

EXPANSION OF SELF-HELP ACTIVITIES

The self-help program is a program for organization of workshops in which unemployed people can use their idle time to make goods or provide services which they need for their own immediate use.

There are over five million people in the United States seeking work but employed neither in private industry nor in Governmental work programs.

Types of self-help are available for workers in virtually all parts of the United States. They range from processing of farm products in cities and towns near farm areas, to bakeries, canneries, sewing rooms, laundries, dry cleaning, wood cutting, and furniture repair in urban centers like Washington, D. C. Self-help programs can be adapted to elderly workers on old-age pensions, to unemployed workers on relief, to unskilled urban workers not on relief, to migrants from rural areas, and to highly skilled workers in their dull season. There is a place for some type of self-help on each step of the "workers' staircase".

It is assumed that nearly a million non-farm workers could be organized into self-help exchanges within two years. Assuming an average of 750,000 for the second year of operations, about 350,000 to 400,000 could probably be organized by the end of the first year.

Funds would be used for quarters, equipment, raw materials, motor trucks, light, gas, electricity, and personnel. A high-grade staff is needed for organization, management, and development of crafts and skill. The self-help program should not be a vocational training program, but emphasis on very high quality of management and craftsmanship are all-essential.

Insofar as possible State, local and private agencies would be encouraged to contribute raw materials, rental of quarters and possibly equipment.

Most Exchanges will probably provide part-time work as a supplement to, rather than a substitute for, private industry. Here the per capita cost should be about \$200 per worker. The cost would be higher where the local situation made it desirable to provide full-time work, as in stranded communities, or where a new and economically sound product might be developed out of local resources.

Such workshops for the unemployed would provide the frame-

work for quick expansion of productive activity in periods of rising unemployment.

Assuming a \$200 average the cost of the program the second year would be about \$150,000,000. An amount equal to about half this, \$80,000,000 could be spent in the first year. Every dollar of this money is spent with private industry.

The expenditure for staff and initial purchases of equipment would be relatively high in the beginning. The benefits are the return to private industry of workers who "graduate" from self-help, and productive activity and increasing consumption for those who cannot get private jobs. The return, in number of workers cared for, and in commodities available to each worker, should show a constantly increasing ratio to money invested. The funds are being invested in increasing skill and self-reliance of the unemployed.

It is extremely important in organizing such a program to allow for the utmost variety in organization, to fit the type of self-help in each area to specific local conditions. It is also important to allow for wide variation in the type of local participation and of financial assistance, in order to encourage both the local community and the unemployed workers to take the largest possible share in participation.

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