

THE WORKS PROGRAM--- Works Progress Administration ---

FOR RELEASE MORNING PAPERS,
Tuesday, July 2, 1935.

Dr. Alderman speaks on character-building aspects of Works Program.

Reviewing activities of the FERA work-relief program in the field of education and character building, Dr. L. R. Alderman, Director of Emergency Education Program, Federal Emergency Relief Administration, declared that under the new Works Program: "we shall continue the educational and character-building activities for adults and add to them the new activities designed especially for the needs of youth."

Dr. Alderman will have a leading part in the educational aspects of the Works Progress Administration under Harry L. Hopkins, Works Progress Administrator. He spoke Wednesday afternoon from Washington over a nation-wide hookup of the National Broadcasting Company in the Greater New York Forum on Character Building. Other speakers were Oswald Knauth, Director of Emergency Relief in New York City, and Frederick I. Daniels, Executive Director of the New York State Temporary Emergency Relief Administration, who spoke from New York.

The full text of Dr. Alderman's talk follows:

I have been asked to talk on the character-building aspects of the Federal Works Program. To some people there may seem to be little or no connection between the Works Program and character building. But, as a matter of fact, since the beginning of Federal relief activities under the FERA, we have continually strived to prevent the depression from destroying the courage and hope of men and women. The FERA has had to combat at all times the character-destroying aspects of unemployment.

It is a truism that character building is the supreme objective of human life. Human institutions are successful to the degree that they tend to strengthen the character of the people. Everything we do should be considered as to its effect upon character.

During this depression we probably have been thinking more about real human values than ever before. I think it is because of this fact that here in

Washington, Governmental affairs have taken on new significance, because what is taking place has to do with things that affect human beings in a more vital way. The depression has quickened our thinking and forced us all to think of those things that have to do with human welfare.

This is the first great depression this country has had since we no longer have an undeveloped frontier. Our frontier has heretofore been the natural cure for depressions because the unemployed and the venturesome could go to the frontier and there, by building roads, bridges and cities, escape the effects of the depression. This time we could not run away, and our great task is to learn how to readjust our relationships and live together in peace and harmony even during the depression.

The ideals of a Democracy, unlike the ideals of some other forms of government, are that the whole people should be taken into account, and that they should have a part in the consideration of any public policy.

The establishment of the FERA was our Democracy's plan for providing for the whole people when our industrial system, because of the depression, had failed. The history of the Emergency Relief Administration shows that its management has had clearly in mind the importance of giving relief in such a manner that the elements of character would be strengthened and not weakened. Men and women, out of employment and discouraged, needed something besides food, shelter and clothing. They needed to keep up their courage, and this could be done only if they gave work in exchange for the relief which they received.

Everyone has known that a dole in the form of cash or an order on a grocery store is temporarily cheaper than to provide work relief. It is estimated that it costs about fifteen percent more to provide work relief than it does to provide a dole, if we do not consider secondary employment and do not consider the value of the work performed. There is no question in the minds of those who have been close to people on relief but that the greater immediate costs of work relief have paid very large returns, not only in the usefulness of the projects done, but more important, in terms of character-building. We all should rejoice in the fact that the character of the American people is such that they demand work instead of a dole. It was this strong demand for work that brought about the establishment of the Civil Works Administration last year. There are those that believe that if funds had been available to enable the continuation of the CWA for three or four months longer, the depression would have been whipped long before this.

The CWA was a new vast experiment. Some communities succeeded with it better than others. Unmistakable evidence has come to the FERA that the CWA provided conditions of character building that were lacking in a program of mere relief. There are those who clamor for a program, who insist that something must be done to ameliorate conditions, yet who decry whatever is done. These people seem to lack the patience necessary for the carrying out of a public policy where planning is necessary for its installation, and where time is necessary for its application.

Let me name some of the more noticeable accomplishments of the FERA that have had a bearing upon character building. Eighteen hundred new school houses have been built, and 30,000 school houses have been rehabilitated; 500 hospitals have been constructed, and thousands and thousands of malarious swamps have been drained. Two hundred new stadiums have been built. Four hundred and seventy-one community centers have been built, and 250 repaired and enlarged. Recreational parks have been provided in all parts of the country. Nearly 2,000 have been constructed, and 3,000 have been improved. To accomplish all this 125,000 men and women have been given employment, and 147,000 others have found employment in supervising playgrounds, helping with dramas, music, and other recreational and cultural activities.

Over 40,000 unemployed teachers have been given employment. They have earned their relief by teaching adults in classes for general education, by teaching vocations to those who had lost their skills and to those who wished to gain new skills. They have also taught new skills to large numbers who, through sickness or accident, have been incapacitated for their regular jobs.

We have had classes in workers' education, parent education, and we have taught approximately 500,000 men and women to read and write. There are probably ten times this number of illiterates or near illiterates who are waiting for opportunities to learn the rudiments of education so that they can take their full part as citizens. These activities all have had a bearing on character building. Under another part of the FERA educational program, 100,000 young men and women, who otherwise could not do so, were enabled to go to college, not by accepting a gift or a loan, but by doing work for their relief that was socially useful.

While this aid for so many worthy young men and women has been a tremendous, tangible contribution to character building, we realize it certainly has not been a comprehensive answer to all the needs of American youth. One group of our citizens during the depression, which probably has been more

-4-

neglected than any other, is that group of young people who never had had a job. Up until now, if work relief were to be provided, it had to be provided for the heads of the families. There is now ready for action a Youth Program of work and educational opportunities for very large numbers of young men and women from 16 to 25 years of age. Guidance, work, and educational opportunities are to be provided.

Now the Federal Government is ready to give even a fuller answer to the continuous and widespread demand for work by people on relief. We shall continue the educational and character building activities for adults and add to them the new activities that are designed especially for the needs of youth. Our experience under CWA and the work-relief program of the FERA has given us much to guide our future course of action.

We see the new Works Progress Administration ready to go into action to provide work sponsored by local communities in all parts of the country. This program of providing work at this time is necessary if the essential elements of character are to be maintained. This work will build self-respect, will strengthen muscle and nerve, and will toughen the fibres of character. This plan is to put to work 3,500,000 men and women. It is to call into action the planning and cooperation of citizens in all parts of the country. While it is Federal in its control, it is local in operation. It is expected that this WPA will mobilize the unselfish leadership of this country, as no other movement has done since the national efforts during the world war.

--0--