoting safety on the job were effectively begun. Approximately 70,000 persons received first-aid training.⁴⁶ The cost

⁴⁴"Reminiscences of Carmody," Papers of John M. Carmody, Group 47, Roosevelt Library. Cited hereafter as Carmody Papers.

⁴⁵Baker, "Report Upon the Civil Works Administration," p. 10.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 11.

of the program amounted to seventeen cents per person. The cost of accidents, in terms of number of victims and amount of compensation, would undoubtedly have been much more. As a matter of fact several Congressmen regarded accident compensation as inordinately high. By February, 1934, approximately 14,000 accidents, including 146 injuries which resulted in death, had occurred on CWA jobs. The cost was slightly over \$14,000,000. "Safety," wrote Hopkins several years later, "was a valuable investment for CWA."⁴⁷

The safety program illustrates the CWA's reliance on local initiative and response. Success of protecting laborers from accidents varied from one project to another. The Federal Civil Works Safety Office declared that by the end of operations the accident rate had fallen to half the expected number of lost-time injuries and deaths.⁴⁸ This would be difficult to determine, for other factors must be considered. The entire program began to be demobilized shortly after the states had finally established safety programs. Furthermore, after two months of operations the workers had probably become more familiar with their duties than they had been at the start and were possibly in better physical condition. To a greater degree

⁴⁷U. S., Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 2d Sess., 1934, LXXVIII, Part 2, p. 1941. Hopkins, Spending to Save, p. 136.

⁴⁸Baker, "Report Upon the Civil Works Administration," p. 10.

the outcome of the safety campaign depended upon the enforcement of the safety policies and rules by local supervisors as well as the attitude of the engineers who directed the activities of the many projects.

Complaints and Other Problems

A multitude of complaints prevailed in the field of labor relations, most of which were handled by local grievance committees whose membership varied in number and composition from state to state. Usually they were selected by local or state CWA headquarters from among representatives of organized labor, professional groups, or business. Wyoming, the only state in which grievance committees were not used, assigned the state CWA field engineers to investigate labor complaints during their regular inspection tours.⁴⁹

Besides complaints of hiring irregularities, accusations that CWA workers received disproportionately high pay, and distress over curtailment, one of the most common grievances concerned the classification of laborers into skilled and unskilled categories. "Just because a man can pick up a brick," one Florida administrator remarked, "he is not a bricklayer."⁵⁰ Charges that men

⁴⁹Wyoming Civil Works Administration, "Review" (n. d.), p. 74, National Archives.

⁵⁰Florida Civil Works Administration, "Review of C. W. A. Activities in Florida: Preliminary Draft" (1934), p. 67, National Archives.

classified as unskilled were required to perform skilled work occurred frequently. William Green, President of the American Federation of Labor, declared that various local CWA officials did not treat skilled workers fairly. A multitude of other complaints ranged from personal incompatibility between workers and supervisors to discrimination against Negroes.⁵¹ These grievances were for the most part handled within the framework of the grievance committees. But scattered reports that farmers who cooperated in the Agricultural Adjustment Administration were not given placements on CWA projects aroused more than local attention. On January 18th, Assistant Administrator Baker sent letters to all CWA administrators stating that "if any such discrimination has taken place, it is unauthorized and should be discontinued in all future placements." Farmers were to be hired on the same basis as other groups.⁵²

Demands that work be distributed among more of the unemployed plagued the program from the beginning. A plan of rotation was suggested whereby those who first received employment would be given a chance to work a period of

⁵¹California, "Final Report," p. 107. William Green to Carmody, January 9, 1934, CWA Records, General Subject Series. District of Columbia Civil Works Administration, "History of C. W. A." (April 21, 1934), p. 11, National Archives.

⁵²Baker to All Civil Works Administrators, January 18, 1934; Bruce McClure to the Honorable H. F. Jones, January 23, 1934, CWA Records, General Subject Series.

perhaps a few weeks and then would be replaced by other unemployed people. The process, known as "staggering," was at first discouraged by the federal civil works authorities. "We are absolutely opposed to staggering," Aubrey Williams wrote as late as December 27th. But by January 2nd, Hopkins had decided to allow a limited amount of staggering among farmers and crews in towns of 2500 or less provided that the total cost remained the same. He ordered that in no case should wages or hourly totals be increased. By mid-January, fifteen states, eight of them southern, were allowed to stagger workers in rural areas.⁵³ The new policy meant that more people could be given work. It also suggested that, in the effort to stretch civil works jobs to accommodate as many as possible, the CWA finally came to consider need at least an indirect factor.

Some opposition to the policy occurred. It appeared to discriminate unfairly against rural workers. "We have a leg to stand on," remarked Aubrey Williams in reply to one charge of discrimination, "because they [rural workers] have a horse, cow, chickens and the fellow in Little Rock hasn't a thing." Appearing before the House Appropriations Committee, Hopkins stated his own reservations. "The

⁵³Telegram, Baker to Lawrence Westbrook, November 29, 1933, CWA Records, General Subject Series. Williams to H. W. Fulks, December 27, 1933; John Williams to Emil F. Bertsch, January 2, 1934; Telephone call, Williams to Mrs. Thomas O'Berry (Memorandum), January 12, 1934; Telephone call, Frank Bane to Williams (Memorandum), January 12, 1934.

difficulty of staggering," he pointed out, "is that if you divide up among too many, finally none have anything."⁵⁴

Staggering provides an interesting example of the frustrations that beset the CWA. Again and again, Hopkins and his staff found that whenever they adopted a solution to one difficulty, a new one arose. Perhaps this would not have been the case if there had been more time in which to prepare.

In spite of the number of grievances, strikes were not common, although some such disturbances occurred in New York and Pennsylvania. In both states a number of organized protests resulted when orders were given in January to reduce the total working hours. The first strike in New York occurred at Bear Mountain. It involved 2,700 men and was accompanied by fist fights and the haranguing of a few agitators. According to the New York Times, "several Communists, attempting to block negotiations between workers and the CWA, received severe beatings."⁵⁵

The extent of Communist influence cannot be precisely determined. One or two rather small demonstrations by a Communist organization called the "United Front" occurred in Denver, Colorado, but apparently received little or no

⁵⁴Telephone call, Williams to W. R. Dyess (Memorandum), January 12, 1934, CWA Records, State Series. House Subcommittee of Committee on Appropriations, FERA and CWA Hearings, 1934, p. 56.

⁵⁵Pennsylvania, "Final Report," p. 64. New York Times, December 5, 1933, p. 2.

support from CWA employees.⁵⁶ The New York Daily Worker said nothing about the CWA's establishment until its November 17th issue. Then a small statement relating to the placement of the unemployed on CWA jobs was tucked down at the bottom of page one. Even at that early date the article revealed a hostile attitude. "There are a million and a quarter jobless in New York City alone and even according to Roosevelt's rosy promises, which are never kept, the maximum jobs promised are 125,000 for New York City."⁵⁷

When a scattering of disturbances broke out in early December, many of them widely believed to be Communist inspired, the Daily Worker began printing a greater number of stories about the CWA, all disparaging in tone. It portrayed the CWA officials as petty tyrants, completely callous to the welfare of the workers. One vituperative article, which may serve as an example of the paper's stand, appeared in the January 1st issue:

Bayonets and sawed-off shot guns in the hands of National Guardsmen was Detroit's New Year's greetings to C. W. A. workers.

Guards, police and special deputies were stationed outside and inside the Kerr Building Saturday, where hundreds of C. W. A. workers waited in line all day clamoring vainly for their pay.

The workers were in an angry mood because they had been sent from one place to another time after time for their pay. . . . On December 23, when no pay came, the workers on the C. W. A. projects at Joseph Campau

⁵⁶Colorado, "Final Report," p. 38.

⁵⁷New York Daily Worker, November 17, 1933, p. 1.

and Davison Aves., tore up the street car tracks and tipped over a street car.⁵⁸

From the latter part of November to the end of March, the Daily Worker continued to condemn the administration and policies of the Civil Works Administration.

All strikes and discord cannot, however, be attributed to Communist activities. Incidents such as that which occurred on a cold morning at the entrance of New York City College on 129th street did not erupt because of outside agitation. According to the New York Times, 500 men who had been ordered to report to the college on the morning of January 17th received slips of paper informing them that no jobs would be available and that they would be notified later if work could be found for them. Disappointed and cold, the men gathered in groups. Some claimed that they had been sent several times to the college and had always been turned away. When a few became vociferous in their disappointment, a police emergency truck with fifteen officers arrived on the scene. The crowd dispersed. One man was arrested and given a suspended sentence.⁵⁹

Nor could the riot in the eastern Tennessee town of Dayton be attributed to the Communists.irate citizens there, impatient with the slow progress of relief, stormed the CWA and FERA offices and either frightened, or forced,

⁵⁸Ibid., January 1, 1934, p. 1.

⁵⁹New York Times, January 18, 1934, p. 15.

the local officials out of the county. The National Guard had to be sent to Dayton to restore order.⁶⁰

In a few states disagreements resulted between the CWA and labor unions. In San Francisco the Construction Workers Industrial Union complained of unfair practices during the CWA's curtailment. Regardless of "the size of their family and their needs," union members were apparently layed off before non-union men.⁶¹ Trade unions in Salem, Oregon, resented a local policy of requiring all laborers to work on Saturdays and later vigorously protested the wage reduction initiated on March 2nd.⁶² In the San Francisco and Oregon cases arbitration boards, or grievance committees, were able to work out peaceful solutions, thereby avoiding the violence that characterized the incidents in New York City and Dayton.

Disputes with organized labor were the exception rather than the rule. Nearly all of the other states maintained harmonious relationships with unions. Even as noteworthy as the Dayton and New York cases may be, or the incidents described by the Daily Worker, they were not typical of the civil works program. Despite many labor

⁶⁰Tennessee Civil Works Administration, "Review of Civil Works Administration Activities in Tennessee," Part I (n. d.), p. 73, National Archives.

⁶¹J. G. Livingston, Construction Workers Industrial Union of San Francisco, to Roosevelt, March 8, 1934, Roosevelt Papers.

⁶²Oregon, "Final Report," pp. 98-99.

problems, strikes, riots, and other disorders were rare. Unfortunately, those that did occur, together with the Civil Works Administration's relatively high standard of pay and its refusal to classify applicants on the basis of need, generated much hostile criticism and misrepresentation. The CWA's bold approach to unemployment often exceeded the bounds of public understanding.

CHAPTER V

PROJECTS

The Civil Works Administration directed an impressive quantity and variety of employment during its short existence. Between mid-November and March 31st it launched 177,600 projects throughout the forty-eight states and the territories of Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.¹ It undertook, among other things, the elimination of chinch bugs in Indiana, the restocking of wildlife in Alaska, the construction of a three-ton calculating machine at the University of Pennsylvania, the sealing-up of abandoned coal mines, and the compilation and analysis of climatic data from the Soviet Union. Most projects were considerably more mundane. Approximately 35 per cent of the total expenditures for the program involved road construction and repair. Work was done on nearly 255,000 miles of streets, alleys, and roads. Construction and repair of public buildings accounted for another 60 per cent.²

¹"Projects," CWA Publications, Vol. II.

²Gill, "The Civil Works Administration," Municipal Year Book, 1937, pp. 424-25.

Despite the preponderance of such works, a sufficient diversification existed in all parts of the country to provide employment for individuals of nearly all skills.

State and Local Projects

All projects were classified as either local, state, or federal. The planning of the project determined the classification. Thus, activities planned by a federal or state agency were classified respectively as federal or state projects, and those planned by local agencies as local projects. The primary source for plans for local works were the local governmental agencies, although some plans were initiated by local Civil Works Administrations. While responsibility for administering the plans rested with each civil works office, it was under no circumstances to interfere with the obligations of local government. The CWA might undertake only those jobs which city, county, or state governments could not perform themselves.

No worthy project could be launched unless plans had been worked out. This, of course, took time and the Civil Works Administration did not have sufficient time. It had to rely heavily on plans that had been already devised. Nearly all communities possessed plans for improvements or repair of streets, roads, schools, and other public property that had been devised at some time in the past and shelved for lack of funds. In urban centers, city planning

committees frequently had backlogs of such plans which could be put into operation almost immediately.

Plans for local projects had to be approved first by county or municipal Civil Works Administrations, then by state and federal offices. The procedure to be followed required the agency submitting a plan to obtain from the local CWA office application papers entitled CWA Form L-3. Three copies had to be filled out with a description of the proposed work and estimates of material and labor needed. About a month after the beginning of the CWA the first forms were replaced by CWA Form L-3a, which required more specific data.³

When a requested project received approval by a local Civil Works Administration, two of the three copies of the application were then forwarded to the state office. The state CWA offices exerted direct control over local offices and could either approve or reject a proposal. In the event that the state office approved any suggested activity, it would keep one copy of the application form and send one to Washington.⁴ The federal headquarters rarely disapproved of any plan that had once received approval by the state. Only when allegations of graft or

³Federal Civil Works Administration, Rules and Regulations, No. 1. Missouri, "Final Report," p. 47. Mississippi, "Final Report," p. 18.

⁴FERA Report, December, 1933, p. 15. New Jersey, "Final Report," p. 39. Hopkins to All CWA Administrators, January 22, 1934, CWA Publications, Vol. II.

inefficiency arose would the federal authorities intervene.⁵

Not all CWA projects were locally planned. Some were proposed by state and federal agencies and designated state or federal projects. These, unlike the local projects, were approved only by the federal or state CWA headquarters, according to the origin of the plan. Most non-local projects were federally initiated. Relatively few were originated by state agencies.⁶ Nevertheless, regardless of whether a project had been planned and approved on the state, local, or federal level, the responsibility for carrying it out rested ultimately with the local Civil Works Administration of the area in which the work would be performed. The men employed on non-local projects were hired by the local CWA's and came out of their allotted quota of workers. The materials and other costs were likewise supplied and administered by the local CWA agencies.⁷ In fact the only difference between local CWA projects and state and federal ones lay in the source of the plans and the initial approval. All projects were

⁵For example, see pp. 161-65.

⁶Further discussion of state and federal projects follows on pp. 135, 137-43.

⁷CWA employees were considered to be employed by the federal government regardless of whether they worked on local, state, or federal projects. This was one distinction between the CWA and the work relief program of the FERA. Under the FERA, relief workers were not regarded as federal employees.

administered locally. At the same time, the state and federal headquarters had power to intervene in the affairs of any project while the local offices had no veto over state or federal projects. Thus final authority over policy as well as veto power rested with the federal administrators.

Local projects constituted the largest group of CWA undertakings. Without the cooperation of civic groups, which were generally eager to supply plans for improvement or repair, the Civil Works Administration would have been unable to operate. The local projects were the backbone of the CWA. In Minnesota local projects utilized nearly 90 per cent of the total 104,946 persons employed during the peak of the program. The remaining 10 per cent were employed on state or federal assignments. The Kansas CWA, with 3,200 projects, had only twenty-seven federal projects and just thirty-five initiated by the state.⁸ These were typical. As in all other states, local projects represented the vast majority of work undertaken.

The territories, however, were generally an exception. There the territorial or federal agencies originated plans for most of the work to be done. In Puerto Rico, which had the largest CWA program, 125 of the 213 projects were proposed by the Insular government. Only eighty were of the

⁸FERA Report, December, 1933, p. 18. Minnesota, "Final Report," p. 86. Kansas, "Final Report," p. 43.

local variety. In the Virgin Islands, where the number of men to be employed was set at 3,000, all enterprises were planned by the United States Department of Interior.⁹ But these cases were exceptions. Any success achieved by the Civil Works Administration may be attributed in large part to the initiative shown by local agencies.

As already pointed out, decentralization was the key to the organization of the Civil Works Administration. It would have been impossible, and tactless, for the federal office to plan and supervise all projects, and it would have been time-consuming for it to investigate every proposal submitted by state organizations. Although the decentralized system may have encouraged inefficiency and the development of graft, it also made possible early and rapid organization and operation of projects.

The task confronting the state and local offices, particularly during the first month, can only be described as tremendous. Aside from registering applicants, assigning jobs, procuring materiel, and supervising projects, they also studied and approved hundreds of requests and plans for projects. Final decisions had to be rendered within a period of days. In Arizona an average of two days elapsed between the presentation of a plan and its

⁹Puerto Rico, "Final Report," p. 18. Minutes of the CWA Staff Meeting, November 25, 1933, Hopkins Papers. The Virgin Islands quota was later raised to 4,000, Telegram, Baker to Governor Pearson, December 13, 1933, CWA Records, State Series.

acceptance or rejection. By allowing requests to be made by telephone the Connecticut CWA could reach a decision within twenty-four hours. In most areas the Civil Works Administrations set up double shifts of clerical workers and administrators.¹⁰ According to a New York Herald Tribune account, Travis H. Whitney, CWA administrator for New York City, died as the result of overwork. While conferring with his deputies, he slumped over his desk and died several days later.¹¹

Another death from overwork allegedly occurred in Nacagdoches, Texas. During January, rumors circulated claiming that a Miss La Faye Dearing had been compelled to work ninety-seven hours in one week and that she had died as a result. Investigation by the federal CWA yielded the information that Miss Dearing had been in poor health for several months preceding her appointment by the Nacagdoches County Relief-CWA office. It further disclosed the fact that she had not worked ninety-seven hours in any single week, but had very likely worked from fifty-six to seventy hours.¹² This was not unusual. Other office employees

¹⁰Arizona Civil Works Administration, "Federal Civil Works Projects in the State of Arizona" (1934), p. 20, National Archives. FERA Report, December, 1933, p. 18.

¹¹New York Herald Tribune, January 9, 1934, in "Newspaper Clippings," Vol. VIII, n. p., Hopkins Papers.

¹²Mrs. W. W. Keeting to Frances Perkins, January 22, 1934; Memorandum, W. G. Carnahan to C. B. Brown, February 11, 1934, Hopkins Papers.

worked just as long. The report is interesting, for while it may have been an attempt to disclaim responsibility for the woman's death, it inadvertently dramatized the fact that office employees in Nacogdoches county, and presumably in other localities, worked exceedingly long hours during the early stages of the program.

A large portion of the first activities were less worthy than later ones which were generally better prepared. This was partly due to the many FERA-financed projects that were incorporated into the CWA in the beginning. These projects had to be improved and new and better ones started as soon as possible. This was at first a slow process. In Pennsylvania only three new activities were approved during the first week; before the end of the second week, however, 316 had been cleared, and by the end of the month a little over 2,000 had been activated. A total of 7,561, or 80 per cent of all works in Pennsylvania had been approved by the end of the fifth week.¹³

In the wake of this rapid expansion the state civil works agencies proved to be an important part of the program. In order to check and weed out unworthy projects, continuous inspection was necessary. In most states engineers made tours throughout the state, or in specifically designated areas, in order to see that work conformed to standards. The engineers also reviewed all requests for

¹³Pennsylvania, "Final Report," p. 91.

projects. Only upon recommendation of the engineering staff would the state administrations approve any new enterprise. In Pennsylvania eighteen districts were formed with one field engineer for each. Early in December the Iowa CWA organized a corps of field inspectors resembling the Pennsylvania engineers. Iowa, however, assigned two engineers to each district. In Texas the district engineers were called field supervisors.¹⁴ Regardless of their titles, all performed similar duties. Contrary to what might be expected, there was little or no duplication between activities of the federal field representatives and the state field inspectors. The field representatives investigated matters which the state officials could not adequately handle, as for example cases in which complaints concerning specific projects or a particular administrator became so pronounced that federal investigation seemed warranted.¹⁵

A further example of state power may be found in Illinois where the state CWA completely took over a sewer construction project in Harvey when reports reached state headquarters that the work was not managed efficiently. After a personal investigation by the state Director, the

¹⁴Ibid., p. 56. Iowa, "Final Report," n. p. Texas Civil Works Administration, "A Record of Achievements by the Texas Civil Works Administration" (n. d.), pp. 7-8, National Archives.

¹⁵See above, p. 72.

Illinois CWA relieved the local office of all responsibility for the undertaking. It also took over work designed to level the banks of the Chicago drainage canal that was sponsored by the Chicago Sanitary Department. Because of the magnitude of the work involved and the number of men employed, the Sanitary Department had been unable to provide adequate supervision.¹⁶

Local projects were frequently combined. In Missouri, for example, ninety-nine separate rural school jobs were consolidated into one. Several road undertakings were combined in the same manner. This not only enabled the Missouri organization to simplify its purchasing and accounting, but also made possible a more efficient program from the standpoint of management and engineering.¹⁷ A project, it should be explained, did not necessarily refer to one activity in one locality. A single enterprise might be operated in any number of places, providing employment for hundreds of people. Local offices could also be consolidated. For example, in western Nebraska where the population was very sparse, several county CWA agencies were combined.

According to CWA regulations, the three major factors to be considered in the selection of a project were how quickly and inexpensively it might be set up and how

¹⁶Illinois, "Final Report," p. 50.

¹⁷Missouri, "Final Report," p. 47.

socially valuable it would be.¹⁸ Because, as previously stated, road and street repairs demanded little preparation or materials, at least a third of the local projects were confined to work of that nature. They required only picks, shovels, and other hand tools. Road work amounted to 70 per cent of the civil works activities in Kansas and to nearly 50 per cent in Oklahoma, Minnesota, and South Carolina.¹⁹ In states with larger urban populations, construction and repair of schools, parks, swimming pools, sewers, airports, court houses, and other public property was launched. These states relied less heavily on road work than did rural areas. Nevertheless, while such activities accounted for only 35 to 39 per cent of all civil works in such states as Maryland and California, they constituted the largest single activity.²⁰

The total cost of the Civil Works Administration, including wages, amounted to \$925,251,000. The largest part of this sum, \$798,493,600, was expended on improvement of public property, with \$313,290,600 allotted to road and

¹⁸Federal Civil Works Administration, Rules and Regulations, No. 1.

¹⁹Kansas, "Final Report," p. 48. Oklahoma Civil Works Administration, "Review of Activities" (1934), pp. 76-81, National Archives. Minnesota, "Final Report," p. 93. South Carolina Civil Works Administration, "Report of South Carolina Civil Works Administration, November 15, 1933 to April 30, 1934" (n. d.), n. p., National Archives.

²⁰Maryland, "Final Report," p. 188. California, "Final Report," p. 37.

street repairs. Another \$134,346,000 was expended upon buildings.²¹

The importance of each type of program cannot be evaluated only in terms of its size or total cost. Flood control, for example, while costing considerably less than road and street repairs, was an important contribution. In Missouri, south of the Missouri River, flood control measures were extremely valuable. In Idaho and Washington State, several proposed activities had to be either postponed or canceled because of severe floods. In Shoshone County, Idaho, in December and again in January, all CWA workers had to be removed from their jobs and reassigned to flood-control projects. Another flood in March necessitated the use of CWA employees for "clean up" work. Not all the flood control projects were locally sponsored. Several were federal projects, undertaken in cooperation with the Army Corps of Engineers. In Washington State the Civil Works Administration received orders to cooperate with the Army Corps of Engineers to restore flood protection in areas where floods had been most damaging.²²

In St. Louis city beautification assumed considerable importance. A project to plant trees along the city

²¹Gill, "The Civil Works Administration," Municipal Year Book, 1937, p. 431.

²²Missouri, "Final Report," p. 49. Major General E. M. Markham to Hopkins, February 9, 1934, CWA Records, State Series.

streets was undertaken at an estimated cost of \$11,000.

The St. Louis Post Dispatch reported that 230 men took part in the work of planting 17,000 trees. In an editorial the Post Dispatch stated:

Succeeding generations of St. Louisians, who will know about the CWA only from their history books, still will have a visible memento of that great experience. Tree-lined streets, almost 100 miles of them, now are in the making, thanks to a timely collaboration of CWA workers and city planning. For an old city, many parts of St. Louis are surprisingly barren of trees. The program now under way will give verdant beauty and cooling shade to many streets where they are now lacking.²³

A particularly interesting local project took place in Aroostook County in northern Maine. In the fall of 1933 there were 220 families on relief in the community of Presque Isle which had a total population of 4,662. Most of these families were French Canadians who, nearly thirty years before, had migrated to Presque Isle looking for work in the lumber mills. Many had been out of work even before the crash of 1929. Housing had long been a serious problem. Using plans proposed by the Presque Isle city manager, the local CWA organized a housing project. A crew of forty men were sent into the woods to secure lumber while another crew prepared an area in the town in which to build new houses.²⁴ Local ingenuity and initiative, those seasoned American ideals, were thus exploited by the Civil Works

²³St. Louis Post Dispatch, January 12, 1934, p. 2B.

²⁴Maine Civil Works Administration, "Review of Civil Works Administration, State of Maine" (n. d.), pp. 20-23, National Archives.

Administration in the alleviation of a problem that had long plagued the Aroostook community.

In the endeavor to create worthy projects, the CWA was sometimes confronted with a question involving the distinction between private and public property. In Los Angeles the CWA was asked to provide labor for hauling dirt to the site of a new railroad station. The proponents of the plan reasoned that even though the work would be done on private railroad property, the property might be regarded as dedicated to public service. The Civil Works Administration refused to approve the work. In Henryetta, Oklahoma, the local CWA attempted to obtain federal approval of a plan to repair St. Michael's Parochial School. In answer to pleas that the general policy be disregarded, Arthur Goldschmidt wrote: "If this project is not for a public institution, we can make no exceptions to our rules and allow Civil Works workers to be employed on work at this school."²⁵

In Chicago a question again arose concerning civil works on private property. A project sponsored by the city water department was designed to stop the leaks in water pipes throughout the city. In order to eliminate all possible sources of leaks, the water department had found it necessary to enter private homes and buildings. The

²⁵California, "Final Report," p. 6. Goldschmidt to Carl Giles, February 27, 1934, CWA Records, State Series.

federal CWA decided to permit the practice, but in most other cases insisted that CWA labor could only be employed upon public property.²⁶

In late February, 1934, the northeastern portion of the United States experienced one of the heaviest snowfalls in years. In order to keep the CWA free from association with "leaf-raking" or snow-shovelling activities, the federal headquarters had been from the first reluctant to approve snow-removal jobs. But the severity of the storms during February forced them to relax the prohibition, and to permit thirty-three states to assign CWA employees to emergency snow removal. The heavy snowfall caused many states considerable difficulty in carrying through road and street projects. In northern Maine the temperature dropped to 60 degrees below zero and did not rise above 40 below for six consecutive days. In Kansas, all unskilled laborers were reassigned to snow removal.²⁷

In Hawaii, where heavy vegetation took the place of snow as a public nuisance, grass-cutting projects and "picking up of leaves and other kinds of maintenance work" were not allowed. Hawaii had the distinction of being one of the few states or territories to have devised a good

²⁶Telegram, Carmody to W. S. Reynolds, December 15, 1933, CWA Records, State Series.

²⁷New York Times, February 27, 1934, p. 3. District of Columbia, "Final Report," p. C7. Montana, "Final Report," pp. 27-31. Pennsylvania, "Final Report," pp. 114-17. Maine, "Final Report," p. 10. Kansas, "Final Report," pp. 48-49.

work relief program under the FERA. The necessity of almost instantly creating a number of worthy projects, which proved such a problem in many localities, was less difficult in Hawaii.²⁸

Every state had at least a few projects planned and supervised by state agencies. The Connecticut Shell Fish Commission, for example, directed an attempt to destroy the star fish in the public oyster beds along the Connecticut coast. The Alamo similarly became the site of a state sponsored undertaking. The State of Texas purchased it in 1883 and adjacent lands in 1903 and 1931 but attempted no repairs or landscaping. On February 2, 1934, the Texas CWA began tearing down the unsightly buildings that surrounded the Alamo with the objective of improving the entire property.²⁹

A problem which interested the federal and state officials concerned the welfare of industrial workers who were thought to be permanently unemployable. In Hopkins's words they included "coal miners of coal mines . . . and steel workers of steel mills that are never going to open."³⁰

²⁸Hawaii Civil Works Administration, "Report of Works Engineering and Inspection Department, Civil Works Administration and Federal Emergency Relief Administration for the Territory of Hawaii, December 20, 1933 to December 31, 1934" (n. d.), p. 5, National Archives.

²⁹Connecticut, "Final Report," p. 17. Texas, "Final Report," p. 159.

³⁰Minutes of the CWA Staff Meeting, December 12, 1933, Hopkins Papers.

Lawrence Westbrook, director of the Texas CWA, wrote to Hopkins suggesting a plan for construction of a "quasi-municipal New Deal Colony" by the Texas Civil Works Administration. His plan offered a possible solution to the problem by establishing a colony which would be operated without profit under the direction of a "State Colony Authority." Each settler would be given a small area of land, called a "subsistence homestead," upon which he could grow most of his own food. "The investment is amply justified," wrote Westbrook, "by the fact that the cost to the State of maintaining such persons as at present in cities is greater than the amortization costs of establishing the proposed colonies, to say nothing of the fact that the great majority would as colonists not only become self-sustaining, but would become self-reliant, valuable citizens and would produce independent incomes."³¹

The idea was not unique to Texas. In Pennsylvania, two county CWA offices conducted surveys to discover suitable locations for subsistence homesteads and interviewed families who might settle there. The Bureau of Animal Industry initiated a similar project at Beltsville, Maryland, where there were many destitute families.³² CWA employees began preparations for a homestead colony,

³¹Lawrence Westbrook to Hopkins, December 2, 1933, CWA Records, State Series.

³²Pennsylvania, "Final Report," p. 106. FERA Report, December, 1933, p. 27.

constructing drainage systems and sewers, and repairing roads.

The federal administrators discussed the question in a mid-December meeting. Hopkins suggested moving "these whole peoples to the South where it is easy to take care of them." Suggestions for appointing a man to head an investigation of the problem included such recommended qualifications as "open mind," "broad vision," "someone who does not come from Washington," and "a man who has been over in Russia."³³ Despite the interest of the CWA officials in the idea of subsistence homesteads, none was ever constructed by the Civil Works Administration in Texas or elsewhere.

Federal Projects

Hopkins and his assistants had at first planned to allot 1,000,000 men and \$100,000,000 to federal projects. When it proved impossible to organize these as rapidly as had been hoped, Hopkins decided to increase the quotas and budgets of the more easily organized local projects.³⁴

The federal programs were nevertheless established as rapidly as feasible. Unlike the local and state programs which were instigated by municipal and county groups, state agencies, or sometimes by CWA organizations, the

³³Minutes, Staff Meeting, December 12, 1933.

³⁴Baker, "Report Upon the Civil Works Administration," p. 7. Illinois, "Final Report," p. 63.

federal projects were sponsored only by departments or bureaus of the federal government. They had two major purposes: to serve as models for the inspiration of local administrators, and to make possible large, inter-state undertakings.³⁵ For example, a project designed to reduce the acid content of water in a number of Ohio River tributaries was sponsored by the Public Health Service in cooperation with the United States Bureau of Mines. The results would doubtlessly have been obtained with greater difficulty if the undertaking had been left to states bordering the river.³⁶

At the beginning, the federal authorities sent requests to various federal departments and bureaus for suggestions of worthy activities which yielded a large number of plans. Ideas submitted by any department were presented for approval to the Federal Projects Division. Sanction by the state or community in which the work would be performed was not required. Those ideas receiving approval were dispatched to the states involved with instructions to furnish the necessary workers and materials.³⁷ The government could not hire a group of workers and send them out to the states. The designation of

³⁵Baker and Goldschmidt, Tape Recording.

³⁶FERA Report, December, 1933, pp. 24-25.

³⁷Ibid., p. 24. Gill, "The Civil Works Administration," Municipal Year Book, 1937, p. 424. Federal Civil Works Administration, Rules and Regulations, No. 8.

federal projects, therefore, was primarily an administrative distinction. The employees and equipment of the local administrations performed the work which had to be done.

Federal projects, as all state and local ones, could be undertaken only on public property and often involved repair and general improvement. Some work was done on property owned by state and local governments, but by far the largest number were carried out on federal property, typically agricultural experiment stations, government fish hatcheries, national parks, lighthouses, FERA transient camps, and army and navy installations. By the end of December, approximately ninety federal projects had been set up in hundreds of locations throughout the United States.³⁸

As in the case of state and local works, the question of privately owned property again arose. It occurred first in reference to a proposal to seal old, abandoned coal mines. At first Hopkins ruled that because the work would involve technically private property, it could not be permitted. But John Carmody, federal Chief Engineer, was aware of the pollution of streams and rivers caused by these mines and convinced Hopkins of the need for the work. A chemical reaction often occurred in the mines which led to eventual contamination of rivers and streams with a high acid content. By the end of December, 6,572 men, most of them unemployed

³⁸FERA Report, December, 1933, pp. 25-37.

miners from Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky, were employed throughout the coal mining areas sealing up the abandoned mines. This project, sponsored by the Public Health Service, did much to decrease the danger of contamination.³⁹ Nevertheless, the CWA rarely undertook cases which required work on private property. Only in cases which directly affected the public interest or welfare were exceptions permitted.

The federal projects were classified into seven broad categories:

1. Projects benefiting the public health
2. Projects to control or eliminate pests
3. Projects to improve public property
4. Projects having to do with statistical research and surveys
5. Projects to improve, preserve, or survey natural resources
6. Projects for improvement or preservation of public records and documents
7. Projects not properly classifiable under the preceding types⁴⁰

Work on army installations was the largest federal project. By the end of December, 47,159 men had been employed under the supervision of the Quartermaster Corps to make general repairs on buildings and to improve the grounds by landscaping, drainage, and minor construction. No work connected with combat equipment was allowed.⁴¹

³⁹"Reminiscences of Carmody," Carmody Papers. FERA Report, December, 1933, p. 26.

⁴⁰FERA Report, December, 1933, p. 25.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 26.

The Rural Sanitation Project, with nearly 32,000 workers, was the second largest civil works project to be carried out under the auspices of various federal departments or bureaus. The Public Health Department sponsored this particular program. Its purpose was to install sanitary privies, over 200,000 altogether, in many rural communities throughout the country. Ten other health projects designed to eliminate disease-spreading pests employed nearly 72,000 persons. A malaria control project alone employed 29,779.⁴²

By no means did all federal undertakings involve the labor of thousands. The Russian Rainfall Studies Project employed only three. Sponsored by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, the job required persons who could read Russian and involved compilation and analysis of climatic data from the Soviet Union. The information gleaned was used to determine Russia's agricultural potentials. Similar studies already had been made by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics on other leading agricultural nations.⁴³

A Survey of Historic Buildings, sponsored by the Interior Department, employed 1,082 people for the purpose

⁴²C. E. Waller, "A Review of the Federal Civil Works Projects of the Public Health Service," Public Health Reports, Vol. XLIX, Part 2 (July-December, 1934), pp. 963-64. FERA Report, December, 1933, pp. 25-27.

⁴³FERA Report, December, 1933, p. 31.

of measuring buildings of historic value. The information, deposited in the Library of Congress, was designed to serve as an aid to future restoration.⁴⁴

Arthur Goldschmidt was among others of the Washington staff greatly concerned with the problem of developing worthy activities. He had instructed his secretary to admit anyone to his office, even apparent crackpots, for at least a hearing. Not long after the launching of the CWA, a haggard, threadbare man, with mud clinging to his shoes and trouser cuffs, came into Goldschmidt's office and in a Harvard accent asked for an opportunity to talk to Mr. Goldschmidt. The secretary, remembering her orders, reluctantly granted him an appointment. Goldschmidt recalls that the man informed him that his name was Eric Steinlein and that he was a ship designer who had not had a commission since 1929. Steinlein outlined a plan to measure sunken ships in harbors and around the coast of the United States, urging that the information would be of utmost value to the ship designing and building profession. The idea impressed Goldschmidt. He knew that President Roosevelt had a keen interest in ships and boats, and suspected that the President would find the project fascinating. Steinlein's plan received the necessary approval and was designated a part of the Historic Buildings Project. Steinlein, who was placed

⁴⁴"A Brief Description of the Federal Civil Works Administration," CWA Publications, Vol. II.

in charge of the survey, was hired at first as a file clerk until his proposal could be approved.⁴⁵

Professional skills were put to use in other federal projects. Under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institute some 1,100 persons were engaged for archeological excavations. One location of this project was the pueblo village Tuzigoot in Yavapai County, Arizona. Excavations brought to light 415 burial places and around 4,000 artifacts.⁴⁶

The Public Works of Art, sponsored by the Treasury Department, Procurement Division, employed 3,000 artists for the beautification of public buildings.⁴⁷ Like other federally initiated undertakings, the Public Works of Art was designed to demonstrate the potential value of activities that might appear entirely impractical to local administrators.

Civil Works Service Projects

On the state, county, and city level the Civil Works Service provided most of the available civil works jobs for artists, professional people, and women. It gave work to musicians, composers, writers, teachers, seamstresses, as well as painters and sculptors. It should not be confused

⁴⁵Baker and Goldschmidt, Tape Recording.

⁴⁶FERA Report, December, 1933, p. 37. Arizona, "Final Report," p. 30.

⁴⁷FERA Report, December, 1933, p. 30. Gill, "The Civil Works Administration," Municipal Year Book, 1937, p. 425.

with the more limited, federally-sponsored Public Works of Art.

From the start, concern for unemployed women, artists, and people whose skills fell outside the realm of manual labor had been uppermost in the minds of the CWA administrators. It was these people that Aubrey Williams had in mind when he called Hopkins long distance from Oklahoma to outline the germ of the civil works idea. In actual practice, the CWA did not fulfill these early dreams. Only a small segment of the program was devoted to such plans. Most of the projects were designed to accommodate skilled and unskilled manual laborers.

The New York Times suggested that the women's program of the Civil Works Service had been the result of "the combined interest of Mrs. Roosevelt in the unemployed woman and the social relief philosophy of Harry L. Hopkins."⁴⁸ The FERA had instituted a Women's Division in September, 1933, but the problem of unemployed women remained acute.⁴⁹ At Hopkins's suggestion a Women's White House Conference was held on November 20th, presided over by Mrs. Roosevelt. Forty leading women from all parts of the United States attended. Testimony disclosed that there were currently three to four hundred thousand women whose plight warranted

⁴⁸New York Times, December 26, 1933, p. 17.

⁴⁹For administrative background and organization of the CWS, see above, p. 71.

federal action.⁵⁰ Under the CWA women could not be employed on road, street, and building projects. If they were to be helped, different types of work had to be devised.

Because the CWA's initial funds came from the PWA, Hopkins was reluctant to use it for activities unrelated to construction or repair. At a meeting on November 28th, he and his staff decided that all non-construction projects would be financed from relief funds and called Civil Works Service. They further decided to allow the prevailing wage of each locality to determine the pay for CWS workers, provided that it would not be lower than the FERA minimum of thirty cents an hour.

"CWS was a lawyer problem," Jacob Baker recalls. "CWA could only be a public works, so relief money was used for CWS. It was often hard to determine whether it should be CWA or CWS."⁵¹ Indeed this was a difficulty. Some CWA projects, such as the Russian Rainfall Study or the health protection enterprises, could not be classified as public works.

Like other civil works activities, the CWS projects were as a rule initiated by a civic agency and approved successively by local, state, and federal Civil Works Administrations. Because CWS received support from FERA funds,

⁵⁰White House Conference on Emergency Needs of Women, Proceedings, Washington, D. C., November 20, 1933, Hopkins Papers. New York Times, November 21, 1933, p. 1.

⁵¹Baker and Goldschmidt, Tape Recording.

applicants had to take the "means test" required under state relief programs. Aside from this, it was otherwise administered in accordance with Civil Works Administration regulations. The work quotas assigned to the states included CWS jobs.⁵²

The women's projects included sewing, canning, mattress manufacturing, weaving, and various other handicrafts. In many cases these projects were merely transformed by administrative nomenclature from FERA to CWS jobs. In Massachusetts, for example, orders issued in early December transferred 10,500 women on relief to the CWS, thereby increasing the state's total number of women hired under Civil Works Service to 13,000.⁵³ A similar process occurred in other states and territories. Female clerical personnel, however, were usually employed under the CWA and were not directly connected with the CWS.

As mentioned above, the total employment quota for each state included CWS workers. The quotas, as for all phases of the program, were never adequate. When an Arkansas administrator attempted to secure approval for a woman's project requiring 3,500 women, his request was

⁵²Minutes of the CWA Staff Meeting, November 28, 1933, Hopkins Papers.

⁵³Works Progress Administration, "Analysis of Civil Works Program Statistics," June, 1939, CWA Records, General Subject Series. Massachusetts Civil Works Administration, "Review of Civil Works Administration in Massachusetts, November 20, 1933 - March 31, 1934" (April 20, 1934), p. 25, National Archives.

refused. The entire CWS quota for Arkansas was less than a third of that number. By mid-January a total of only 190,000 people had been hired on the various Civil Works Service programs. In California, by February 1st, the number of jobs that had been allotted to the CWS amounted to only 13,679, doubtlessly leaving thousands of women and professional people destitute during the winter of 1933-1934.⁵⁴

The projects established for professional people ranged from attempts to revive ancient skills of pottery, basket weaving, and bread making among the Indians of Arizona to the establishment of symphony orchestras in New York City and Buffalo.⁵⁵ Hopkins may or may not have had an interest in basket making, but he did express enthusiasm for music development. In December, 1933, he cordially endorsed the Civil Works Service promotion of a national music program. "I cannot think of anything more important than music development in this country," he said in a press interview. "I would like to see our bands in beer gardens and other public places. It would encourage people to go out and sit around and talk and forget their troubles."⁵⁶

⁵⁴Arkansas, "Final Report," p. 46. California, "Final Report," p. 46.

⁵⁵Arizona, "Final Report," p. 43. New York Times, December 19, 1933, p. 2.

⁵⁶New York Times, December 19, 1933, p. 2.

Small orchestras, bands, and other musical organizations were formed in many states. By March 1st, twenty such groups gave employment to 352 musicians in southern California. In San Juan, Puerto Rico, a CWS concert band gave two performances a week in a city plaza. A forty-five member orchestra was organized in Atlanta. And in Habersham County, Georgia, the CWS employed musicians to teach music in several communities and in a county CCC camp.⁵⁷

The Civil Works Service established art projects in many states. Like the federally-sponsored Public Works of Art, they were designed to beautify public buildings. Frescoes of the sermon on the mount and other Biblical scenes were painted on the walls of the St. Louis City hospital. "Some people will believe it is a waste," declared Louis La Beaume, CWS director in Missouri, "but it has encouraged artists to continue, most of whom have been without employment and unable to dispose of their paintings. It has encouraged many a young artist to develop himself, and I believe it will bring about a renaissance in American art."⁵⁸

Cultural projects did not exist in all states. Mississippi and Oklahoma, for example, did not have any.⁵⁹

⁵⁷California, "Final Report," p. 5. Puerto Rico, "Final Report," p. 209. Georgia, "Final Report," p. 141.

⁵⁸St. Louis Post Dispatch, January 28, 1934, p. 1.

⁵⁹Mississippi, "Final Report," p. 30. Oklahoma, "Final Report," pp. 76-81.

Projects for actors were lacking in nearly all the states. Plans to establish theater productions were largely unfinished when curtailment orders were issued. Although the FERA minimum of thirty cents an hour was paid to most Civil Works Service employees, artists and other professional people usually received a higher wage ranging from \$27.50 to \$42.50 a week.⁶⁰

The Adult Education Service, one of the largest CWS programs, employed 40,000 teachers, many of whom were assigned to teaching illiterates. In Georgia, adult education classes existed in over 100 counties with students ranging in age from nineteen to ninety. "I want my children to learn to write before they are 38 years old like I am," wrote one student to the state CWA headquarters. "It is not a New Deal," wrote another Georgian in appreciation of the work performed by the CWS. "It is a fresh deck of cards. A new game."⁶¹

There were other phases in the education program of the CWS. A course in rural social work was taught at the University of Missouri under the auspices of the Civil Works Service. It lasted thirteen weeks. The University waived a portion of the fees and students who enrolled were given part-time jobs.⁶²

⁶⁰St. Louis Post Dispatch, January 28, 1934, p. 1.

⁶¹Georgia, "Final Report," pp. 198-200.

⁶²Missouri, "Final Report," pp. 116-17.

In Wisconsin some confusion developed in regard to payment of employees of a University adult education project. When funds for the Civil Works Service were delayed in Wisconsin, the state CWA director attempted to pay salaries out of CWA funds. The federal CWA headquarters informed him that all education projects must be paid for with relief money.⁶³ Apparently even administrators occasionally found it difficult to distinguish between CWA and CWS.

Missouri organized a CWS project for collecting local folklore. Editors of county newspapers cooperated in the undertaking by advertising the type of material wanted. Employees then visited old settlers and any other interested persons to collect their stories.⁶⁴ Some states organized historical records projects for the purpose of collecting and coordinating data found in county court houses. CWS copyists in thirty-six Virginia counties performed this work for wages of forty-five to sixty cents an hour. An historical survey project in Texas drew the following praise from the Dallas Morning News:

That the CWA cannot and should not be extended too far for Treasury ability to finance its needs is obvious. But, while it is lasting, it is doing a real service, not only in supplying employment by way of relief but

⁶³Telegram, C. N. Ward to Corrington Gill, February 19, 1934; Telegram, Gill to Ward, February 21, 1934, CWA Records, State Series.

⁶⁴Missouri, "Final Report," p. 115.

in useful accomplishment by at least a majority of the jobless who have found occupation in its manifold enterprise. The historical survey under the direction of the University of Texas, which has taken the form of indexing newspaper files, is a case in point.⁶⁵

By mid-January, the Civil Works Service, along with the entire CWA program, began to curtail its operations. Early in March the federal CWA abolished all distinction between the CWS and CWA. The change in policy stemmed from the Congressional appropriation in February of \$450,000,000 for the continuation of the civil works program. The additional money, unconnected with the PWA, made it possible for both construction and non-construction projects to be financed from the same source. The change had very little practical effect, however, for by early March many CWS projects had been terminated or greatly curtailed.

The cultural program of the Civil Works Service drew both negative and favorable criticism. In reference to a CWS painting depicting CCC workers in action, the Washington Post charged that the undertaking "smacks of propaganda rather than art." On the other hand, Russell H. Kurtz wrote in Survey magazine that "despite its faults and its difficulties . . . [the CWS] was a grand adventure. . . . and gave America a lift when she badly needed it."⁶⁶

⁶⁵Virginia, "Final Report," p. 17. Dallas Morning News, February 9, 1934, II, p. 2.

⁶⁶Washington Post, February 9, 1934, p. 8. Russell H. Kurtz, "An End to Civil Works," Survey, LXX (February, 1934), p. 37.

Regardless of the merits or shortcomings of the CWS, it marks the first attempt by the United States government to patronize the arts. The Civil Works Service, as well as the entire CWA program, did the "spade work" for the later Works Progress Administration which included not only construction and repair projects but a comprehensive art program as well.

CHAPTER VI

SLINGS AND ARROWS

"The first thing I did," declared a woman whose husband had just received a CWA job, "was to go out and buy a dozen oranges. I hadn't tasted any for so long I had forgotten what they were like."¹ Grateful reaction such as hers was not uncommon. Indeed, despite vociferous complaints, there was wide grassroot support for the Civil Works Administration all during its existence. The following letter to the President is typical of the sentiments of CWA workers:

When before the election you spoke of the "forgotten man", every unemployed man took that as a message to himself, but since you became President your every official act shows that we are no longer "forgotten".

Therefore the undersigned residents of the city of Portland and the state of Oregon, from unemployed who through your help are now working steady again, feeling that we are earning our daily bread instead of living on doles: hereby desire to express our sincere appreciation and heartfelt gratitude to you, our champion.²

¹Lorena Hickok, "Reaction to CWA in December, 1933," Report, December 4, 1933, Hopkins Papers.

²C. W. Lindall to Roosevelt, December 6, 1933, Roosevelt Papers.

Lorena Hickok, a field reporter for the CWA who traveled about the country sampling public opinion, wrote Hopkins: "Two weeks ago today men went to work for the first time under the new CWA set-up. Everything I've heard indicates that the new plan is certainly fulfilling--and possibly exceeding--your hopes for it."³

Approval of the CWA was not limited to laborers. "CWA has served a most satisfactory purpose," remarked a member of Maryland's Old Town Merchants and Manufacturers Association. "It is impossible to tell what might have happened without it. We should not consider ourselves immune to riots and revolutions that break out in other countries. No expense should be spared in finding work for the unemployed."⁴

Favorable editorial comment was also common. The Atlanta Constitution averred that "no single phase of the general relief program has had a more direct and immediate effect than the CWA."⁵ Even the conservative Los Angeles Times gave the civil works program mild praise, describing it as "a combination of altruism and practical philanthropy tinged with an element of marxism [sic]." Although criticizing the CWA for attempting to put into action "the unrealistic Socialist dogma that the world owes every man

³Hickok, Report, December 4, 1933.

⁴Maryland, "Final Report," p. 157.

⁵Atlanta Constitution, December 16, 1933, p. 8.

a living," the Times conceded that "the civil works program has great potential possibilities."⁶

But there were dissenting voices. In an editorial recognizing the benefits of the Civil Works Administration, the Christian Science Monitor also forewarned of the dangers inherent in its organization. "Any long-distance management risks waste, favoritism and ineffectiveness. Unless these are successfully guarded against, relief will become a top-heavy and over-extended system that will fall by its own weight of public opinion and so will leave the needy to suffer."⁷ In one respect the Monitor was wrong. Public opinion never turned against the CWA, although there were many outspoken critics. Its popularity was particularly evident during the curtailment period.⁸ But the Monitor's reference to the dangers of "long-distance management" held an element of truth. While the federal CWA headquarters controlled the bulk of funds and had final authority over projects, it could not control the multiplicity of daily decisions and activities in all the local administrations. As previously explained, the need to commence operations quickly required the use of existing relief agencies. Decentralization to a degree was necessary. While this

⁶Los Angeles Times, January 7, 1934, p. 20.

⁷Christian Science Monitor, December 2, 1933, p. 16.

⁸For examples of public opinion during this period, see pp. 195-97, 209-10.

contributed to the success of the program, it likewise nurtured the blight of corruption.

Reports of dishonesty in the operation of the CWA were made within a week after the President's plea for non-partisanship at the November 15th White House Conference. By late January, reports of graft, political favoritism, and other forms of dishonesty became virtually everyday stories in newspapers and magazines.

Charges of malpractice fell mostly on city and county officials, never on Washington administrators. Apparently most alleged incidents took place in small communities, although many occurred in urban areas.⁹ Among the most frequently charged misdemeanors were political intrigue, fraudulent contracts, bribery, negligence of duty, discrimination, payroll padding, falsification of accounts, and job selling.

The CWA leaders were naturally alarmed by the reports. In a press conference on January 22nd, Hopkins confessed surprise and disappointment over the evidences of corruption. "I never anticipated anything of the kind," he told reporters. "I suppose I'm naive and unsophisticated . . . but I didn't, and I feel badly about it." He admitted that many local directors were incompetent and that some projects, to use his own term, were "lousy."¹⁰ "I am perfectly frank to

⁹House Subcommittee of Committee on Appropriations, FERA and CWA Hearings, 1934, p. 28.

¹⁰New York Times, January 23, 1934, p. 2.

say," Hopkins later testified before the Senate Committee on Appropriations, "that when this enterprise was started, it did not occur to me that people would do this kind of petty chiseling." Regarding the accusations of political favoritism which accounted for "49 out of 50" of the charges made, Hopkins remarked: "The charge is made that Democrats or Republicans cannot get a job. Nine tenths of those are inherent in the fact that when a man does not get a job on civil works he wants to blame somebody for it."¹¹ This was true in many instances. There were simply not enough jobs and many disappointed applicants tended to blame their failure on "politics." In the presence of a few cases of obvious corruption, they jumped readily to the conclusion that the entire program seethed with graft. They grumbled to their families and friends and wrote letters to the papers, to the President, their Congressmen, or to the CWA.

Hostility to the program did not reach any impressive proportions until near the peak of operations, around January 18th. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, very shortly after the CWA's launching reports began to filter into the federal office relating instances of incompetence and unfair employment practices. During the week following November 15th, accounts of political favoritism in Youngstown, Ohio, reached Hopkins, who immediately dispatched

¹¹Senate Committee on Appropriations, FERA and CWA Hearings, 1934, p. 31.

the following telegram to the Ohio CWA Administrator:

Newspaper reports that John J. Farrell of Youngstown has advised Democrats who want relief jobs to register at the city employment bureau and then take the card to Mr. Kearney, clerk of the Board of Election. He is quoted as having said, quote, I cannot promise any jobs but I will try to see that the men are placed, unquote. Please investigate this at once. No civil works funds will be expended in Youngstown if these conditions are true. Civil Works Administration will not tolerate political interference. Please have Civil Works Administration, Youngstown, meet at once so that you may advise me regarding this.¹²

The Youngstown scandal was only the beginning. Soon similar incidents became known not only to the federal administrators but to the general public as well.

Alfred E. Smith, defeated Democratic presidential candidate in 1928 and an opponent of the New Deal, was an early and caustic critic of the Civil Works Administration. Smith served on the editorial staff of the New Outlook magazine during the latter months of 1933. In the December 1st issue he called the CWA a "cover-up" for the failure of the PWA. "Half way between a lemon and an orange," wrote Smith, "is a grapefruit; half way between a public work and a relief work is a civil work."¹³ In reaction to Smith's comparison, the Louisville Courier Journal remarked: "the Prince of Fulton Street appears to have taken on all too much acidity himself."¹⁴ Lorena Hickok

¹²Telegram, Hopkins to Frank D. Henderson, November 23, 1933, CWA Records, State Series.

¹³New Outlook, CLXII (December 1, 1933), p. 11.

¹⁴Louisville Courier Journal, December 1, 1933, p. 6.

wrote that the people of Texas "just laughed when you mentioned Al Smith."¹⁵

Yet by January 24th reports of incompetence and dishonesty had become so numerous that President Roosevelt made his first public reference to it since the November 15th conference. In a statement to the press the President announced that he had been receiving an average of 300 letters a day expressing dissatisfaction with alleged malpractices. Hopkins, he reported, also had been receiving two to three hundred complaints daily.¹⁶

Attempts in mid-January and early February to analyze samplings of letters and telegrams received yielded interesting returns. A report submitted by the FERA Research Section disclosed that during the week ending January 27th the federal FERA-CWA office received 31,000 communications. Analysis of 978 pieces of correspondence selected at random revealed that no more than 5.1 per cent could be classified as messages of praise or expressions of gratitude for jobs or aid received. On the other hand considerably less than a majority--approximately 28 per cent of the total--could be classified as complaints. Of these, 19.9 per cent were charges of political interference and 5.1 per cent concerned discrimination against Negroes. In terms of occupation or affiliation of the writers, three-fifths of the letters and

¹⁵Hickok, Report, December 4, 1933.

¹⁶New York Times, January 25, 1934, p. 1.

telegrams came from laborers and approximately one-fifth from civic groups. Nearly all the messages from civic groups were requests for continuation of the CWA. Many letters, because they were neither hostile nor friendly, were difficult to classify. Many were appeals for investigation of what the writers termed an injustice.¹⁷ The following letter, for example, reports a situation which could have been classified simply as a clash of personalities or a complaint against job discrimination:

Two weeks ago I was put in the C. W. A., being one of the first to be put to work. This made my family happy to know that at last I had steady work, but the second week I was on the job my boss, a man by the name of Bennett, got a personal grievance against me and fired me. I was promised a transfer but was turned down and they took my name off the list. I wish you would look into how they run things here.¹⁸

A similar analysis of 1206 letters and telegrams selected from nearly 16,000 received by FERA-CWA headquarters during the week ending February 3rd yielded results comparable to the January 27th survey.¹⁹

Neither analysis revealed any complaint of CWA sponsored "leaf-raking" projects or of what might be termed "boondoggling," or inefficiency, by the workers themselves.

¹⁷FERA Research Section, "Summary of Mail Analysis, Week Ending January 27, 1934," Roosevelt Papers.

¹⁸Frank Morganto to Ickes, December 12, 1933, CWA Records, General Subject Series.

¹⁹FERA Research Section, "Summary of Mail Analysis, Week Ending February 3, 1934," Roosevelt Papers.

Although not mentioned in these reports, the problem of poor quality of some projects did exist, especially during the early period.²⁰ But complaints of inferior projects never became as numerous as charges of political interference or administrative incompetence. These tabulations indicate that despite the enormous amount of correspondence concerning the Civil Works Administration, there was never a majority which could be considered hostile, a fact that is contrary to the impression imparted by some newspapers of the period. Progress in thousands of worthy CWA projects was made, and strong support for the program developed in all sections of the United States. Nevertheless, newspaper accounts of fraud and the number of complaints actually received caused the CWA directors to become defensive and to try almost frantically to correct all such incidents.

A front page article in the January 26th Washington Post stated that graft had been reported in forty-five of the states. The exceptions were Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. Although it was difficult for the federal administrators to determine the validity of most accusations, they never delayed long in taking action. Merely by Hopkins's order, funds could be withdrawn or any local or state official dismissed.²¹ Hopkins relied on quick and

²⁰See above, p. 127.

²¹See also pp. 42 and 74-75.

arbitrary action, but this unfortunately was no panacea. All too often the alleged fraud occurred as the result of honest but inefficient or thoughtless administrative practices, or was so involved with local politics that it was hard for the federal authorities to take any position.

Hopkins's tendency to take action first and ask questions later was more often evident in states with an earlier history of poor working relations with the FERA. Attacked not only by Republicans but also by Democrats, Hopkins doubtlessly felt summary action to be necessary in order to discourage accusations of leniency on his part. Indeed Democrats were among the most severe critics of the CWA in Congress. A survey conducted by Democratic Congressmen, the New Orleans Times Picayune reported, had uncovered the unwelcome fact that Republicans largely controlled the Civil Works Administration in thirty-five states.²² During February the bill for additional funds for the FERA and CWA was under debate in Congress. Hopkins and his staff were alarmed by reports that Congress might attach amendments creating a bipartisan board of directors for the Civil Works Administration. Under such political pressure the CWA officials responded by attempting to weed out inefficiency and corruption as quickly and thoroughly as possible.

One of the best examples of Hopkins's method of attack occurred in Colorado. The relief committee in that

²²New Orleans Times Picayune, January 26, 1934, p. 11.

state, originally appointed by Democratic Governor Edwin C. Johnson, had been in Hopkins's bad graces even before the CWA's establishment. The Colorado Relief Committee, which became the Civil Works Committee in November, included members from both major parties and all political factions. Actually, the nonpartisan nature of the committee did not work well. Many times dissension became so acute that a stalemate developed.²³ Late in January, Hopkins dismissed the entire Colorado commission along with state administrator Herbert Fairall because of a certain project approved for the city of Denver. Known as Project 128, it was designed to audit the financial records of the Denver city government. The city wanted to sell bonds to cover the cost of relief and other needs. The purchasers demanded that the city's financial condition be investigated. With the approval of the Denver city commission and the state CWA, Ralph Mayo, a member of the state relief commission, was hired to supervise the undertaking.²⁴

On January 29th, forty-two days after the project was approved, Hopkins sent the following telegram to Fairall.

I find that project one hundred twenty-eight, which is a project to audit the books of the city of Denver, was approved by you and your commission. I

²³New York Times, February 4, 1934, p. 6.

²⁴J. C. Lindsay to A. Williams, January 26, 1934, CWA Records, State Series. Rocky Mountain News (Denver), January 30, 1934, p. 1. The project cost \$13,500. Mayo's fee was \$2,700.

find further that Mr. Ralph Mayo, a member of your commission, has been employed by the city of Denver to supervise this project and is receiving a fee from the city. I note in the minutes that Mr. Mayo requested to be excused from voting when this project was approved. The approval of this project seems to be altogether irregular if not illegal. I prefer to have responsibility for civil works in Colorado rest entirely with one person in the future. This telegram will therefore relieve you and the commission of all further responsibility for civil works in Colorado. I am appointing Casper D. Shawver Civil Works Administrator in Colorado.²⁵

The Denver episode did not constitute a fraud. Even Hopkins did not directly charge the Colorado administration with graft although he accused it of irregularity. But with pressure from Congress, only the smallest suspicion of dishonesty was necessary to convince Hopkins that radical personnel changes were called for. The Rocky Mountain News suggested that Hopkins's action in this case was unfortunate because the men in question were innocent of corruption.²⁶ They had perhaps acted unwisely, but not from any absence of good intentions. But apparently neither evidence nor persuasion could convince Hopkins that his measures were in error. Casper Shawver replaced Fairall as Colorado CWA Administrator. Meanwhile political turmoil continued unabated.

In Wisconsin there occurred another example of Hopkins's proclivity to remove state officials upon the

²⁵Telegram, Hopkins to Herbert Fairall, January 29, 1934, CWA Records, State Series.

²⁶Rocky Mountain News (Denver), February 1, 1934, p. 6.

slightest suspicion of political intrigue. In a speech before assembled local officials, Robert Johnson, Wisconsin CWA director, stated that he liked to appoint men who both sympathized with the purpose of the Civil Works Administration and supported the Democratic Party. Ironically, Johnson had no background as a politician. He was an engineer and a builder, and reputedly a Republican or at least an Independent politically.²⁷ Hopkins thought that Johnson had done "a splendid job" in getting the program started in the state.²⁸ Nevertheless, he was disturbed by Johnson's remark and ordered him to dismiss any officials whose selection might have been influenced by political considerations. When Johnson delayed, the federal authorities ordered an investigation. Regardless of the honesty of Johnson's motives, the Civil Works Administration could not risk public misunderstanding. Eventually a new state administrator had to be appointed. As this unfortunate episode illustrates, a number of the charges of "politics" in the CWA had some basis in fact but were not necessarily founded upon deliberate dishonesty.

Charges of graft were perhaps even more common in Pennsylvania than in Colorado or Wisconsin. To begin with, an embarrassing situation developed which was not directly

²⁷Leo T. Crowley to Roosevelt, December 9, 1933, Roosevelt Papers.

²⁸Hopkins to Voyta Wrabitz, December 6, 1933, CWA Records, State Series.

related to CWA corruption. David W. Charles, acting assistant comptroller of the Pennsylvania CWA, received a three-year suspended sentence after conviction on charges of misapplication of funds while employed as assistant treasurer of the Merion Title and Trust Company. Hopkins requested Charles's resignation. Eric H. Biddle, Pennsylvania Civil Works Administrator, was reluctant to follow Hopkins's order, and an open break between the federal and state administrators was averted only by Charles's voluntary resignation on January 15th. In a statement to the press, Biddle declared: "Mr. Charles has resigned and is no longer in Harrisburg. His resignation closes the matter and I do not expect to have anything further to say about it."²⁹

Unlike the scandals in Colorado and Wisconsin, however, alleged corruption in Pennsylvania did not center on the state level. Allegations were leveled primarily at county administrations. Local political leaders were accused of granting CWA jobs only to loyal party members. Labor unions were accused of deducting substantial sums from the wages of members who had received jobs with union help.³⁰ Referring to the charges of favoritism, George MacReynolds, Bucks County Democratic Party Chairman, stated:

²⁹New York Times, January 11, 1934, p. 11.
Philadelphia Inquirer, January 18, 1934, in "Newspaper Clippings," Vol. VIII, n. p., Hopkins Papers.

³⁰Telephone call, Eric H. Biddle to A. Williams (Memorandum), January 13, 1934, CWA Records, State Series.

. . . what can you expect when the administration of the President's politics [sic] is placed in the hands of hard-boiled Republicans like State Administrator Eric H. Biddle, a creature of the Grundy Pinchot machine. . . .

These men do not want the Civil Works program to succeed, and, if they can break it down in Pennsylvania, next fall, when they go out on the stump, they will gleefully tell the people that President Roosevelt's policies were unworkable and collapsed of their own weight.³¹

This opinion may of course be regarded as little more than political subjectivism, especially when it was written by a county chairman upon Bucks County Democratic stationery.

Biddle, whom MacReynolds called a "hard-boiled Republican," and "a creature of the Grundy Pinchot machine," was also dissatisfied with the Bucks County Civil Works Administration. In a letter to Hopkins, he stated:

When I made the appointment [Bucks County Administrator] I was more displeased with it than with any other appointment in the entire sixty-seven counties, for many of the reasons which Mr. MacReynolds mentions. I might say in passing that the same thing applies to the Relief Board.

. In case you don't know it, Bucks County is a fief and Grundy is Lord of the manor. This applies particularly to the city of Bristol, where the largest unemployment exists and which is owned by Grundy, lock stock and barrell.³²

Regardless of his disapproval of Bucks County politics, Biddle found himself in a perplexing situation. As Pennsylvania administrator, he was expected to put the CWA into

³¹George MacReynolds to Hopkins, December 11, 1933, CWA Records, State Series.

³²Biddle to Hopkins, December 12, 1933, CWA Records, State Series.

operation. Jobs had to be quickly distributed and projects begun immediately. Because Bucks County, as many other communities, was obviously controlled by local politicians, he found compromise inevitable. "I take it that you, like myself, want results and at times are willing to compromise a bit to achieve them," he wrote in the same letter to Hopkins. To Biddle's further chagrin, political favoritism was not limited to Bucks County. In Pittsburgh, for example, politics also played a part in selection of CWA employees. "It is quite probable," he admitted, "that the people who were engaged in this work were selected by the ward leaders in that city, and that by the same token there was a definite political basis for their employment."³³

Certainly Biddle's frank admission should not be interpreted as condonement of these practices. After the Civil Works Administration had been organized and employment quotas filled, Biddle took steps to rectify unsavory local conditions. He conducted investigations and removed officials when proof of graft could be established.³⁴

In a case resembling Hopkins's action in the Denver episode, Biddle removed Colonel Clarence E. Meyers, Pennsylvania chief engineer, immediately upon rumor of graft. In both cases the officials were dismissed before charges

³³Ibid.

³⁴Biddle to A. Williams, January 13, 1934; Biddle to Hopkins, January 13, 1934, CWA Records, State Series.

against them could be either proved or disproved. Meyers allegedly accepted a fee of between two and three thousand dollars for services rendered as consulting engineer on a sewer project. In requesting Meyers's resignation, Biddle acted without Hopkins's authorization. Hopkins, however, supported the action.³⁵ Several months later, in April, 1934, it became evident that Meyers had not engaged in any dishonest practices. Attempting to rectify any wrong on the part of the Civil Works Administration, Hopkins made public a letter which he wrote to Colonel Meyers.

Since writing you last I have caused a further investigation to be made into the CWA sewer project in the borough of Kennett Square, Pa. This investigation, I am pleased to say, discloses that no fee was paid you in connection with this project. Also, I have been told, and I have no reason to doubt the veracity of such statement, that no fee was expected by you, and that there was no intention on the part of the council of the borough to pay any fee in connection with this particular project.³⁶

In perspective, this case appears grossly unfair. A man whom later investigation proved innocent lost his job and doubtlessly suffered immeasurable humiliation and anxiety. Neither Biddle nor Hopkins wanted to harass their officials needlessly. But by late January the Civil Works Administration, although still in popular favor, was under severe attack by opponents who did not hesitate to portray

³⁵Telegram, Biddle to Hopkins, January 20, 1934, CWA Records, State Series.

³⁶New York Times, April 8, 1934, p. 9.

it as nothing more than a "politician's paradise." Drastic dismissals such as Meyers's were acts of desperation.

A display of political bickering similar to Colorado's severely hampered the CWA program in West Virginia. Nearly a month after the beginning of operations, Governor Herman G. Kump wrote a letter to William Beehler, West Virginia Civil Works Administrator, informing him of numerous complaints concerning partisanship by county relief and CWA boards. Most members of the county boards, organized under the preceding governor, were allegedly Republicans and therefore unsympathetic with either the existing state or national administrations. Convinced that Republicans operated the relief and CWA systems for political purposes, Governor Kump demanded that Beehler conduct an investigation.³⁷

Beehler did not deny the use of political pressure by local CWA organizations. In a letter to Aubrey Williams, Beehler related that the state office was besieged by irate Democrats, many of whom claimed that the county welfare boards were made up of "vicious Republicans and weak-kneed Democrats" who sought to place "what they call honest and strong Democrats on these Boards." According to Beehler, political turmoil was so serious in Kanawha County that the state CWA office discontinued the use of the supposedly

³⁷Governor Herman G. Kump to William Beehler, December 12, 1933, CWA Records, State Series.

Republican county welfare board and established a unit of its own.³⁸

Ironically, despite his efforts to extricate the West Virginia CWA from the morass of politics, Beehler himself became a focal point of attack. Opponents of the program charged that he had attempted to build a Republican political machine out of the Civil Works Administration. This outraged Beehler. One such accusation had been made by West Virginia Senator Mathew M. Neely. Beehler dispatched telegrams of emphatic denial to both the Senator and Aubrey Williams declaring that he did not belong to the Republican Party and that he had never, throughout ten years experience as a social worker, made public his personal politics. "And," he concluded, "I would not make them public in West Virginia because social work and civil works are non-partisanship."³⁹

Endeavoring to disprove the suspicion that members of one party or another dominated the civil works program, the state administration conducted a survey in Logan county, where charges had been made that favoritism to Republicans existed. The survey revealed that only nineteen of the fifty-eight people on the county's administrative staff

³⁸Beehler to Williams, January 24, 1934, CWA Records, State Series.

³⁹Telephone call, Williams to Mr. Bussell, Assistant to Beehler (Memorandum), January 26, 1934; Telegram, Beehler to Williams, January 24, 1934, CWA Records, State Series.

were Republicans, as compared with thirty-nine Democrats. Among the ninety persons employed as supervisors, time keepers, or foremen, there were sixty-five Democrats, twenty-four Republicans, and one Socialist.⁴⁰

Despite all efforts, however, the political controversy continued. On January 25th the West Virginia legislature passed a joint resolution authorizing an investigation of CWA activities. The investigation continued until March, when the civil works program was terminated. Little resulted except a further fanning of the flames of public dissatisfaction.⁴¹

An individual case that drew considerable national attention and involved state as well as local administrators occurred in relation to charges of fraud and administrative inefficiency in the Los Angeles CWA. As in Pennsylvania and West Virginia, the state Democratic leaders had grown dissatisfied with the California relief administration because they believed that it was controlled by the Republican Party.

When, just shortly after the establishment of the FERA, Hopkins began to receive complaints that Republicans were using the relief program for political purposes he

⁴⁰Telegram, Beehler to Hopkins, February 8, 1934, CWA Records, State Series.

⁴¹Telephone call, A. Williams to Bussell (Memorandum), January 26, 1934; Beehler to Baker, February 7, 1934, CWA Records, State Series. Charleston Gazette, March 12, 1934, p. 1.

dispatched Pierce Williams, FERA field representative, to California. Williams reported that, while a few isolated complaints might be valid, in his estimation the California relief system was generally free of graft and the administrators were competent.⁴² It was true that the Director of the California Emergency Relief Administration, Ray C. Branion, was a Republican, but to Hopkins that made no difference. While CWA Administrator, Hopkins did not consider it important how his state administrators, officials, or other employees voted on election day. So long as they performed their duties properly, their politics did not interest him. Charges that Hopkins used the relief program for political purposes did not pertain to the period of the CWA. Later, however, during the time he served as WPA administrator, such accusations were leveled at him with some degree of truth.⁴³

After the Civil Works Administration had operated only a month in conjunction with the California state relief administration, Hopkins ordered the two organizations separated. This did not reflect any disapproval of Branion but was merely an attempt to relieve the overworked state relief administration of the burden of operating

⁴²Hopkins to Pierce Williams, July 5, 1933; Telephone call, Hopkins to Pierce Williams (Memorandum), July 8, 1933, Hopkins Papers.

⁴³Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins, p. 68.

two programs.⁴⁴ The measure did not silence the complaints of disgruntled politicians. Protest reached a climax on January 7th when John B. Elliott, vice-chairman of the Democratic State Council, state manager of the 1932 Roosevelt campaign and a close friend of Senator William G. McAdoo, publicly announced that the management of the Los Angeles CWA was a scandal. Senator McAdoo had headed the California delegation at the Democratic National Convention of 1932 in support of Roosevelt and exerted much political influence in the state. Elliott claimed that 16,000 or 17,000 workers had been employed on projects without tools, and that thousands of employees had not been paid because checks had been misplaced. Elliott said the CWA was prey to political favoritism and demanded a grand jury investigation of its Los Angeles operations.⁴⁵

From the beginning, the Los Angeles CWA had been faced with the common problem of putting its quota of 60,000 people to work within the desired thirty-day period. The transfer of workers from one project to another had many times made it difficult for paymasters to locate the recipients of pay checks. And, as Elliott claimed, tools

⁴⁴Hopkins to Harold S. Chase, December 20, 1933; Hopkins to Olive Gardner Burns, December 20, 1933, CWA Records, State Series. Los Angeles Times, January 7, 1934, p. 20.

⁴⁵Los Angeles Times, January 8, 1934, p. 1. New York Times, February 4, 1934, p. 6.

actually were lacking on several occasions during the hectic first month of operation.⁴⁶

The directors of the county Civil Works Administration were blamed for these conditions. Some of them found political pressure to be so unpleasant that they could not remain in office. Charles C. Frye, after serving as Los Angeles County administrator from the beginning of the program until the first of the year, resigned amidst bitter and largely unjustified abuse. Until Hopkins ordered Major Donald Connelly to take charge, none of the civilian successors was able to sustain himself in this vulnerable position.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, Elliott appointed a committee of his own to study conditions on the projects and submitted his findings to President Roosevelt.⁴⁸ According to Frederick A. Chase, a Los Angeles newspaper reporter, the Elliott inquiry was not properly conducted.⁴⁹ But Elliott accepted the findings and pressed the federal government to make a more

⁴⁶California, "Final Report," p. 93. Edward Macauley to Julius Stone, March 18, 1934, CWA Records, State Series.

⁴⁷Los Angeles Times, January 7, 1934, p. 20; January 27, 1934, p. 1. California, "Final Report," p. 22.

⁴⁸Los Angeles Times, January 15, 1934, p. 1.

⁴⁹Frederick A. Chase to Joseph P. Keenan, November 10, 1934, Justice Department, General Records, Group 60, National Archives. Since all references to this manuscript collection may be found in General Records, Group 60, subsequent citations will be, simply, Justice Department.

thorough investigation of its own. To Senator McAdoo, he sent a telegram declaring:

Pierson Hall [United States District Attorney for Los Angeles] has requested authority from Department of Justice to investigate CWA which is under Ickes. Wants to investigate with their own agents. Please impress upon Cummings [United States Attorney General] absolute necessity of Department of Justice investigation.⁵⁰

Elliott seems to have been confused about the organization of the Civil Works Administration. Ickes was not, of course, the director. His confusion, however, may have stemmed from the fact that the Division of Investigation in the Justice Department made inquiries into alleged irregularities in the PWA as well as in the CWA. District Attorney Pierson Hall traveled to Washington to discuss the Los Angeles situation with CWA leaders and Justice Department officials. As a result of these discussions the federal CWA authorized the Justice Department to handle all further investigations in Los Angeles. This was in accordance with established policy.⁵¹

Following the Justice Department investigations a federal grand jury met for several weeks during the spring of 1934. Scores of witnesses testified. The transcript contained thousands of pages and amounted to six volumes

⁵⁰Telegram, John B. Elliott to Senator William G. McAdoo, January 16, 1934, Justice Department.

⁵¹Homer Cummings to Roosevelt, February 16, 1934, Justice Department. See pp. 181-82, for explanation of policies followed in investigating irregularities.

when bound. On June 20, 1934, the grand jury rendered an indictment against nine men who had served as CWA officials in Los Angeles County. Included in the nine were California Relief Administrator Ray C. Branion and CWA field representative Pierce Williams.⁵²

During the grand jury hearings Ickes received an interesting letter from a California acquaintance which he forwarded to Hopkins with the following note: "I am enclosing, for your information, a letter received from Mr. Halbert Paine Gardner, a two fisted Progressive Republican, whom I have known ever since 1912." The letter read in part:

Because I have no acquaintance and have little correspondence with Mr. Hopkins, I take the liberty of sending this letter to you, trusting that if it in your mind is important enough, you will see that Mr. Hopkins receives the gist of it.

. . . I have no use for Mr. Elliott after his blow-up and I am very leery of United States Attorney Hall's sincerity in several matters. There is too much of the garden variety of politics in several matters. . . .⁵³

In the summer and early fall of 1934 a group known as the Branion-Williams Defense Committee organized a movement in behalf of the men indicted and collected money for their defense. Social workers from various parts of the United States took the lead in the movement, insisting that

⁵²New York Times, June 21, 1934, p. 15. Joseph P. Keenan, "Report," November 12, 1934, Justice Department.

⁵³H. P. Gardner to Ickes, n. d., CWA Records, State Series.

Branion and Williams had been caught in the web of political intrigue.⁵⁴ After the grand jury investigation had ended and the Civil Works Administration had ceased operations, the Justice Department admitted that its case was indeed weak. Eventually a report written by Assistant Attorney Joseph Keenan acknowledged that there was no evidence to prove any of these men had been a party to corruption "as that term is usually understood and applied." His only complaint against them was that they had allowed men to be placed on jobs without sufficient tools and equipment. Nevertheless, as Keenan's report emphasized, their oversight involved no sinister motives and might instead be blamed on over-enthusiasm in supplying the jobless with work. The defendants had not been guilty of creating the problems that arose when the program was undertaken.

Keenan went so far in his exoneration as to declare:

Indeed the entire administration of these projects was notably free from political influence in selecting any of the 64,000 laborers so put upon work and receiving funds in payment therefor. Nor is there any charge that any of the 64,000 laborers so selected received one day's work due to political consideration or at the behest of any person active in politics.⁵⁵

Upon Keenan's recommendation, the federal District Court dismissed the case.

⁵⁴Pierson M. Hall to Cummings, November 10, 1934, Justice Department. Wayne McMillen to Roosevelt, October 24, 1934, Hopkins Papers.

⁵⁵Keenan, "Report."

The federal Civil Works Administration could not investigate and weed out all accusations of malpractice at once. In areas where charges of graft and inefficiency were heaviest Hopkins decided to appoint, or "borrow," Army Engineer Corps officers to administer the program. On January 26th he announced that Major Donald Connelly of Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, would be assigned to duty as Los Angeles County CWA administrator. On the following day he designated Lieutenant Colonel Dan I. Sultan as Civil Works Administrator of Cook County, Illinois. Hopkins also considered naming an army officer to direct the New York City CWA. But political pressure and assurances by New York officials that they could handle the program caused him to cancel the plan. There had been no actual proof of dishonesty or inefficiency in any of the three cases. Believing themselves unjustly treated, the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission, including state administrator R. J. Dunham, resigned in protest. Hopkins expressed reluctance to accept Dunham's resignation, stating that he felt no dissatisfaction with Dunham's performance.⁵⁶ His appointment of Army Engineer Corps officers was merely an

⁵⁶See above, p. 175. New York Times, January 27, 1934, p. 2; January 28, 1934, p. 2. Telegram, R. J. Dunham to Hopkins, January 26, 1934, CWA Records, General Subject Series. Lieutenant Colonel John C. H. Lee, "The Federal Civil Works Administration: A Study Covering its Organization in November, 1933 and its Operations Until 31 March, 1934, Prepared for the Information of the War Department," Hopkins Papers.

attempt to allay accusations that the federal authorities were indifferent to charges of graft.

Almost universal praise from the press accompanied the appointment of the two army officers. Although the action was somewhat dramatic, the results were satisfactory. Both officers proved to be competent men, unhampered by political reputations. The Los Angeles Times paid tribute to their appointment by stating: "the plan to draw the higher executives from the Army Engineer Corps is probably the best one yet. If anybody can pull the C. W. A. out of a mess, it probably is the army engineers." Staffing the CWA with army personnel, the Times went on to suggest, ought not to stop at the upper eschelons. "Some top sergeants in charge of the working gangs might be able to get more useful work accomplished." Lending further support to the move, the Seattle Post Intelligencer, a paper which had formerly wasted no praise on the CWA, declared: "Let the army do it and it will be well and honestly done."⁵⁷ In a somewhat more objective manner the Atlanta Constitution appraised the merits and limitations of the policy:

The decision to draft the service of army officers to free the CWA program of alleged graft and political incompetence is a well-merited tribute to the ability of the army to render public service in an efficient and businesslike manner.

Especially has the army's handling of the civilian conservation corps [sic] demonstrated that its

⁵⁷Los Angeles Times, January 31, 1934, p. 4.
Seattle Post Intelligencer, February 9, 1934, p. 12.

officers know their business and make good administrators. . . .

The same result would have been secured in the CWA program had it been possible to place its operation in each state under the supervision of the army. Manifestly this was impossible, because with so many army officers engaged in the CCC activities it would not have been possible to detach from their regular duties enough officers to head the CWA forces in each state.⁵⁸

In their effort to counteract charges of corruption and incompetence the federal administrators employed other measures besides the appointment of army officers and the removal of politically stigmatized officials. During the hectic days before the Congressional appropriation hearings, Hopkins bluntly told reporters in a press conference that the CWA would do its "own housecleaning." Only when actual theft or misuse of government funds occurred would the cases be turned over to the Attorney General for prosecution.⁵⁹

In practice, all complaints were first investigated by the CWA itself. When any case seemed to require further study it was then turned over to the Department of Investigation of the Public Works Administration. By February there were seventy-five to 100 Public Works Investigators employed on CWA cases. If their inquiries yielded evidence that fraud had indeed occurred, the charges were then turned over to the Justice Department, Division of Investigation,

⁵⁸Atlanta Constitution, February 2, 1934, p. 8.

⁵⁹New York Times, January 23, 1934, p. 2.

for still more study and possible prosecution. Cases were referred to the Attorney General only as a last resort. The Division of Investigation agreed not to handle any CWA case until the Justice Department had received authorization from the CWA that such action would be necessary.⁶⁰

Hopkins sent instructions to all state and local CWA's admonishing them to exercise extreme care that no official or member of any advisory or administrative committee should engage in any political activity that would in any way interfere with the integrity and effectiveness of the Civil Works Administration. Every administrator, state and local, was furthermore informed that if investigators were sent from either the PWA or the Justice Department, full cooperation would be expected. By the last of January, the Justice Department had been called in to investigate 175 complaints. Of this number, six were ordered to be brought to federal court under criminal charges.⁶¹

An interesting case of extortion by local politicians which drew the attention of federal authorities occurred in Chattanooga, Tennessee. According to several

⁶⁰Baker, "Report Upon the Civil Works Administration," p. 12. House Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, FERA and CWA Hearings, 1934, p. 28. Baker to All Field Representatives and State Administrators, n. d., Hopkins Papers. Bruce McClure to Marie Dresden, January 19, 1934, Justice Department.

⁶¹New York Times, January 31, 1934, p. 1.

Negro workers on CWA project 213, a certain foreman had several times levied small sums of money, apparently never amounting to more than a dollar, for the benefit of two Negro politicians in Chattanooga. A Chattanooga attorney, John W. Hallberg, first conducted an investigation for the CWA to determine if the charges were valid. After sifting the evidence, Hallberg concluded that any graft which had existed had been on a small scale and was actually "outweighed by the great benefit to the city."⁶² A subsequent inquiry by United States Attorney J. B. Frazier, Jr. resulted in virtually the same conclusion. In September, 1934, the Justice Department ruled the case closed.⁶³ Unfortunately, the rumors that so freely circulated throughout the affair tended to discredit the CWA in Chattanooga. The tragedy of these rather minor instances of corruption lay in the fact that they tarnished the entire program.

Another type of petty extortion occurred in connection with the hiring of trucks. It was the practice of the Civil Works Administration to rent trucks from private individuals. In Illinois, where several cases occurred, the owners of the trucks rented by the CWA testified that they had been compelled to give sums of money to certain

⁶²Gus Bostock to Paul Anderson, January 11, 1934; Sworn Statement of William Lewis, January 23, 1934; John W. Hallberg, "Report: Brief and Affidavit," January 30, 1934, Justice Department.

⁶³Corrington Gill to Joseph P. Keenan, September 27, 1934, Justice Department.

individuals who apparently had political influence. If they refused to pay, they were informed that the CWA no longer needed their trucks. In one typical case a Chicago owner of five trucks hired for local projects declared that he had been obliged to contribute \$2.00 a day to the Cook County Democratic organization. Although United States District Attorney Dwight Green found evidence of extortion, he declared that no direct violation of any existing federal statute had occurred. Upon his recommendation the Justice Department dropped all truck-hiring cases in Illinois.⁶⁴

Graft was often extremely difficult to prosecute. Many cases were dismissed for lack of substantial evidence.⁶⁵ Often those that could not be prosecuted involved a minor fraud, such as the Chattanooga case, or did not violate existing federal laws. It was difficult, for example, to prosecute under federal statute a politician who did a favor for some unfortunate person who happened to belong to his party. Possibly one of the best examples of this

⁶⁴Memorandum, Mr. Howe of the Adjustment Division to Mrs. Plitt, n. d.; Dwight Green to Cummings, January 9, 1935, Justice Department.

⁶⁵For example, a case dismissed for lack of evidence involved alleged political favoritism and intimidation in securing a contract for the Calumet Steel Company. In another instance, an investigation was carried out by the Justice Department into the purchase of materials for a drainage project in Harvey, Illinois. The United States Attorney in Chicago reported that the facts found in the inquiry yielded no substantial evidence of malpractice. Prosecution was not pursued in either case. Dwight Green to Cummings, January 9, 1935, Justice Department.

problem arose in Massachusetts in connection with work assignment slips. These slips were given to each person hired and specified the project to which he was assigned. In order to be valid, they had to be signed by an official of the local Civil Works Administration. Occasionally unauthorized individuals, local political figures who were not directly connected with the CWA, signed the slips. An investigation conducted by the United States District Attorney proved that in most cases the unauthorized signers were merely trying to help place people on jobs without loss of time.

Demanding action against the so-called forgers, the Boston Herald declared:

Waste on an immense scale seems inevitable when the federal government spends hundreds and hundreds of millions in a hurry and some fraud is probably to be expected. That is not to say, however, that fraud in any form, large or small, should be condoned. Slowness of investigation and laxity of prosecution simply encourages graft on a larger and larger scale.⁶⁶

Agents of the PWA first investigated the forgeries and forwarded their reports to CWA headquarters. In July, 1934, several months after the termination of operations, Bruce McClure, Executive Secretary of the CWA, urged the Justice Department to take action against the unauthorized signers. "This," insisted McClure, "is perhaps the most clear-cut case which has come to our attention of a nationwide abuse of the Civil Works program in which the Government

⁶⁶Boston Herald, February 17, 1934, p. 2.

has been defrauded of the right to select its employees from the ranks of the eligible unemployed according to preferences as outlined in Federal Civil Works Administration Rules and Regulations No. 10."⁶⁷

United States Attorney Francis Ford was less eager than McClure to press the case. He admitted that indictments could be obtained but pointed out that those who had forged the slips had not profited by doing so. "I am strongly of the opinion," he reported to the Attorney General, "that the jury would jump over the offense committed into the realms of human sympathy and from a practical standpoint leave us in not an enviable position."⁶⁸

As indicated by the above cases, many state Civil Works Administrations carried on their own investigating programs in addition to the inquiries conducted by the federal authorities. The New Hampshire CWA instigated a plan which divided the state into nine areas with a special investigator for each. All complaints within a particular section were submitted to the investigator for examination.⁶⁹ In New York State the Temporary Emergency Relief Administration helped the CWA investigate complaints. The TERA increased the staff of its Division of Information more than 100 per cent and undertook many of the inquiries

⁶⁷McClure to Keenan, July 12, 1934, Justice Department.

⁶⁸Ford to Cummings, May 24, 1934, Justice Department.

⁶⁹New Hampshire, "Final Report," pp. 109-10.

and complaints that poured into the state CWA headquarters on an average of 150 a day. Most dissatisfaction occurred in New York City where, on January 23rd, the city Civil Works Administration established a Department of Irregularities consisting of a director and a staff of eight investigators. In only 3 per cent of the investigations made in New York State was graft actually discovered. Job assignment grievances amounted to 19 per cent of the total number of complaints and another 19 per cent involved charges of political, racial, and religious discrimination.⁷⁰ These statistics again point out that fraud was not so common in the CWA as alleged by the press. They also indicate that the state administrations were possibly as much concerned with the existence of shortcomings as the federal authorities.

At no time, it should be reiterated, did the Civil Works Administration attempt to deny the existence of graft. It recognized the problem and made strenuous efforts to rectify any dishonesty. Unfortunately, graft was not the only burden confronting the civil works program during its existence. By mid-January the CWA also faced the difficult task of curtailing expenditures and projects. Of perhaps even greater importance was the simultaneous struggle to acquire additional funds from Congress for the purpose of carrying on operations until spring. Investigating

⁷⁰New York, "Final Report," p. 45.

charges of malpractice in effect amounted to an additional burden. "It takes a tremendous amount of time to investigate charges of politics in this matter," Hopkins stated in his testimony before the House Committee on Appropriations. "If you were to investigate them adequately, it would be a terrific job to prove political interference."⁷¹

Obviously, corruption existed in the operations of the CWA, but Hopkins alone should not be blamed. Harold Ickes wrote: "I don't blame Hopkins . . . because he was called upon to do an impossible job without time to organize the plan for the job. Necessarily there were waste and graft and corruption which no man could have prevented under the circumstances."⁷² In the same vein the Dallas Morning News commented:

It would be astonishing if so large an enterprise as C. W. A., hastily thrown together, did not develop individual cases of bribery, graft and maladministration. These occur under the direction of any party. Of so carefully supervised a Government business as the post office, the Federal District Attorney remarked in a report on a Dallas case several years ago that defalcations by employees were not unusual.

The Nation has been fortunate when graft has been confined, as seems to be the situation now, to inferior posts.

The Roosevelt administration faces the situation with candor, makes no effort to cover up the fact that graft exists, and endeavors to ferret out and punish offenders.⁷³

⁷¹House Subcommittee of Committee on Appropriations, FERA and CWA Hearings, 1934, p. 28.

⁷²Ickes, Secret Diary: The First Thousand Days, p. 277.

⁷³Dallas Morning News, January 25, 1934, IV, p. 2.

It would be impossible and pointless to mention all the cases investigated or prosecuted by the Civil Works Administration. When they are statistically summarized, however, it is possible to gain perspective. One of the most striking things about graft and maladministration in the CWA is the relatively small number of serious cases. Although the federal authorities received thousands of complaints, according to figures released by the Senate in April, 1935, only 751 warranted investigation.⁷⁴ This number does not, of course, include the many inquiries into petty incidents made by state and local officials.

While accusations of incompetence were now and then directed at state and community administrators, there was no evidence of charges of "boondoggling" or inefficiency against the employees themselves. Although many of the first projects were inferior, apparently the over-all quality of civil works resulted in greater pride and self-respect among the employees than had been true of earlier work relief programs. At the same time, none of the cases involved any of the federal authorities. In fact, no single member of the Washington headquarters was ever charged with graft, even by the CWA's most outspoken critics.

⁷⁴This figure and the statistics cited on the following page may be found in Senate Document No. 56, Expenditures of Funds, 1935, pp. 656-57. For other information pertaining to the Civil Works Administration given in this same document, see above, p. 86.

Of the 751 complaints investigated by the federal government, seventy-seven cases involving criminal violations were referred to the Justice Department for prosecution. And of this number, seventeen criminal suits involving twenty-two persons resulted in conviction. With over 4,000,000 people employed on the CWA, and more than 70,000 of them engaged in administering the program, the total of twenty-two convictions constitutes an extremely small number. In view of the nearly one billion dollars appropriated, handled, and quickly expended, the necessity for expediency, and the presence of operations in nearly every county in the United States, the proven instances of graft seem indeed amazingly small.⁷⁵

The small number of convictions, however, was partially due to the inadequacy of federal legal resources. The graft that existed did not develop because the tentacles of national power had weakened local initiative and morality. Indeed the contrary was true. The government, of course, had power to administer the program but could not prosecute many cases of obvious dishonesty under the statutes that existed in 1934. Despite the sincere intentions of the federal authorities and most state and local officials, the lack of sufficient legal power in some instances allowed malpractices to flourish and may well have hindered the progress of the entire program.

⁷⁵Ibid.

Because of the relatively few number of cases of graft in the CWA it is a temptation to interpret them as of little importance. Certainly the twenty-two convictions should not be dismissed as the only cases involving dishonesty. Doubtlessly many individuals guilty of fraud were never detected. Many known malpractices that were morally wrong were not prohibited directly by federal statute and prosecution was therefore impossible. The point to remember is, however, that while the presence of graft and incompetence in the Civil Works Administration may have been relatively small, accounts of the shortcomings made frequent items for newspapers. A portion of the public, confronted with the stories, too readily concluded that the whole program was corrupt. Despite the fact that a majority of the public gave continuous support, the stigma of corruption became permanently attached to the Civil Works Administration.

CHAPTER VII

CURTAILMENT

"Administrator Hopkins' difficulty seems to be that he can not duplicate the miracle of the loaves and fishes." With this statement the Dallas Morning News facetiously but accurately summed up the dilemma confronting the Civil Works Administration in mid-January, 1934.¹ Only \$400,000,000 had been obtained for the operation of the program. Hopkins and his advisers had estimated that this sum would last through the winter, but by early December it became evident that it would not be enough and probably would be exhausted by February 3rd. Efforts to supplement funds from other sources until additional money could be appropriated by Congress did not suffice.² Projects therefore had to be curtailed and hours reduced.

The problem grew still more acute with pressure to expand the program from civic leaders, state officials, local civil works administrators, and the millions without work. Although all CWA offices were instructed not to

¹Dallas Morning News, January 22, 1934, II, p. 2.

²See above, pp. 83-86.

exceed their work quotas, the restriction proved difficult to obey. At first the federal authorities ignored violations. During the first six weeks all energy was devoted to devising projects, purchasing materials, and putting people to work as quickly as possible. Despite the fact that the program fell short of its schedule and did not reach its quota of 4,000,000 workers until the week ending January 11th, the total number on the payroll rose to 4,263,644 by the end of the following week, January 18th. Once operational procedures became established, therefore, the problem of providing employment evolved into the problem of limiting expenditures.

Reduction of Hours

Lack of sufficient money compelled the CWA to resort to drastic measures. Funds had to be made to last until additional appropriations by Congress could alleviate the situation. The restraints that resulted stemmed from financial necessity, not from any desire on the part of CWA officials to curtail employment. The leaders of the CWA had largely envisioned the enterprise idealistically, as a program offering worthy employment to people of all skills and at the same time as an opportunity for the federal government to exert more control over work projects. Limiting the program was an unpleasant but unavoidable task.

January 18th was the date on which curtailment began. A telegram sent to all state administrators read as follows:

Due to the fact that average weekly wages for civil works is in excess of original estimated weekly payrolls it is necessary to reduce the hours worked per week on local, state, and federal projects to keep within the money available. You are herewith instructed that effective January nineteenth, nineteen thirty four, all per diem workers are to be put on a work week as follows. In cities over twenty-five hundred population maximum twenty-four hours per week. In cities under twenty-five hundred and open country a maximum of fifteen hours per week. All clerical, supervisory, and professional workers a maximum of thirty hours per week with proportionate wages adjustment. This does not include administrative workers in administrators' offices. This applies to all civil works and civil works service employees and must be made effective everywhere on this date since disbursing officers will be instructed not to pay wages for work in excess of the hours provided herein. From this date no name shall be added to any payroll in actual replacement of a worker fully terminated and finally paid off. Notify all your counties by wire today of the contents of the telegram.³

This telegram marked the turning point for the Civil Works Administration. Before January 18th it experienced growth; after that date it began to diminish in scope.

The January 18th order did not compell the reduction of workers, but prohibited the hiring of additional employees. From the high point of 4,263,644 persons on CWA payrolls on Friday, January 18th, the total number fell slightly during the following week to 4,164,377. Not until February 15th were orders issued to release workers already employed. By that date 3,787,986 were still employed on CWA projects. No change in wage rates occurred until March 2nd. The restriction of hours did, however, decrease the average weekly earnings from \$15.05 on January 18th to

³Telegram, Hopkins to All State Administrators, January 18, 1934, CWA Publications, Vol. I.

\$11.32 on January 25th. Total weekly earnings for all personnel declined in the same period from \$64,000,000 to \$47,000,000.⁴

The reduction of hours, which in turn resulted in decreased wages, compelled many CWA workers to seek direct relief in order to supplement meager incomes. Statistics such as those just quoted can be misleading. Many of the workers received earnings far below the average. During the week ending January 11th, 42.9 per cent earned weekly salaries between \$14.25 and \$20.24, but by February 22nd 41.7 per cent received \$5.00 to \$9.95.⁵

Protest against the reduction quickly materialized. In a frontpage article on the day following the order, the Washington Post referred to the CWA as "one of the most vital elements in the Administration's recovery plan." On January 20th, it reported that a storm of disapproval had erupted. Congressmen, mayors, and state officials, according to the Post, expressed great consternation. The executive committee of the United States Conference of Mayors termed the order "the first blow against 4,000,000 people who have been given work at regular wages."⁶ In an editorial on January 19th, the Kansas City Star declared:

⁴FERA Report, June, 1936, p. 37.

⁵Ibid., p. 38.

⁶Washington Post, January 19, 1934, p. 1.

If the reduction in hours and pay of the CWA should be the prelude to early discontinuance of the program it would be unfortunate indeed. Millions of men and women, particularly all of them with dependents, would be thrown out of employment in the midst of winter and a direct relief burden of unprecedented proportions thus would be created.⁷

Newspaper comment was not the only source of protest. Letters and telegrams from all elements of society flooded the offices of federal officials. A letter from a citizen of Colebrook, Connecticut, to Postmaster General James Farley was typical of many of the pleas:

As I have been a strong Roosevelt backer from the very beginning of the campaign and still am, I'm taking this opportunity to ask you on behalf of this section, to do whatever is in your power to put the C. W. A. back on a thirty hour week instead of what we now have fifteen hours.

I donbt [sic] if some of our great leaders know how hard hit some are in this section. I coul't [sic] tell of several true heart backing instances--but that would take to much time.

The people here do not want donations they want a chance to earn an honest dollar so they can go out looking every on straight in the face.⁸

Typical of many appeals from civic organizations was the following telegram from the County Commissioners of Chaves County, New Mexico:

Impossible to over estimate benefits of CWA programme to this county in relief to unemployed citizens and improvements on roads and other projects effected. We

⁷Kansas City Star, January 19, 1934, p. D.

⁸J. W. Otto to Farley, January n. d., 1934, CWA Records, General Subject Series. Farley at that time also served as national chairman of the Democratic Party. As in all other letters quoted, in order to avoid excessive use of "sic," no attempt has been made to point out every mistake in spelling or syntax.

urge that every effort be made to restore CWA to original status and will appreciate whatever is done to that end.⁹

Senator Edward P. Costigan of Colorado declared that his office had been deluged with messages from city councils and civic organizations in his state. Representative Fred C. Gilchrist, a Republican of Iowa, referred to the curtailment as "illogical and undemocratic."¹⁰ In the midst of the wave of protest, the order received some endorsement. The Los Angeles Times, for example, interpreted it as an indication that "CWA waste is general all over the country."¹¹ Most newspaper comment, however, as well as most letters and telegrams, strongly indicated that public sentiment was one of dismay over the new policy.

Dismay resulted not only over curtailment in general, but also over the method used to carry it out. Charges of discrimination against rural workers constituted a large part of the criticism against the reduction. The CWA officials justified any apparent discrimination on the basis that people of rural areas, many of whom owned a little poultry or stock, could live more cheaply than those in urban communities. Hopkins later confessed before the

⁹Board of County Commissioners, Chaves County, New Mexico to Dennis Chaves, January 23, 1934, CWA Records, General Subject Series.

¹⁰Costigan to Hopkins, January 20, 1934, CWA Records, General Subject Series. U. S., Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 2d Sess., 1934, LXXVIII, Part 2, p. 1350.

¹¹Los Angeles Times, January 20, 1934, p. 4.

House Appropriations Committee that the restriction of fifteen hours a week for rural workers was too great, but necessitated by the acute financial problem.¹² Expenses had to be reduced somehow, and, in the words of Aubrey Williams, "you have to draw the line somewhere."¹³ A question soon developed regarding counties which had both rural and urban CWA projects. Hopkins disposed of the dilemma by declaring that, in counties "predominantly urban in character," twenty-four hours work a week would be adopted as the policy.¹⁴ In many places, however, the question remained as to what constituted "predominantly urban in character." Never satisfactorily answered, it became merely an additional administrative problem for the CWA.

As stated above, the reduction of hours did not result from any desire on Hopkins's part to curtail the program. The cost of operation had simply been much greater than anticipated, and money was running out. Speaking before the National Emergency Council in February, Hopkins disclosed that the advent of better projects had led to a need for more skilled labor and an unexpected increase in wages. He went on to say:

¹²House Subcommittee of Committee on Appropriations, FERA and CWA Hearings, 1934, p. 55. Senate Committee on Appropriations, FERA and CWA Hearings, 1934, p. 15.

¹³Telephone call, Bill Coffey to A. Williams (Memorandum), January 20, 1934, CWA Records, State Series.

¹⁴Telegram, Hopkins to All CWA Administrators, January 23, 1934, CWA Records, State Series.

With Mr. Morgenthau on one hand and the White House asking embarrassing questions about how the money was holding out, we decided we would cut hours. We cut the hours in the city to twenty-four and the country to fifteen. Now you hear a lot of people saying we are cutting hours for other reasons because we wanted Congress to know about it. That's nonsense. The only reason we cut was we didn't have money up until the time Congress was going to get it, because at the time, the President had already decided to ask for more money for civil works.¹⁵

There was little else to be done in the face of a dwindling money supply. The Civil Works Administration suffered from lack of adequate, long-range financial planning. Expedient measures such as restriction of hours had to be improvised but did not enhance the CWA's effectiveness as a recovery measure. Unlike the National Recovery Administration or the Agricultural Adjustment Act, the civil works program was not designed as a direct aid to national economic recovery, but as an emergency program to assist four million people through the winter months of 1933-1934.

Despite pressure to continue it indefinitely, the Administration gave no indication that the CWA would evolve into a long-range undertaking. On the contrary, the reduction of hours was a strong hint that Roosevelt still favored the CWA as a temporary measure and might, as his more conservative advisers urged, let it die when the original appropriation was exhausted. However, Roosevelt characteristically pursued a middle course. He did not let the CWA

¹⁵Hopkins, Speech to the National Emergency Council, Washington, D. C., February 1, 1934, Hopkins Papers.

die when the PWA appropriation ran out, nor did he expand it into a permanent feature of his Administration. He stuck to the original plan of continuing the program through the winter months and asked for additional money from Congress to allow it to terminate its operations in an orderly and deliberate manner.

On January 27th the President sent Henry T. Rainey, Speaker of the House of Representatives, a request for \$950,000,000 for relief and the CWA. According to the public announcement, \$350,000,000 would be designated for the CWA and \$600,000,000 for relief. The President's note, however, did not specify any amount for either program. At no time did doubt exist that Congress would grant the additional funds, but Budget Director Lewis Douglas advised him that passage of the bill would be easier if the request were left in one lump sum.¹⁶

Congressional Action

The bill providing for the request went first to the House Committee on Appropriations. Under pressure for greater aid to the CWA the specified sum was accepted with the understanding that the Civil Works Administration would be granted \$450,000,000 and the relief administration \$500,000,000 rather than the \$600,000,000 originally

¹⁶New York Times, January 28, 1934, p. 1. Memorandum, Douglas to Roosevelt, January 27, 1934, Roosevelt Papers. It was Douglas who suggested the sum to be given each program.

suggested. After a series of conferences with Congressional leaders, Roosevelt agreed to this relatively minor change.¹⁷

The Committee on Appropriations reported the measure to the House on February 2nd.¹⁸ By this date a revolt had begun, headed by Representative Kent Keller. Its purpose was to increase the total appropriation in order to allow the CWA to stay in operation indefinitely. The Wall Street Journal described a plan "to write into the pending \$950,000,000 relief appropriation bill sufficient funds to carry on CWA work until next November."¹⁹

It was generally known that many Congressmen favored an expanded CWA, but the sudden insurgency caught the Administration's House leadership by surprise. The original plan had been to vote on the bill on the same day that it came from committee, Friday, February 2nd. Uncertain of their strength, Speaker Rainey, Majority Leader Joseph Burns, and James P. Buchanan, Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, got the vote postponed. On the following Monday, more sure of their support, they allowed a vote to take place, but employed the rarely used "suspension

¹⁷New York Times, January 29, 1934, p. 4; February 3, 1934, pp. 1-2.

¹⁸U. S., Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 2d Sess., 1934, LXXVIII, Part 2, p. 1894.

¹⁹Wall Street Journal, February 3, 1934, p. 1. Los Angeles Times, February 3, 1934, pp. 1-2.

measure" which limited debate to forty minutes and prohibited all amendments.²⁰ The bill passed overwhelmingly in the House, 386 to 1, with forty-six abstaining. The opposition, termed by the Wall Street Journal "the most threatening Congressional revolt since the sales debacle of 1932," failed to make the CWA into a long-range program.²¹

Representative Keller and his followers, leaders of the revolt, voted for the bill despite their failure to amend it. Others who viewed the CWA in a more or less disparaging light likewise voted affirmatively. For example, John Taber, who argued that the appropriation was not necessary and that the CWA would actually delay business recovery, voted for the measure.²² The lone opponent was George Terrell, a Democratic Representative-at-large from Texas who had been elected to his first term in 1932. Terrell feared that the Civil Works Administration would lead to civil war and revolution, and described his colleagues as "dumb driven cattle."²³ Such a statement, speculated the Cleveland Plain Dealer, would "not likely make

²⁰New Orleans Times Picayune, February 3, 1934, p. 1. Wall Street Journal, February 5, 1934, p. 13. U. S., Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 2d Sess., 1934, LXXVIII, Part 2, p. 1941.

²¹U. S., Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 2d Sess., 1934, LXXVIII, Part 2, p. 1945. Wall Street Journal, February 5, 1934, p. 1.

²²U. S., Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 2d Sess., 1934, LXXVIII, Part 2, pp. 1941-44.

²³Ibid., p. 1945.

him a cloak room favorite, especially as he is a new member." The landslide approval in the House, the Plain Dealer further declared, was a "fair index of the degree to which the nation approves the Roosevelt program."²⁴

The House bill contained a clause denying civil works employees all compensation for injury or death. While this prohibition had not been suggested by the Administration, it was not opposed by Representative Buchanan, who sponsored the bill on the House floor. Buchanan evidently did not believe that CWA workers were employees of the federal government.²⁵ Failing to grasp the difference between the CWA and FERA programs, he mistakenly believed that, like all other relief workers, they were employed by state or local governments.

The Administration's victory in the House did not at once defeat the proponents of an enlarged CWA program. On February 5th, the Senate referred the bill to the Committee on Appropriations and on the following day began debate. Discussion on the Senate floor, which continued until February 8th, could not be limited as it had been in the House. It was therefore impossible for the Administration leaders to ward off all amendments.

In an attempt to restore compensation benefits, Senator Carl Hayden, Democrat from Arizona, introduced an

²⁴Cleveland Plain Dealer, February 7, 1934, p. 6.

²⁵U. S., Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 2d Sess., 1934, LXXVIII, Part 2, p. 1940.

amendment to permit a maximum payment of \$5,000 for injury or death. Senator Kenneth McKellar, who led the fight for the Administration's bill, opposed the Hayden amendment. Nevertheless, the measure carried.²⁶

As soon as the Hayden amendment received approval, Senator Bronson Cutting, Republican from New Mexico, introduced an amendment to increase the appropriation from \$950,000,000 to \$2,500,000,000. This increase was overwhelmingly rejected by a vote of ten to fifty-eight.²⁷ Immediately after the defeat of the Cutting amendment, Senator Robert LaFollette, another progressive Republican, introduced an amendment to increase the appropriation to \$1,500,000,000. His proposal suffered a similar fate.²⁸ Under Senator McKellar's leadership, Administration forces in the Senate were able to defeat the efforts of the more liberal group to increase the appropriation and convert the CWA into a long-range program.

On February 8th, the same day that Senators Cutting and LaFollette introduced their amendments, Democratic Senator Pat McCarren of Nevada presented a proposal to require all state CWA and FERA directors to be appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Without support

²⁶Ibid., p. 2162.

²⁷Ibid., p. 2195.

²⁸Ibid., p. 2197.

of the Democratic leadership, the McCarren amendment carried by a vote of forty-two to nineteen.²⁹

By the evening of February 8th, debate in the Senate came to an end, and at 7:45 the bill was approved without a recorded vote.³⁰ The amendments added by the Senate made it necessary for both Houses of Congress to confer. An understanding was quickly reached. The Senate agreed by a vote of sixty-four to nineteen to rescind the McCarren amendment, which would have opened the door to Congressional interference in CWA affairs. The other major difference concerned compensation benefits. The House of Representatives, which had attempted to prohibit all such payments, agreed to a compromise providing a maximum aggregate payment of \$3,500 and limited monthly compensation of \$25.00 or less for disability or death.³¹ On February 14th, both Houses approved the report of the compromise committee with little discussion.³² The bill was rushed to the President, who signed it on the following day.

The passage of the measure was a victory for Roosevelt. All attempts to increase the funds above his

²⁹Ibid., p. 2198.

³⁰Ibid. New York Times, February 9, 1934, p. 8.

³¹U. S., Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 2d Sess., 1934, LXXVIII, Part 3, p. 2492. FERA Report, February, 1934, p. 34.

³²U. S., Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 2d Sess., 1934, LXXVIII, Part 3, pp. 2423-25.

request failed and Congressional pressure to make the CWA a long-range program was unsuccessful. Had Roosevelt wanted to, he could have enlarged the appropriation even then, justifying the action on the basis of Congressional wishes and public opinion. Evidently, during the early period of the New Deal, he held less liberal views on relief and especially work relief than did Congress.³³

The Act did not specify how the funds would be divided between the CWA and FERA. On the same day that he signed the bill, Roosevelt issued Executive Order No. 6603 declaring that \$450,000,000 of the appropriated sum of \$950,000,000 would be made available for the operation of the Civil Works Administration.³⁴ The CWA now had sufficient money to continue its program at least until May 1, the designated date of termination.

Continued Demobilization

The additional funds, however, were not sufficient to change the policy of reduced hours. Curtailment was in fact accelerated. On February 13th Jacob Baker sent orders to all supervisors of federal projects to terminate as many activities as possible beginning February 15th.³⁵ Personnel on these projects were to be reduced by counties, 10 per

³³See below, pp. 215-17 and 222-23.

³⁴Executive Order No. 6603, February 15, 1934.

³⁵Baker to All Federal Departments Supervising Projects, February 13, 1934, CWA Publications, Vol. II.

cent each week. On February 16th a letter to all state administrators ordered that as of February 23rd all state and local organizations must lay off specified numbers of employees. This marked the beginning of a concerted drive to reduce the number of workers. In the following week a further personnel reduction was ordered. For example, on February 28th a wire to Wisconsin's CWA Administrator stated:

Effective March ninth reduce to 53,000 persons.
Effective March sixteenth reduce to 47,000 persons.
Effective March twenty-third reduce to 41,000 persons.
Effective March thirty reduce to 35,000 persons.³⁶

Demobilization was well under way by the end of February. By the first of March, only 2,937,342 employees were still working on CWA projects.³⁷

The task of distributing the reduced number of workers on local and state projects was left to the state Civil Works Administrations. The method used varied from state to state. In Minnesota and many other states veterans and workers with dependents were given prime consideration. Minnesota established county mediation boards which gave workers a chance to state why they should not be discharged. Decisions could be appealed to a state mediation board. The Illinois CWA instructed the county units to release

³⁶FERA Report, March, 1934, pp. 3-4. Telegram, Hopkins to Voyta Wrabitz, February 28, 1934, CWA Records, State Series.

³⁷FERA Report, March, 1934, p. 1.

first so-called "trouble makers and loafers," followed by individuals who had other means of earning a living or who possessed property. Workers who had been employed in industries that renewed operations in the spring of 1934 were next to be released. As curtailment progressed, still others who had members of their families employed by the CWA or elsewhere were dropped from the payroll. Next came those who had no dependents, followed by those with dependents. Finally, only people who were essential to the completion of a project remained.³⁸ Other states adopted similar policies designed to allow those who were relatively in less need of work to be discharged first, unless essential to the projects. Except for preference for veterans, the policy followed in hiring workers had taken no consideration of need. In curtailment, need became a matter of prime importance.

The continuous curtailment received some support among leading newspapers. The Washington Post exclaimed: "the President's determination to demobilize the CWA according to schedule is a courageous as well as commendable decision." The Kansas City Star said: "the gradual discontinuance of the CWA is a recognized but regrettable necessity."³⁹ But such editorials were a minority. Pressure

³⁸Minnesota, "Final Report," pp. 150-52. Illinois, "Final Report," pp. 182-84.

³⁹Washington Post, February 18, 1934, p. B6. Kansas City Star, February 20, 1934, p. D.

from all sections of the United States unceasingly urged the Administration not to abandon the CWA. Telegrams and letters continued to pour into Washington addressed to Congressmen and other federal officials, begging that the program be continued. From private citizens, singly or in a body, from businesses, civic groups, city officials, mayors, governors, and the like, they arrived. Typical of appeals from business is the following telegram from the City Savings and Trust Company of Deridder, Louisiana.

Removal of practically all CWA workers from rolls in Beauregard Parish leaves hundreds of former sawmill employees unemployed and in destitute circumstances. Situation serious. Anything you can do to get conditions remedied will be appreciated.⁴⁰

A group of citizens of Starke, Florida, sent the following appeal to Representative R. A. Green:

This is to certify that the people of this section are more in need of work than they were in the winter, for the fact that the packing plants are closed putting most of the people of this section out of work, and unable to take care of their families during the summer.⁴¹

A telegram from the Mayor of Wausa, Nebraska, stated:

On account of drouth, grasshoppers, and hail the last few years in our county our needs for help through CWA funds are far greater than otherwise and hope your allotment of Nebraska will be adequate to help us in Knox County in a sum of among ninety thousand dollars.⁴²

⁴⁰Telegram, City Savings and Trust Co., Deridder, Louisiana to Hopkins, CWA Records, General Subject Series.

⁴¹Petition, J. W. Whitman to R. A. Green, February 27, 1934, CWA Records, General Subject Series.

⁴²Telegram, S. J. Larson to Hopkins, February 14, 1934, CWA Records, General Subject Series.

From the Mayor of Tampa, Florida, came a plea to Hopkins declaring that "unless CWA is continued until private industry can absorb surplus labor national calamity will result."⁴³

These frantic appeals had no perceivable effect on the policy of demobilization. Instead, the termination date which had been set for May 1st was advanced to March 31st. The change was announced on March 6th in a letter to all state administrators. Four days earlier the federal CWA office had announced that wages would be reduced in order to equal prevailing rates in each community, but with the stipulation that no pay should be less than thirty cents an hour.⁴⁴

Early March, therefore, witnessed accelerated efforts by the Administration to terminate the CWA. On the day following the announcement of the new suspension date, the Cleveland Plain Dealer lamented: "the blunt announcement brings new complications to Cuyahoga's [county] relief." "CWA's reduction is inevitable and is accepted as such," the Plain Dealer declared later in March. "But Washington should, it seems to us, use a little discretion in the tapering process."⁴⁵ "The whole episode should serve as a

⁴³R. E. L. Chancey to Hopkins, February 28, 1934, CWA Records, General Subject Series.

⁴⁴FERA Report, March, 1934, p. 5. See above, pp. 105-06.

⁴⁵Cleveland Plain Dealer, March 7, 1934, p. 6; March 28, 1934, p. 8.

lesson," lectured the Boston Herald. "When states and municipalities accept grants from Washington they automatically put themselves at least partly under the control of the federal government. And what Washington gives it can take away."⁴⁶

On March 24th Norman Thomas, perennial Socialist Party candidate for President, led a group of 500 to 800 persons to Washington. Thomas and his demonstrators marched from the Union Station to the White House bearing banners which proclaimed "We want jobs, no charity," and "CWA must go on." A half dozen were admitted to the Executive Office, only to be informed that the President was too busy to see them. A sharp exchange of words reputedly occurred between the President's secretary, Marvin McIntyre, and one of the women marchers. The group next proceeded to trudge up icy streets to the New York Avenue office of Harry Hopkins, where they were granted an interview with the CWA administrator. In the course of the conversation Thomas charged that the federal government was "up to the old game of seeing how few crusts can keep the people from starving or rioting."⁴⁷ Hopkins listened attentively for nearly an hour. He was under orders to end the program and could give no hope that the curtailment policy would be

⁴⁶Boston Herald, March 8, 1934, p. 14.

⁴⁷Washington Post, March 25, 1934, p. 2.

reversed. The only assurance he could give was: "it certainly was no fun for me to issue those orders."⁴⁸

The abolition of the Civil Works Administration continued as planned. By the week ending March 29th the working force had been reduced to 1,964,040. On March 31st the Civil Works Administration officially ceased operation, although there were some exceptions. In four states, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, and Florida, the end had occurred in the middle of March. In other localities certain specific projects had been closed on March 29th. Some CWA personnel were retained after March 31st on several activities supervised by federal departments and a few employees were kept on the payroll after the termination date in order to complete disbursements, close accounts, and conclude reports. By May 3rd 40,757 persons were still working for the CWA. Finally, on July 14, 1934, the last group of employees, numbering 3,345, was dismissed.⁴⁹

"Desirable" local and state CWA projects still in operation on the date of suspension were incorporated into the FERA Work Division. Other uncompleted activities were halted and only finished after a long delay, if at all, leading to additional charges of waste and inefficiency.⁵⁰

⁴⁸New York Herald Tribune, March 25, 1934, in "Newspaper Clippings," Vol. VIII, n. p., Hopkins Papers.

⁴⁹FERA Report, March, 1934, pp. 4-5; June, 1936, p. 8.

⁵⁰Ibid., March, 1934, p. 5. Gill, "The Civil Works Administration," Municipal Year Book, 1937, p. 431.

The formal suspension of the CWA on March 31st did not lead to riots or violence. According to the New York Daily Worker, Communists sponsored a demonstration against the termination on April 1st in Chicago's "loop area," and held up traffic for forty minutes. This Communist publication, which had never spoken kindly of the CWA, reported the Chicago demonstration with much literary gusto.⁵¹

Another disturbance implicating a number of former civil works employees broke out in Minneapolis on April 6th. On that date a group of unemployed people began a parade through the streets with the purpose of presenting requests for work to the city council. Their progress was orderly at first. But as they neared the city hall, the parade degenerated into a mob of four to six thousand rioters. They stopped a coal truck and used its load as missiles against the police. The police retaliated with tear gas bombs which the enraged mob simply picked up and threw back. After a series of charges and counter charges, the police were finally able to restore order. Fifteen persons, including eight officers, were injured critically. The first press release stated that former CWA employees led the disturbance. T. J. Edmunds, FERA field representative, was dispatched to Minneapolis to investigate the situation. He sent the following report to Hopkins:

⁵¹New York Daily Worker, April 2, 1934, pp. 1-2.

Minneapolis riot situation investigated by Gov. Olson and myself jointly. Met with representatives of city council, public welfare board, Hennepin County Relief Administration, police department, and about a dozen labor unions. Twelve of the twenty-three ring leaders have Communist cards. Movement said to be instigated by agitators and not by CWA employees.⁵²

A statement by Minneapolis Police Chief Michail Johannes verified Edmunds's message. While a number of former CWA workers had been in the parade, the chief declared, they left it when they realized that it had been taken over by "red agitators."⁵³ There was no evidence in either the Chicago or the Minneapolis disturbances that former civil works employees were connected with the Communists.

In the months immediately following the abolition of the Civil Works Administration, the economy experienced a moderate recovery. By June, 1934, nearly 2,000,000 more people were employed in private industry than at the beginning of the year. The index of manufacturing production stood at 76 in January, 1934, advanced to 82 by March, and reached 86 in May, the highest point for the entire year. From that time on, however, the index indicated a gradual decline. By September, 1934, it had fallen to the year's lowest point of 69. The index of mineral production also rose from 88 in January to 100 in March, but as in

⁵²New York Times, April 8, 1934, pp. 1 and 3. Minneapolis Journal, April 6, 1934, in "Newspaper Clippings," Vol. VIII, n. p., Hopkins Papers. Telegram, T. J. Edmunds to Hopkins, April 8, 1934, Hopkins Papers.

⁵³Minneapolis Journal, April 8, 1934, in "Newspaper Clippings," Vol. VIII, n. p., Hopkins Papers.

manufacturing, it steadily decreased throughout the remainder of the year.⁵⁴

Meanwhile, during the months in which the number of employees and expenses of the CWA were being steadily reduced, the number of persons needing relief increased. In February there were 2,599,975 on relief. By March the total had risen to a little over 3,000,000, and in April, the month following the CWA's abandonment, the relief rolls increased to 3,866,133.⁵⁵ Indeed one of the immediate results of the curtailment was a sharp rise in the number of people seeking help.

Reasons for Termination

Almost from the beginning of the CWA, Roosevelt was under pressure from two opposing groups, those who favored work relief and a CWA-type of operation, and those who advocated direct relief. Most of the public and a majority of Congressmen saw the advantages of a work program while conservatives, alarmists, and, most influentially, several intimate advisers were against it.

Actually, Roosevelt knew little more about the CWA than what Hopkins and various associates told him. He knew the stories of graft and incompetence and statistically how

⁵⁴Economic Adviser to the Executive Council, "Review of the First Half of 1934," July 24, 1934, Hopkins Papers. Statistical Abstract, 1935, p. 748.

⁵⁵FERA Report, June, 1934, p. 2.

many letters either for or against the program his office and CWA headquarters received. But the Civil Works Administration was a small matter of concern to him compared with the devaluation of the dollar, difficulties with the NRA, air mail contracts, and countless other problems. He had to rely upon others, and not all his advisers were enthusiastic about the program.⁵⁶

The arguments for work relief have been discussed already. They hinged primarily upon a humanitarian desire to provide the unemployed with decent, real, respectable work of benefit to society. Democrat Harry L. Haines of Pennsylvania expressed the typical Congressional point of view when he declared in the House: "I plead guilty to having gone up and down my district in the past urging that the budget be balanced; but to me, over and above that, there is a sacred responsibility I owe my people . . . to see that the men and women of this Nation are employed and given at least the opportunity to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow."⁵⁷ Kent Keller of Illinois, another Democratic Representative, considered the money spent on the CWA to have been well worthwhile. In fact, he declared, the civil works program was the first measure of the Roosevelt recovery program which actually helped the

⁵⁶Baker and Goldschmidt, Tape Recording.

⁵⁷U. S., Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 2d Sess., 1934, LXXVIII, Part 2, p. 1273.

unemployed. "All the billions heretofore provided for have been poured in at the top, hoping that it would trickle down and then it failed to trickle."⁵⁸

Democrats were not the only spokesmen for work relief. Ohio's Republican Representative Thomas Jenkins claimed that while he would have liked to see the CWA operated without "so much waste and overhead expense," he had no desire to discontinue it.⁵⁹ Charles A. Wolverton, Republican Representative from New Jersey, exclaimed:

If our Nation could loan or give \$10,000,000,000 of money to European countries, and spend twenty billion more to win a war for someone else, then we can and should spend at this time the necessary few hundred millions of dollars to provide work for the unemployed by means of the C. W. A., the C. C. C. and other agencies, and be ready and willing to do so in such amounts as may be necessary as long as the need shall exist.⁶⁰

Those who opposed the CWA and work relief did not consider the money well spent. They based their reasoning upon the lower cost of direct relief and upon the graft and waste which seemed unavoidable under a work program. They further argued that the jobless would come to depend upon government-supplied work and regard it as a right.

Among Roosevelt's advisers who opposed a permanent work program were Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Director of the Budget Lewis Douglas, the Cornell economist

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 1944.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 1783.

George Warren, and Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins. During January, while the question of more money was pending, Douglas again and again urged Roosevelt to abandon the CWA and revert to direct relief as soon as possible. On January 24th, 1934, he sent to the White House a draft of a request for additional relief funds from Congress, at the same time declaring:

It is my opinion that the Civil Works Administration should be discontinued on February 15, 1934, if not before, and that if not then discontinued, the political forces which will have been created will become so powerful that it may be impossible to discontinue at a later date. . . .

I recommend that in lieu of the continuation of the Civil Works Administration, you revert to direct relief, applying the "means" test. . . .

If, however, you decide, as you apparently have, to continue the Civil Works Administration until the spring, I strongly recommend that the rates of pay be decreased so that where employment is available in industry it will be sought rather than rejected.⁶¹

On January 30th he sent still another appeal.

Permit me, with all the sincerity at my command and with great earnestness, to make this last plea against further large undertakings involving huge government expenditures, excepting alone whatever may be necessary for the direct relief of the destitute and the unemployed. History demonstrates, almost without exception, that huge expenditures eventually plunge government, even though reluctant, into paper inflation.⁶²

Frances Perkins opposed work relief for different reasons. She favored the CWA as a temporary measure but

⁶¹Memorandum, Lewis W. Douglas to Roosevelt, January 24, 1934, Roosevelt Papers.

⁶²Memorandum, Douglas to Roosevelt, January 30, 1934, Roosevelt Papers.

later indicated fear that a permanent work program would take the place of unemployment insurance and thus be harmful to the working-man in the long run. The struggle between the advocates of direct relief and work relief was not resolved during the period of the CWA. Miss Perkins wrote in 1946:

As the experience under work relief progressed, there was a moment [in 1935] when I feared Roosevelt was going to agree with an idea of Harry Hopkins's that work relief would be better than unemployment insurance and that we might perhaps switch from consideration of unemployment insurance, next on our program, to a permanent work relief, under some other name of course. The President, Hopkins, and I had a long discussion on this point. My argument was that if there were mass unemployment again, political confusion might cause other administrations to prevent unemployment insurance from going into operation soon enough to do any good. Hopkins argued that any unemployment insurance we could devise would not be enough to take care of families in a long depression.

"Well, I don't see why you can't combine both," the President said. "Let's go ahead with the plan for unemployment insurance. I think that's right. Let a man have something definite by law for some weeks and then arrange it so he can have work relief afterward if unemployment continues and he is in need."⁶³

In the end the advocates of work relief lost, although there was never really any victor. Times simply grew better and the WPA became unpopular in Congress. Only unemployment insurance remained.

During and after the demobilization of the Civil Works Administration, Hopkins at all times publicly supported the Administration's stand. At the Congressional

⁶³Frances Perkins, The Roosevelt I Knew (New York: The Viking Press, 1946), pp. 188-89.

hearings he made no request for appropriations for a long-range program, arguing that it would be difficult to predict the needs of the unemployed more than a month or so in advance. "You cannot project precisely what you are going to do to meet a condition when you do not know what that condition is going to be. . . . and I do not think that Congress should appropriate, therefore, large sums of money to finance something which may or may not require it as the time comes." He further stated: "it was not started as a permanent enterprise of the Government. No one had that in mind. I believe that it should be discontinued."⁶⁴

Hopkins gave three reasons for the abandonment of the Civil Works Administration. First, the expectation of increased PWA activities gave some hope that CWA workers could be absorbed in public works. In the second place, December and January had traditionally been the months of greatest unemployment. The CWA had served during this period of the year. With the approach of spring there would surely be less need for such an enterprise. His third reason rested on the optimistic forecast that the spring and summer of 1934 would witness a revival of industrial activity with an ensuing period of economic recovery.⁶⁵ All three reasons were actually one: the

⁶⁴House Subcommittee of Committee on Appropriations, FERA and CWA Hearings, 1934, p. 30.

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 29-30.

Administration's optimistic belief that the depression was substantially over and that further large expenditures would be unnecessary.

The termination of the CWA illustrates Hopkins's loyalty to Roosevelt. Privately, as was hinted in his statement to Norman Thomas, he was unhappy over the decision. Aubrey Williams has written an interesting account of Hopkins's tact and of his personal reaction to the order to end civil works.

You ask whether Hopkins was in favor of the liquidation of CWA? I am sure he was not. I am equally sure that if he sensed that the President was beginning to doubt the wisdom of continuing it, that Hopkins would give the impression that he had doubts about the wisdom of continuing it. This would not mean that he was agreeing with the President. I am sure he stood his ground with the President when they were alone.

Hopkins came back from the meeting with the President where it was decided that CWA was to be liquidated and sent for some of us. . . . I recall the hour and how he looked and what he said. He said "The President has decided to end CWA." Then he told me to draw up a telegram to all State Administrators. . . . After I had sent it I went back to his office, and asked Mrs. Godwin, his secretary if I might see Mr. Hopkins again. She called in, and then said to me "He will see you." I went in and Harry was standing at one of the windows looking out. He stood there a long time, then turned around and came over and sat down at the long conference table in his office, and said "It was Warren (Economist from Cornell) He has been telling the President 'You'll never be able to get them off the Federal payroll.'" This remark I definitely recall. Hopkins definitely did not have any other program in mind.⁶⁶

Whether Hopkins knew about the Douglas memos is not known. He was, of course, aware of Morgenthau's stand. At any

⁶⁶Aubrey Williams to the author, June 26, 1961, in possession of the author.

rate, if Williams's memory is accurate, Hopkins believed that George Warren's advice was a decisive factor in the President's decision.

Actually, Roosevelt's decision was based primarily on his desire to reduce government spending as much as possible. He had established the Civil Works Administration as a temporary measure for the winter of 1933-1934, but the cost proved to be greater than anticipated, and much greater than direct relief. In its four and a half months of existence it cost more than the combined FERA and state and local relief programs during the entire year of 1933.⁶⁷ The President's advisers believed that the re-introduction of FERA sponsored work relief, in which only the destitute would receive employment, would greatly aid in decreasing expenditures. Roosevelt did not put an end to the CWA when its original appropriation ran out, but he ordered the date of termination advanced from May 1st to March 31st.

Meanwhile, improved financial conditions gave hope that economic recovery was imminent and that no permanent, large-scale program would be needed. Hopkins's testimony before the House Appropriations Committee reflected the Administration's expectation that the battle against the depression was nearly won. Although the business up-turn

⁶⁷Gill, "The Civil Works Administration," Municipal Year Book, 1937, p. 431.

in the spring of 1934 proved to be both slight and temporary, the Roosevelt Administration continued to follow a course of action, for several months at least, based on the expectation that recovery was close at hand.

The curtailment of the CWA was only one result of this point of view. In March, Congress passed the Independent Office Appropriation Bill which provided increased wages for many government workers and more liberal pensions for veterans. The President vetoed the bill, but on March 28th both Houses of Congress overrode the veto overwhelmingly.⁶⁸ In the early months of 1934 it was Congress, not the executive branch of the government, which endeavored to launch a more liberal spending program.

Perhaps the conservative spirit that prevailed among many of Roosevelt's advisers in the early New Deal period induced him to listen to arguments that the CWA, if unchecked, would generate forces so powerful that it would be impossible to discontinue the program at a later date. Whether Roosevelt adhered to such reasoning cannot be determined. It is certain, however, that he wanted to cut expenses as much as possible and primarily for this reason was persuaded to abandon the CWA.

⁶⁸New York Times, March 29, 1934, p. 1.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

"I believe CWA will stand out, even when WPA becomes past history, like a precocious child in a family of slower going but more substantial children," wrote Harry Hopkins several years after the termination of the Civil Works Administration. "For its special quality of having come and gone so quickly, yet having let loose great forces, both economic and spiritual, it shares certain of the memorable qualities of special events."¹

William Hodson, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Public Welfare, referred to the termination of the CWA, particularly its dramatic suddenness, as a tragedy. Hodson considered the virtue of the Civil Works Administration to have stemmed from the principle that employment was a right belonging to all men, regardless of their need.²

During mid-January Governor Alfred Landon of Kansas, Republican presidential candidate in 1936, wrote President

¹Hopkins, Spending to Save, p. 123.

²New York Times, April 11, 1934, p. 22.

Roosevelt: "I have felt that this Civil Works program is one of the soundest, most constructive policies of your administration, and I can not urge too strongly its continuance."³

In the month following its termination, the Literary Digest heaped praise on the defunct enterprise.

No Egyptian ruler with his pyramid-building program, involving thousands of slaves, no empire building by Romans, no medieval fortress construction in the Middle Ages, could be compared in any way with the concrete achievements of the CWA in 136 days. . . . It could not help but have its social and economic effects on the nation.⁴

The final report of the Michigan Civil Works Administration characterized the program as the single New Deal measure that saved the United States from the threat of Communism.

Where a year before riots and violence were common, and revolution a common topic of conversation confidence in the government has been restored, and a new outlook on the future has apparently been inculcated. The renewed confidence and faith in the future of the United States was indicated in part by the fact that the Communist Party was able to muster less than 100 followers for its demonstration in Detroit, during the month of March, while two years earlier as high as 30,000 followers were in evidence.⁵

Highly favorable comments such as these, as emphasized in preceding chapters, were more common than unfavorable ones. Yet hostile criticism existed, and wielded

³Alfred Landon to Roosevelt, n. d., Roosevelt Papers.

⁴"CWA Ends After Brightening Up Nation," Literary Digest, CXVII (April 21, 1934), p. 9.

⁵Michigan, "Final Report," p. 145.

considerable influence on the President. Many influential newspapers portrayed the Civil Works Administration in an unflattering light. The Washington Post declared that "demobilization of the CWA marks a close to perhaps the most dangerous experiment conducted by the Roosevelt Administration."⁶ The Boston Herald labeled it an "extremely expensive and dangerous" undertaking.⁷ In contrast to the Michigan report which credited the CWA with deflating the appeal of Communism, the Idaho report described the civil works program as destructive to the American spirit of independence and hard work.

The CWA left an unfortunate attitude in the minds of so-called labor classes who actually did not want to work, that the government would see that they were provided with the necessities of life. The requirements of shorter working hours has left an unfortunate impression in the minds of this class. They have come to believe that a four or five day week with six hours per day should be sufficient and . . . [this belief provides] a fertile field for communism as well as a large field for crime.⁸

Certainly no common opinion existed concerning the merits of the Civil Works Administration. Those who were apprehensive of government-sponsored work relief were inclined to emphasize the worst features. Those who possessed sympathy for it tended to appraise it in a favorable manner, as did Alfred Landon with his assertion that the

⁶Washington Post, April 1, 1934, p. 4B.

⁷Boston Herald, March 23, 1934, p. 4D.

⁸Idaho, "Final Report," p. 65.

civil works program constituted one of the "soundest, most constructive policies" of Roosevelt's Administration. The CWA can hardly be called the soundest of Roosevelt's policies. Yet Landon's enthusiastic statement reflected the attitudes of millions of people.

Hopkins's prophecy that the CWA would stand out in history is another example of the tendency on the part of sympathizers to exaggerate the program's importance. Most people, unless they were connected with it, have forgotten about the CWA. Even books covering the Roosevelt Administration usually give it only fleeting reference. In comparison, the Works Progress Administration left a much greater imprint on the record of the New Deal. In one sense, however, Hopkins's remark was justified. The CWA marked the first attempt by the federal government to provide work for the unemployed, and in this respect it shares "certain of the memorable qualities of special events."

Little justification can be found for the Literary Digest's comparison of the civil works program with the erection of Egyptian pyramids or the building of Rome. Except for construction of a number of small airports, swimming pools, and some 150,000 sanitary privies, the CWA's activities, including road projects, were largely restricted to repair work. While the author of the article only wanted to point out the CWA's achievements, his remarks could lead

to misunderstanding if taken literally. His enthusiasm is typical of the untempered approval prevalent among many of the CWA's admirers.

Unfavorable criticism of the Civil Works Administration likewise lacked objectivity. Some of it was quite unrealistic. Much hostility was based on fear of extensive social change, as for example the Idaho reviewer's consternation over a possible detrimental influence on the moral fiber of the working class.

The American social and economic system received a severe blow by the depression. Unemployment and hard times intensified the problems of adjustment in a nation that had recently become principally industrial and urban. The transformation of the United States from a predominantly rural society to a more highly complex urban society was, of course, well underway before the depression. This is not to say that the CWA's critics failed to sense the "spirit of the times," but their superficial understanding of it frightened them. The dismay of the Idaho critic was not uncommon. To men of his outlook, the government's attempt to provide work, at relatively high wages and at a six- or eight-hour day, seemed brazen cultivation of "a fertile field for communism as well as a large field for crime."

Such critics were reluctant to discard their "horse and buggy" concept of the proper order of society and the

correct responsibilities of government. They sensed the transformations of their era, but from them they could predict only an ominous national future. Representative George Terrell, only member of Congress to vote against the CWA-FERA appropriation bill, expressed this anxiety with his prophesy that the CWA would lead to civil war and revolution.⁹ Terrell evidently understood neither the significance of the program nor the trends of modern American life.

Those who sought new solutions to the problems created by the depression became easy prey for the fearful. In their attempt to provide work relief without the humiliating "means test" and at wages above the current standard, the CWA administrators were especially vulnerable. Without the melodramatically sudden launching of the program, the relatively high pay scale, and the presence of a number of poor projects, the CWA might have avoided much exaggerated criticism. In spite of its faults, the CWA was not as bad as alarmists pictured it.

Of course, not all the CWA's opponents were alarmists. Many rational critics opposed it because they regarded relief, especially work relief, as a hindrance to economic recovery. "It is not because a few hundred or a few thousand big and little crooks have slipped in among the 4,000,000 that the CWA must be gradually liquidated," the

⁹See above, p. 202.

Wall Street Journal explained, "but because the whole series of emergency measures imposes a strain upon the Government's fiscal position which delays natural and lasting recovery." The Washington Post expressed a similar attitude. "Harsh though it may seem to the sentimentalists, the destitute unemployed cannot long be maintained at public expense under the conditions that make them the envy of self-sustaining workers." The Cleveland Plain Dealer, which generally endorsed the philosophy of work relief, stated: "The public obligation to feed the hungry is accepted. No one questions the superiority of the CWA method to the breadline and the handout of charity. But manifestly the cost of relief can't be allowed to sink the nation's credit, for then there wouldn't be any relief at all."¹⁰ Budget Director Lewis Douglas's notes to Roosevelt during the latter part of January reflected this opinion. In early 1934 the New Deal had not become noticeably influenced by advocates of heavy government spending. Without doubt, Douglas's advice as well as that of other conservatives influenced Roosevelt's decision to bring the Civil Works Administration to an end.¹¹

An objective evaluation of the Civil Works Administration presents many difficulties. Contemporary opinion,

¹⁰Wall Street Journal, February 10, 1934, p. 6. Washington Post, March 24, 1934, p. 8. Cleveland Plain Dealer, January 29, 1934, p. 6.

¹¹See above, pp. 215-19.

as shown, was usually biased in one direction or another. Preconceived values, as well as lack of sufficient time in which to develop perspective, unavoidably handicapped the most conscientious critics of the period. Their appraisals, regardless of position, do not convey a true picture. On the other hand, neither can the process known as "hindsight" be relied upon to yield ultimate understanding. Emotions generated in passionate partisanship or unmitigated hostility, or in any of the shadings of the sentiments between, should not necessarily affect a later critic. Ideally, anyone reviewing the Civil Works Administration from the vantage of thirty years distance would be a free agent, able to comprehend the whole program in relation to the complexities of the decade and the individuals connected with it. Unfortunately, the danger of hindsight lies in its very objectivity. The ephemeral texture and spirit of a time can be easily misinterpreted. Proper appreciation of the social, political, and economic conditions of the 'thirties as well as of the proclivities, hopes, and fears of the people involved may be lost through impersonal analysis. However, if the limitations are kept firmly in mind, it is perhaps possible to attempt a fair evaluation of the program and its significance.

The United States in the fall of 1933 was in the throes of a great depression. The new Administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt launched an all-out attack on the

economic debacle, largely through the mass of legislation passed during the so-called "One Hundred Days." The Administration hoped that the NRA, PWA, and AAA would revitalize the economy within a relatively short time. Actually, the Civil Works Administration was not a part of the New Deal recovery plan. New Deal officials regarded it only as a temporary, winter measure to mitigate suffering caused by prolonged unemployment. They did not foresee any need for it after the spring, believing that recovery would be well enough underway to make an expensive work program no longer necessary. They regarded long-range planning, particularly in the field of relief, as unwise. Hopkins's testimony before the House Appropriations Committee illustrated this optimistic point of view.¹² During the first year, the leaders of the Roosevelt Administration avoided launching any undertaking that would require elaborate plans. The CWA must be evaluated in accordance with this fact.

An idealistic desire to improve the opportunities of every individual appears to have characterized the directors of the Civil Works Administration. "The government does not owe a man a job. It owes him a living," wrote Aubrey Williams in an article which appeared in the New York Times on April 1, 1934, the day after the abandonment of the CWA.¹³ The idea behind the program stemmed partly from a

¹²See above, pp. 219-21.

¹³New York Times, April 1, 1934, IX, p. 1.

yearning to break away from the tradition that relief should be only sufficient to provide the barest essentials of life. Before the onslaught of the depression in the early 1930's, the typical American thought that most persons resorting to public relief were shiftless and a little dishonest. To accept public charity tended to brand an individual as a derelict. With approximately ten million persons out of work by 1933, this attitude placed an unjustified stigma on the jobless. But because survival was more important than pride, many reluctantly subjected themselves to the "means test" and received grocery slips or work relief. Bitterness, resentment, and humiliation frequently resulted.

The Civil Works Administration constituted an effort to mitigate this deplorable condition. Determined to depart from the degradation of human dignity, the CWA administrators decided to hire the unemployed without first establishing their need for work. The practice unfortunately made it possible for some unworthy persons to secure jobs while others, perhaps in greater need, remained unaided. Those hostile to the program were quick to seize upon this fact and exaggerate it. Without the humiliating "means test," apparently no way could be found to assure help only to the most needy.

The idealism of the CWA's planners revealed itself in still another respect. The projects initiated, and

particularly those sponsored by federal departments and bureaus, were designed to carry out beneficial public services which private, or even local and state enterprise, could or would not undertake. While they were simpler and less diversified than those first imagined by Aubrey Williams, they were of finer quality than the activities devised by earlier measures. A small number at least were of outstanding value and originality and must have fulfilled the dreams not only of many CWA officials but of numerous others such as Eric Steinlein, the destitute ship designer who saw in the civil works program an opportunity to perform a useful service.

The desire for worthwhile projects was not enough, however, to insulate the program against mistakes. The need for expediency at the beginning brought forth a multitude of inferior undertakings. The lack of sufficient time did not permit all activities to meet the standards desired by the planners. As the CWA became better organized, the projects improved. The leaders of the program cannot be blamed for the early imperfections. They were deeply distressed and took what means they could to rectify them. A motivating factor for launching the Civil Works Administration, it will be remembered, was the hope of avoiding the "leaf-raking" character of many state and local relief programs, even under FERA assistance. Despite the "jack-built" nature of some early activities, the term "leaf-raking" cannot properly be applied to the CWA.

A brief survey discloses the multitude of undertakings attempted during the CWA's brief existence. Projects involving approximately 255,000 miles of improvement or construction of streets and roads accounted for a large proportion of the expenditures--nearly 35 per cent. Over 40,000 repairs on schools, ranging from small rural structures to universities, were undertaken. Approximately 200 swimming pools and 3,700 playgrounds were built. Construction of more than 1,000 airports, of which about half had been completed before the CWA ceased operation, was begun. Over 8,560 research and survey projects were launched under the auspices of the program. Improvements were undertaken on military installations, transient camps, public buildings, and dykes and other flood control facilities. The following table indicates the variety of projects and the number, cost in wages, and total cost of each.¹⁴

Type of Project	Number of Projects	Wages (in 1,000's)	Total Cost (in 1,000's)
Roads and streets	56,660	\$246,105	\$314,697
Public buildings	33,850	99,688	138,338
Sanitation and drainage	14,020	72,689	91,374
Waterworks and utilities	3,750	18,060	26,991
Recreation facilities	2,840	22,966	28,822
Flood control	3,220	30,830	38,142
Erosion control, parks	12,870	86,593	195,230
Airports	1,440	8,842	13,018
Other construction	7,640	30,196	42,815
Goods	5,670	9,710	11,331
Welfare and health	7,470	25,162	27,849
Education and research	23,560	51,816	54,928
Administration	4,610	31,726	37,253
Total	177,600	\$734,383	\$930,788

¹⁴"Analysis of Projects," CWA Publications, Vol. II.

These statistics reveal much about the program, but they have their limitations. The variety of undertakings can only suggest the ambition to infuse the element of humanitarianism into a government program and at the same time to promote worthy projects. The CWA attempted to give respectable jobs to the unemployed, not handouts or "made work." This two-fold idealism--the desire to mitigate the humiliation of the unemployed and to develop useful projects that would never have been undertaken by private industry or local initiative--constituted a less than tangible, but nevertheless important, aspect of the program. Merely to list and describe the projects is not to guarantee perception of the quality that distinguished the Civil Works Administration from similar ventures.

The CWA represented only a small segment of the New Deal, but it deserves more than passing notice. Unfortunately, it has been stigmatized as a program ruined by graft and inefficiency. Even students of recent American history visualize it as having fallen just short of a fiasco. This idea is based not only upon the well-known fact that Roosevelt terminated the program after it had been in existence only four and a half months but also upon hostile criticism that occurred during the period. A careful study of the charges simply does not substantiate this assumption. There existed, of course, many examples of petty graft. Most of these involved local political figures

who, because they had served as relief officials and therefore were employed by civil works, were able to utilize the CWA for their own purposes. None of these instances involved the federal administrators. Washington bureaucrats did not siphon off funds or use the program to advance their own political aspirations. The only charge which can be justly made against the CWA's directors is that they were so naive as not to foresee that petty abuses would result. In a press conference on January 22, Hopkins himself admitted his naivete.¹⁵

A fair evaluation, on the other hand, would neither declare nor imply that the Civil Works Administration would have been a panacea for the ills of the economy if it had been allowed to continue. Several weeks after the close of the CWA, the New York Times reported that the curtailment had little effect on the sales volume of business throughout the United States.¹⁶ Instead, the slight economic upturn continued well into the summer of 1934. The Civil Works Administration did not foster a general economic recovery.

It did, however, have a beneficial effect in many local areas. The projects, according to the Minnesota "Final Report," constituted the only source of employment in many small communities. This was true throughout the

¹⁵See above, pp. 156-57.

¹⁶New York Times, April 22, 1934, p. 3.

United States. CWA administrators of sixty-three counties in Illinois reported that business had been greatly stimulated, and that numerous businessmen related stories of old debts paid as a result of CWA activity. A survey conducted among a number of Arizona firms revealed a general improvement in business during the early months of 1934, attributed in part to the CWA.¹⁷ The New York Times described the effect of the program on a small eastern Tennessee town:

Of a total population in this county of 11,500, 2,000 or nearly 20 per cent have registered for CWA work. When it is remembered that a hill family consists chiefly of children it will be evident that this figure represents practically all the able-bodied men in the country. In general, only the preachers, teachers, professional and business men failed to register.

Up to last December, the only phases of the New Deal that penetrated into the mountains and received any favorable reception at all were the CCC, which absorbed some two dozen young men about the town and the relief funds for road work allotted by the RFC.

The CWA standard of 30 cents an hour and up is exactly three times as high as the prevailing local rate and the work considerably easier. The increased income has enabled many of the hill people to indulge in the luxury of white flour in place of cornmeal. . . . There is a brisk demand for second hand cars.¹⁸

Obviously the CWA program did result in some limited economic benefits. Yet the fact that a few mountain people could afford white flour instead of cornmeal does not reflect affluency upon either a local or national level. Unmistakeably, both during and after its existence, the

¹⁷Minnesota, "Final Report," p. 182. Illinois, "Final Report," p. 192. Arizona, "Final Report," p. 67.

¹⁸New York Times, January 21, 1934, IV, p. 7.

depression was still very much a part of the American scene. Of course, as previously stated, the Civil Works Administration was not really a factor in the Administration's recovery plan. It was a spur-of-the-moment effort to relieve winter unemployment. During its brief appearance it helped many individuals but did little to boost the national economy.

Above all, however, the CWA provided valuable experience for initiating a more extensive works program. Although begun with limited funds or opportunity for planning, it proved that an enterprise of such magnitude could be undertaken. While it may have fallen short of its vision, the experience gained through its operation tremendously aided in the later establishment and operation of the WPA.¹⁹ Harry Hopkins became the administrator of the WPA, and his former CWA staff continued to serve as his assistants or found positions on other relief programs.²⁰ Hopkins himself stated:

WPA exceeds CWA in scope, volume, and efficiency. Without what we learned through our CWA experience of procedure, labor problems, supervision, planning and resources of the community, we could never have had WPA, and to that extent it can be looked upon as a preliminary almost a probationary period.²¹

¹⁹Gill, "The Civil Works Administration," Municipal Year Book, 1937, p. 432.

²⁰Aubrey Williams, for example, became director of the National Youth Administration.

²¹Hopkins, Spending to Save, p. 123.

The value of the CWA in this respect has not been exhausted even yet. It illustrated that a national work program of benefit to society could be sponsored by the government. And it suggested that all people have a common need: to be employed meaningfully at work which commands respect and which brings enough return to maintain dignity.

The expense of a work program proved to be higher than that of ordinary relief. The dole, or the giving of commodities to the most needy, only kept the unemployed from starving. Any long-range benefit either to those receiving assistance or to society as a whole was negligible. Not only did the man employed on a work project receive enough to purchase necessities, his labor had a tangible value. If it involved only road repair, the product was of at least some benefit to society. The relatively high cost of an enterprise such as the CWA provided dividends in the merit of the work performed.

One of the New Deal's most outspoken critics, Republican Representative Robert L. Bacon of New York, made the following evaluation of the Civil Works Administration several months after its termination.

It was altogether admirable in its general purpose: jobs to rescue the spirits of those who had been driven to the humiliation of public charity; more jobs for the self-sustaining unemployed who would otherwise eventually be forced to seek relief. But worthiness of purpose must not be confounded with soundness of method. The CWA wrote a tragical and pathetic page in the history of American government. Designed as it was to meet desperate conditions in an American way, it ended

in the disgrace of a politician's paradise, unhonored and unsung, and more than a month before its allotted time. The scandals that attended this colossal experiment, the blunders of its administration, the Alice-in-Wonderland quality of many of its undertakings, the unthinkable wastes of public money that should have been spent to secure a maximum of relief--all these cannot be exculpated and passed over because the motive behind it was apparently sound and praiseworthy.

The original and basic sin in the history of the CWA is that it was launched with melodramatic suddenness in order to meet a situation that should have been acknowledged and planned for months earlier, and that could have been foreseen as inevitable on election day 1932.²²

Bacon's criticism overestimated the shortcomings. The Civil Works Administration did not sponsor "Alice-in-Wonderland" projects, nor was it guilty of unmitigated waste of public funds. Nevertheless, the New York Representative hit upon the underlying flaw. The civil works program was launched without proper preparation. It was also too limited in scope. Regardless of the excellent quality of its administrative officials or the dire need for the program, no undertaking could have been effectively established under such short notice. The "melodramatic suddenness" of its initiation inevitably raised the expectations of the millions of unemployed, only a portion of whom could receive work. Even if the CWA had been able to avoid graft entirely and could have operated at one hundred per cent efficiency, approximately six million persons still would have been without jobs. This unfortunate inadequacy of scope and

²²U. S., Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 2d Sess., 1934, LXXVIII, Part II, p. 11891.

planning in the Civil Works Administration combined to form the basis for dissatisfaction.

If unfavorable criticism is warranted, however, it should be directed at the New Deal leaders who made no preparation for such a program until after they had been in office for about eight months. For several months after March, 1933, the only federal measures to alleviate unemployment were the PWA, which was primarily a recovery program aimed at priming the economic pump, and the FERA grants and loans to the states. Yet it was disclosed as early as June, in the White House conference of relief administrators, that these measures were inadequate. The reluctance to plan for a long-range relief or work program was reflected in Hopkins's public statements. On more than one occasion he declared that it was impossible to predict the state of unemployment more than a few months in advance or to make elaborate plans for its alleviation.²³

The refusal to make proper preparation was caused, at least in part, by optimism prevalent among many Administration leaders. They believed that other New Deal measures such as the NRA, AAA, banking reform laws, and currency manipulation would be enough to bring recovery. When it became evident that recovery had not occurred and that more aid to the unemployed would be needed, the CWA was launched.

²³New York Times, September 24, 1933, X, p. 2. See above, pp. 33-34 and 220.

By that time expediency had to prevail over planning and proper organization.

It was unfortunate for the Civil Works Administration that it lacked sufficient funds or time in which to plan and weigh projects. Unquestionably it should have been financed so as to afford employment to all who wanted or needed it. Plans should have commenced months before November. The criticism may be made that the program should have been postponed and initiated at a later date. In this line of reasoning the existing FERA could have been expanded to meet the needs of the destitute until plans could be matured and sufficient funds obtained. Yet it must not be forgotten that relief programs existing in the states, even with FERA aid, were inadequate. Many were nothing more than "leaf-raking" projects. Some organizations, particularly in the South, were so inferior that they were unable to give sufficient aid. Merely to enlarge the FERA would not have corrected these basic faults. More direct federal participation was necessary. A bold new program was needed immediately, and the CWA was an attempt to fulfill that need. Its shortcomings are obvious when seen in perspective, but the reality of the circumstances that existed during the fall of 1933 must not be overlooked.

The sudden appearance of the Civil Works Administration followed by its abrupt termination only a few months later reflects the pragmatic nature of the New Deal. The

changes in attitude and practice of the Roosevelt Administration, as illustrated in the CWA saga, were in harmony with the ideas Roosevelt expressed in a speech at Oglethorpe University during the presidential campaign of 1932. "The country needs, and unless I mistake its temper, the country demands, bold, persistent experimentation. It is common sense to take a method and try it: If it fails, admit it frankly and try something [else]." ²⁴

The Civil Works Administration was an experiment inspired by the more liberal New Deal leaders and regarded as a failure by conservative forces. Influenced by budget-conscious advisers, Roosevelt allowed it to come to an end after an existence of four and a half months, although not as soon as some had urged. With its abrupt inauguration and equally abrupt end, the CWA exemplified the struggle between the liberal and conservative forces which surrounded Roosevelt during the early period of the New Deal. The historian, with the benefit of hindsight, may conclude that Roosevelt was neither a consistent liberal nor a conservative, but more nearly a pragmatist who tried various methods in the attempt to solve the perplexing problems of the depression.

²⁴The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, I, p. 646.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscript Collections

- Justice Department. General Records. Group 60. National Archives, Washington, D. C.
- Papers of John M. Carmody. Group 47. Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
- Papers of Harry L. Hopkins. Group 24. Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
- Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Group 13. Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
- Records of the Civil Works Administration. Record Group 69. Central Correspondence Files. State Series and General Subject Series. National Archives, Washington, D. C.

Public Federal Documents

- Executive Order. No. 119-04. November 22, 1933.
- Executive Order. No. 6420-B. November 8, 1933.
- Executive Order. No. 6603. February 15, 1934.
- Executive Order. No. 6689. April 24, 1934.
- Federal Civil Works Administration. Rules and Regulations. No. 1 through 10. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1933-1934.
- Federal Emergency Relief Administration. Monthly Report of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, 1933-1936. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1933-1936.
- U. S. Congressional Globe. Vol. XXVIII.

- U. S. Congressional Record. Vols. XVIII, XXV, XXVI, LXXI, LXXV, LXXVIII.
- U. S. House of Representatives, Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations. Hearings on H. R. 7527, Federal Emergency Relief and Civil Works Program. 73rd Cong., 2d Sess., 1934.
- U. S. Industrial Commission. Report of the Industrial Commission of the Relations and Conditions of Capital and Labor Employed in Manufactures and General Business, Including Testimony So Far Taken (November 1, 1900), and Digest of Testimony. Vol. VII. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901.
- U. S. Senate, Committee on Appropriations. Hearings on H. R. 7527, Federal Emergency Relief and Civil Works Program. 73rd. Cong., 2d Sess., 1934.
- U. S. Senate. Document No. 56, Expenditures of Funds: Federal Emergency Relief Administration. 74th Cong., 1st Sess., 1935.
- U. S. Senate, Subcommittee of Committee on Manufactures. Hearings on S. 5125, Federal Aid for Unemployment Relief. 72nd Cong., 2d Sess., 1933.
- U. S. Statutes at Large. Vols. VI, XLVII.

Unpublished State Reports

These reports were submitted by each state Civil Works Administration soon after the close of the program on March 31, 1934. All are collected in the National Archives in Washington, D. C. They vary greatly in length, format, and content, and in their value to the researcher. Some were prepared with evident care while others were hastily put together. Although generally they contain little information concerning political "in-fighting," inefficiency, or graft, they do provide some idea of the history and accomplishments of the program within the various states.

Alabama Civil Works Administration. "Review of Activities, November 18, 1933 to March 31, 1934." n. d.

Arizona Civil Works Administration. "Federal Civil Works Projects in the State of Arizona." 1934.

- Arkansas Civil Works Administration. "Federal Civil Works Administration, State of Arkansas." May 15, 1934.
- California Civil Works Administration. "Summary Report: Civil Works Administration Activities, State of California, November 27, 1933 - March 29, 1934." n. d.
- Colorado Civil Works Administration. "Review of Civil Works Administration Activities in Colorado." n. d.
- Connecticut Civil Works Administration. "Review of C. W. A. Activities in Connecticut." Vol. I. 1934.
- Delaware Civil Works Administration. "Revised Review of CWA Activities in the State of Delaware." May 1, 1934.
- District of Columbia Civil Works Administration. "History of C. W. A." April 21, 1934.
- Florida Civil Works Administration. "Review of C. W. A. Activities in Florida: Preliminary Draft." 1934.
- Georgia Civil Works Administration. "A History of the Georgia Civil Works Administration, 1933-1934." n. d.
- Hawaii Civil Works Administration. "Report of Works Engineering and Inspection Department, Civil Works Administration and Federal Emergency Relief Administration for the Territory of Hawaii, December 20, 1933 to December 31, 1934." n. d.
- Idaho Civil Works Administration. "Review of Civil Works Activities in the State of Idaho." n. d.
- Illinois Civil Works Administration. "Report of the Federal Civil Works Administration for Illinois." March 31, 1934.
- Indiana Civil Works Administration. "A History of Indiana State Civil Works Administration, November 15, 1933 to March 31, 1934." 1934.
- Iowa Civil Works Administration. "Report." Vol. I. 1934.
- Kansas Civil Works Administration. "Review of the Civil Works Program, November 17, 1933 to March 31, 1934." n. d.
- Maine Civil Works Administration. "Review of Civil Works Administration, State of Maine," n. d.

- Maryland Civil Works Administration. "Civil Works Administration Activities in Maryland." n. d.
- Massachusetts Civil Works Administration. "Review of Civil Works Administration in Massachusetts, November 20, 1933 - March 31, 1934." April 20, 1934.
- Michigan Civil Works Administration. "Civil Works Administration in the State of Michigan, November 17, 1933-March 31, 1934: A Report of Activities and Accomplishments." May 31, 1934.
- Minnesota Civil Works Administration. "Review of CWA Activities in Minnesota." n. d.
- Mississippi Civil Works Administration. "Program of the Civil Works Administration in Mississippi." n. d.
- Missouri Civil Works Administration. "A Review: November 15, 1933 to March 31, 1934." n. d.
- Montana Civil Works Administration. "State Civil Works Administration for Montana." n. d.
- Nebraska Civil Works Administration. "Review of Civil Works Administration in the State of Nebraska." n. d.
- New Hampshire Civil Works Administration. "The Federal Civil Works Program: State of New Hampshire, 1933-34, Final Report." n. d.
- New Jersey Civil Works Administration. "A Report of the Civil Works Administration Program in New Jersey, November 15, 1933 to March 31, 1934." July, 1934.
- New Mexico Civil Works Administration. "Review of the State Civil Works Administration Activities in New Mexico." n. d.
- New York Civil Works Administration. "Review of C. W. A. Activities in New York State." 1934.
- Ohio Civil Works Administration. "The Civil Works Administration in Ohio, November 15, 1933 to April 1, 1934, A Brief History Based on Facts Available." May 1, 1934.
- Oklahoma Civil Works Administration. "Review of Activities." 1934.

- Oregon Civil Works Administration. "Outline of Civil Works Administration Activities Between November 8th, 1933 and March 31st, 1934, Within the State of Oregon with Complete Data in Regard to Work Performed, Financial Statement Showing Costs and Summary of Conditions Preceding the Establishment of the Work and the Effect in General Upon Business and Social Life Within the State Under the Program." n. d.
- Pennsylvania Civil Works Administration. "The Civil Works Administration in Pennsylvania, November 15, 1933 to March 31, 1934." April, 1934.
- Puerto Rico Civil Works Administration. "Report of the Activities of the Civil Works Administration up to March 31, 1934." n. d.
- South Carolina Civil Works Administration. "Report of South Carolina Civil Works Administration, November 15, 1933 to April 30, 1934." n. d.
- Tennessee Civil Works Administration. "Review of Civil Works Administration Activities in Tennessee." Part I. n. d.
- Texas Civil Works Administration. "A Record of Achievements by the Texas Civil Works Administration." n. d.
- Virginia Civil Works Administration. "A Review of CWA Activities in Virginia, November 15, 1933 - March 31, 1934." July, 1934.
- Wyoming Civil Works Administration. "Review." n. d.

Books

- Abbott, Edith. Public Assistance. Vol. I: American Principles and Policies, in Five Parts: with Select Documents. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940.
- Brown, Josephine Chapin. Public Relief: 1929-1939. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1940.
- Brownlow, Louis. A Passion for Anonymity: The Autobiography of Louis Brownlow, Second Half. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.
- Faulkner, Harold U. Politics, Reform, and Expansion: 1890-1900. New York: Harper & Bros., 1959.

- Feder, Leah Hannah. Unemployment Relief in Periods of Depression: A Study of Measures Adopted in Certain American Cities, 1857 through 1922. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1936.
- Hayes, E. P. Activities of the President's Emergency Committee for Employment, 1930-1931. Concord: Rumford Press, 1936.
- Hopkins, Harry L. Spending to Save: The Complete History of Relief. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1936.
- Ickes, Harold L. Back to Work: The Story of PWA. New York: Macmillan Co., 1935.
- _____. The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes: The First Thousand Days, 1933-1936. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1953.
- Lescohier, Don D. Working Conditions. Vol. III of History of Labor in the United States, 1896-1932. Edited by John R. Commons. New York: Macmillan Co., 1935.
- Perkins, Frances. The Roosevelt I Knew. New York: Viking Press, 1946.
- The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, with a Special Introduction and Explanatory Notes by President Roosevelt. Vol. II: The Year of Crisis, 1933. Vol. III: The Advance of Recovery and Reform. Edited by Samuel I. Rosenman. New York: Random House, 1938.
- Sherwood, Robert E. Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History. Revised ed. New York: Grosset & Dunlop, 1950.
- U. S. Bureau of the Census. Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1934. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1934.
- _____. Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1935. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1935.
- Williams, Edward Ainsworth. Federal Aid for Relief. New York: Columbia University Press, 1939.

Articles

- Colcord, Joanna C. "Right-About Face," Survey, LXX (April, 1934).

"Crisis in Civil Works," Literary Digest, CXVII (February 3, 1934).

"CWA Ends After Brightening Up Nation," Literary Digest, CXVII (April 21, 1934).

"Federal Use of the Unemployed," New Republic, II (April 10, 1915).

"First Year's Work of the United States Employment Service," Monthly Labor Review, XXXIX (October, 1934).

Flowers, Ben O. "How to Increase National Wealth by the Employment of Paralyzed Industry," Arena, XVIII (August, 1897).

Gill, Corrington. "The Civil Works Administration," in Municipal Year Book, 1937: The Authoritative Resume of Activities and Statistical Data of American Cities (Chicago: International City Managers' Association, 1937).

"Handling the Strikes that Menace Recovery," Literary Digest, CXVI (October 28, 1933).

Hurlin, Ralph. "The Mounting Bill for Relief," Survey, LVIII (November 15, 1926).

Kellor, F. A. "Out of Work: A Study of Unemployment," New Republic, II (April 17, 1915).

_____. "Salvaging the Unemployable," New Republic, IV (October 2, 1915).

Kurtz, Russell H. "An End to Civil Works," Survey, LXX (February, 1934).

Rich, Endicott G. "The Week in Business Summarized," Literary Digest, CXVI (October 7, 1933).

Smith, Alfred E. "Civil Works," New Outlook, CLXII (December, 1933).

Waller, C. E. "A Review of the Federal Civil Works Projects of the Public Health Service," Public Health Reports, XLIX (July-December, 1934).

Wilber, Walter. "Special Problems of the South," The Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Science, CLXXVI (November, 1934).

Newspapers

Atlanta Constitution. 1933.
 Boston Herald. 1934.
 Charleston Gazette. 1934.
 Christian Science Monitor. 1933.
 Cleveland Plain Dealer. 1934.
 Dallas Morning News. 1934.
 Kansas City Star. 1934.
 Los Angeles Times. 1934.
 Louisville Courier Journal. 1933.
 Minneapolis Journal. 1934.
 New Orleans Times Picayune. 1934.
 New York Daily Worker. 1933-1934.
 New York Times. 1933-1934.
 Rocky Mountain News (Denver). 1934.
 Seattle Post Intelligencer. 1934.
 St. Louis Post Dispatch. 1934.
 Wall Street Journal (New York). 1933-1934.
 Washington Post. 1933-1934.

Other Materials

Baker, Jacob, and Goldschmidt, Arthur. Conversation on the Civil Works Administration. Tape Recorded for the Author. May, 1961. In Possession of the Author.
 Baker, Jacob. Letter to the Author. November 27, 1961. In Possession of the Author.
 Bane, Frank. Letter to the Author. June 26, 1961. In Possession of the Author.

Charles, Searle Franklin. "Harry L. Hopkins: New Deal Administrator, 1933-1938." Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1953.

Personal Interview with John Carmody. Washington, D. C., April 5, 1961.

Williams, Aubrey. Letter to the Author. June 26, 1961. In Possession of the Author.

_____. Unpublished Manuscript. 1958. In Possession of Williams.