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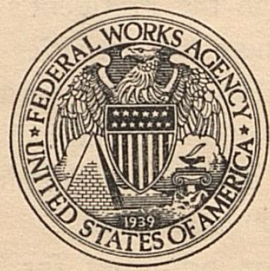
FOR AMERICAN WORKERS

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The Negro in the
Government's Work Program

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FEDERAL WORKS AGENCY
John M. Carmody, *Administrator*

Work Projects Administration,
Public Roads Administration,
Public Buildings Administration,
Public Works Administration,
United States Housing Authority

Federal Works Agency

The Negro in the Government's Work Program

THE Federal Works Agency is continuing the policies of Negro participation in the Government's public works program that were established by the five major construction and employment activities that have now been consolidated under the FWA through the President's Reorganization Plan No. 1. These five activities are represented by the Work Projects Administration, United States Housing Authority, Public Works Administration, Public Buildings Administration, and Public Roads Administration.

Employment opportunities for Negro workers have been assured in each of these agencies, either by congressional legislation, administrative regulations, or long-standing practice. This employment has covered a wide range of occupations from unskilled labor to professional and policy-making positions, and has been applied to the construction of schools, housing projects, highways, public buildings, dams, bridges, and many other local and national improvements through the use of which the Negro people have received important lasting benefits.

This program providing public works and employment, initiated by the five constituent agencies, has been coordinated for more effective administration under the direction of FWA.

WPA Creates Employment; Services the Nation

TOUCHING the lives of more individuals than any other of the FWA agencies, the Work Projects Administration has since its creation in 1935 been engaged in a gigantic struggle to relieve unemployment, to raise the standard of living, and to increase the purchasing power of the American people. During these years, one out of every five Americans has received some direct benefit from the 250,000 WPA projects distributed throughout the country and employing as many as 3,000,000 workers in a given year.

Negro Americans, who have suffered keenly from unemployment, have shared in the varied activities of this vast program. New employment opportunities in a wide range of occupations have been created. Important social services which contribute to their well-being have been made available to them. Public facilities have been developed in their communities.

During 1939 an average of 300,000 Negro workers were employed on WPA projects. It is estimated that these workers received some \$15,000,000 in monthly wages. More than a million Negro citizens, including dependent members of these workers' families, owed their livelihood directly to the WPA. This employment has been facilitated by congressional legislation imposing penalties upon any person who deprives an eligible person from benefits of the WPA on account of race, creed, or color.

Negro WPA workers did work of all kinds. In the WPA's art projects, they found a rare opportunity to show their talents as artists, sculptors, writers, actors, and scenery designers. As musicians they composed music and played in orchestras. They sang in choral groups over the radio, at the World's Fair, and before the King and

Queen of England. They taught classes of all sorts, and they played an important part as leaders in organized recreation. As doctors, dentists, pharmacists, and nurses, they helped local health agencies extend their services among the underprivileged and spread health education. White-collar workers were employed as clerks, stenographers, typists, statisticians, operators of calculating machines, draftsmen, and map makers. Among Negro skilled workers were mechanics, electricians, pipe fitters and layers, steel and sheet-metal workers, blacksmiths, tractor and truck operators, air hammer and compressor operators, carpenters, painters, bricklayers, plasterers, and others.

Negro workers found many opportunities for vocational training on WPA projects, as well as at adult education classes in such subjects as radio, woodwork, metalwork, and music. Young white-collar workers learned to make maps and to operate many kinds of computing machines. Negro women learned to sew, to make household necessities from scrap materials, and were trained as domestic workers on household training projects.

In every section of the country, North and South, East and West, Negro workers found employment on WPA projects. Educational, health, recreational, and other social services were likewise made available to colored persons in all sections of the country.

Decent Housing for Masses Aim of the USHA

LIKE WPA, the United States Housing Authority gives work to the unemployed. Its primary purpose as a permanent agency, however, is to assist local communities in the eradication of slums and the development of low-rent housing projects. In this program, the USHA is meeting two of the most urgent problems of the Negro American—housing and employment.

Survey after survey has indicated that great masses of Negroes are living in substandard dwellings for which they are compelled to pay high rents. They have not been able to get out of these slums and blighted areas, because decent, safe, and sanitary homes have not been available to them at rentals within their reach.

Throughout the Nation, local housing authorities are trying to meet this problem with the cooperation and financial assistance of the USHA. Dreary tenements and flimsy shanties are being torn down to make room for substantial and modern low-rent housing projects for small-wage earners now living in substandard homes.



As of April 1940, local housing authorities had obtained the approval of loans from the USHA amounting to nearly \$631,000,000 to pay 90 percent of the development costs of 400 projects in 180 communities. These projects will rehouse 143,600 families. It is estimated that 47,000 of these will be Negro families.

Through April 1940, 23 USHA-aided projects had been opened for occupancy and were rehousing 9,100 families, including about 900 colored families. Seven of the projects are for predominant Negro occupancy, while colored families are also living in six other projects. In addition, nearly 7,500 Negro families are living in public housing

projects developed by the PWA Housing Division and now administered by the USHA. Of the 195 USHA-aided projects under construction as of April 12, 1940, there were 66 for predominant Negro occupancy.

Not only shelter but also employment at the site is provided by the program of the United States Housing Authority. In addition, large sums will be received in wages by workers in supply industries such as lumber, cement, brick, glass, steel, paint, trucking, and railroads.

In order to insure participation of Negro workers in this vast construction program, specific protective measures have been taken. Clauses have been incorporated in building contracts indicating that the payment of certain minimum percentages of the skilled and unskilled pay rolls to Negroes shall be considered evidence of nondiscrimination against these workers. Under terms of these agreements, Negro workers in 81 communities throughout the country have received a total of \$2,500,000 in wages, of which sum more than \$500,000 went to skilled workers.

The program also has created jobs for Negro architects, engineers, and other technicians, as well as for professional and clerical personnel and management and maintenance workers.

Schools and Hospitals Developed by PWA

ESTABLISHED as a stimulus to industry and employment through the construction of public buildings, the Public Works Administration has created jobs for Negro building trades workers and has greatly increased the number of school buildings, hospitals, and other facilities for community use.

To date, PWA has allotted funds for public works in all but three of the Nation's 3,071 counties. Nearly \$6,000,000,000 has been spent in the development of 34,500 projects. Of this sum,

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\$1,538,208,000 was paid in wages on the sites of construction.

Negro workers, skilled as well as unskilled, have shared in these wages in accordance with the *Terms and Conditions of PWA* which require "that there shall be no discrimination because of race, creed, color, or political affiliations in the employment of persons for work. . . ."

In addition to construction employment, PWA has created thousands of jobs through the stimulation of business activity in the production, fabrication, and transportation of building materials. Thousands of Negro workers are employed in these industries.

Throughout the southern and border States modern buildings have been erected at publicly controlled schools for Negro youth. PWA has made allotments for more than \$11,000,000 worth of construction for Negro colleges.

In even greater measure, the Negro elementary and high schools have benefited by the PWA program. New school buildings aided by PWA are valued at nearly \$27,000,000 and afford accommodations for more than 120,000 Negro children in 24 States and the District of Columbia. Thousands of other colored students are attending mixed schools in northern States which have received PWA aid also.

Just as PWA has expanded the educational facilities available to Negroes, it has also sought to improve their health standards through the construction of hospitals. Through grants and loans, PWA has increased the number of hospital beds available to Negro patients by more than 7,200.

One of the largest and most modern hospitals erected for Negro patients with the aid of PWA funds is the Homer G. Phillips Municipal Hospital in St. Louis. This imposing institution cost more than \$3,000,000 and has a capacity of 685 beds.

PWA's school building and hospital construction programs are merged in the development of

the \$700,000 tuberculosis annex at Freedmen's Hospital in Washington for the treatment of patients and the training of physicians.

PBA Constructs and Manages Government Buildings

THE Public Buildings Administration is an agency of many years standing. It is responsible for the construction and management of such Federal buildings as post offices, customhouses, courthouses, and departmental buildings in Washington. In recent years the construction of Federal buildings has been greatly increased. During the period 1934-40 nearly 2,000 new Federal buildings, outside the District of Columbia, have been constructed at a cost of \$315,000,000.

Both in the construction and maintenance phases of this program Negro workers have been employed. In Washington a large percentage of the thousands of custodial workers and elevator conductors in Government buildings are Negro men and women.

Network of Highways Expanded by PRA

THE Public Roads Administration is also a permanent agency. It is responsible, in cooperation with the States, for the development of a vast network of highways throughout the Nation. As in other construction work, road building has been greatly stimulated in recent years by an emergency program carried on directly by the Federal Government without the financial assistance of the States.

As everyone knows who has traveled through the South, road building is an occupation in which large numbers of Negroes are employed in the skilled finishing work as well as in unskilled and semiskilled jobs.

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