

*Confidential - not yet O.K'd by research division -*

March 27, 1937

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. Myers

FROM: Dean R. Brimhall

SUBJECT: Age Groups of the Unemployed

As you know, I have bothered you for data on the age groups of the workers on W.P.A. Below you will find a simple table showing the various percentages of age groups which I have derived from different sources. You will find a description of the sources on an attached sheet.

Age group	New Hampshire : : by its State : : Employment Div :	U.S.E.S. : (Stead) :	W.P.A. : (Myers) :	CCC : NYA : WPA : (Berman) :	CCC, NYA, WPA Other agencies (Brimhall)	<u>New Hampshire</u>	<u>U.S.</u>
Under 25Yrs	14.8	18.1	11.5	37.4	36	36	35.1
- 44	45.2	44.9	48.5	35.5	33.9	33.9	30.2
45 - 64	35.7	30.9	36.3	24.9	26.8	26.8	22.6
65 and over	3.9	3.7	3.7	2.2	3.	3.	2.3
Unknown	.35	2.5			.3		9.8

My interest in the matter has been stimulated for three reasons:

- (1) The general impression has grown up that such figures for W.P.A. alone represent a fair picture of unemployment in general.

I know you have warned readers of your studies against this supposition but the Information Service has recently made a collection of publicity on age groups of the unemployed and it is clear from editorials, columns, and the like that the public thinks that the older age groups represent our most difficult problem.

*3 1/2 million  
2 workers*

*approx 14,000 workers*

*100% most here*

- (2) You also know of my interest which has arisen out of the correspondence between this Administration and the Department of Labor, and
- (3) Local and national planning is likely to be affected by whatever conception is built up, however valid or invalid it may be.

The State Administrator of New Hampshire, for example, was so impressed by the data collected by his Director of the Division of Employment that he had a summary mimeographed and widely distributed. If we compare the age groups that he finds as representative of the unemployed in his state and then compare it with the age groups after adding the CCC and NYA people, we find some dramatic differences.

The New Hampshire officials probably forgot, or if they did not forget, they disregarded the large number of young people employed by other government agencies in their own State. While it is true that not all of the CCC boys and the NYA boys and girls are from relief families, nevertheless, the government has removed a large number of young people from the labor market. If these government agencies suddenly ceased functioning, the State of New Hampshire would learn quickly enough that the unemployment problem in their state is not one primarily of the old age groups.

I think the Employment Service suffers from the same misconception. They report, as you will note by the table above, a relatively small number of workers under 25 years. Therefore, the unemployed who are on relief, according to their judgment, are of an inferior lot. They point out that their applicants for work who do not come from relief rolls have a much larger percentage in the age group under 25. The only way I can explain their distribution is by assuming that they do not register workers who have been certified as eligible for relief who ultimately get on CCC and NYA. Were it not for federal agencies other than the W.P.A., the labor market would certainly be very different from what it is now and I think all people who are employed on government projects should be taken into consideration in any discussion of the problem of the older workers.

If we do not do this we will be following the practice of various European countries who reduce unemployment statistically by putting men in the army. The general assumption is that these people will be absorbed into private industry because of their age and physical condition. This may be true in the future but it is not true now. Even the United States Employment Service, as you know, reports that it is this young group below the age of 25 that is the most difficult to place.

There is one further observation I cannot help making, though it is not strictly a statistical one, and that is that innumerable naive people who have recognized the youth problem, are recommending training for the younger group. There is only one way by which young people have obtained training in the past and that is by being on a job. The best evidence that I have been able to obtain shows that 95% of the skilled workers of the country learned their skills on the job and are trained by other workers.

If these observations are supported by fact it appears to me that our problem is not one of the older workers, even of the unskilled older workers, but one of youth.

March 27, 1937

## DERIVATION OF PERCENTAGES

The New Hampshire data were derived from the findings of a survey conducted by James P. Quinn, Director of Employment. The total number of cases surveyed as of February 1, 1937 was 9,071 (In addition to those above 45 years of age it was found that 870 workers, or 9.6 of the total, had infirmities which would make them unemployable so far as private industry is concerned)

The U.S.E.S. report was prepared by William H. Stead for the Secretary of Labor. It is an analysis of the active registrants on its files as of July 1936 and represents only those with a relief status.

The WPA distribution by Howard Myers was submitted by him in a memorandum to Dean R. Brimhall dated January 19, 1937. The data were obtained as of June 1936 but "the figures have been adjusted to indicate a distribution as of present age of the workers."

The distribution supplied by Berman is for persons employed on WPA projects, enrolled in the CCC and aided by NYA as of May and June 1936.

My estimate is based on the total number employed by all government agencies under the Works Program, which includes WPA, CCC, NYA and other government agencies. The ages of the latter were unknown and this accounts for the large per centum of "unknown" in the break-down. All totals were as of February 27, 1937, as furnished in the confidential tabulation sheet, excepting those for NYA, which are as of January 31, 1937. These figures were furnished by the NYA Statistical Division. My New Hampshire estimate was made by adding CCC enrollees from New Hampshire and those receiving NYA aid to the total given in the WPA State survey.