Hopkins emphasizes usefulness of WPA projects before U. S. Conference of Mayors.

Declaring that attempts inspired by ignorance, willful maliciousness, knowing misrepresentation are being made to discredit WPA projects in "your cities," Harry L. Hopkins, Works Progress Administrator and Federal Emergency Relief Administrator, today analyzed a national summary of WPA projects before the United States Conference of Mayors.

Explaining that more than half of the projects selected for operation up to November 1 comprise public buildings, highways, roads, and streets and that the percentage of white-collar projects is dictated by the number of these workers on the relief rolls, Mr. Hopkins emphasized that the WPA program constitutes what responsible public officials, State, County, and city, have asked for.

"I think that it may be unnecessary for me to tell the mayors of the great cities of the kind of work being done under this program. There are those who through ignorance, others through willful maliciousness, and I may say, knowing misrepresentation, attempt to discredit projects which are being undertaken in your cities," Mr. Hopkins said.

"All of these projects are being sponsored by the cities which you represent, and in most cases your funds are joined with Federal funds in the prosecution of the enterprise," he continued.

"There are those who would pick out of the more than 100,000 projects which have been approved, small individual projects which seem to them absurd and wasteful. This judgment is expressed usually by people without any knowledge of the project itself, before the project has even been put into operation, and without any real understanding of its significance.

"Recently there has been widespread criticism of drainage projects. Well now, it happens that drainage projects, particularly in and around cities, are in those parts of the municipalities wherein dwell the poor. The poor don't live on the hill-tops. These breeding places of disease, we propose to wipe out. They are projects sponsored by the health officers who advise you of their danger to life,
and yet there are people who would not have them done, though they represent the thoughtful planning and desires of intelligent people of the communities.

"I want to be explicit this morning in stating so that they cannot possibly be misrepresented, just the type of projects upon which the Administration is expending its unemployment relief funds through the WPA.

"These figures are taken from projects actually undertaken by the Works Progress Administration prior to November 1. The total number of projects initiated up to that time was 31,672.

"Of these, 4,550 were projects involving building farm-to-market roads. These represent 10.7 percent of the total funds. There were 7,361 projects for paving, repaving, and repairing other highways and streets, involving 30.7 percent of the funds. Now, when you add to these 5,077 projects for the repair and construction of public buildings calling for 10.3 percent of the total funds, you have more than half of the program which unquestionably constitutes the kind of improvements and expansions that all America knows is needed.

"Nobody raises any question about the usefulness of roads, streets, highways, and public buildings, and there is no more justification in the cracks they have taken at the other projects.

"Is there any more good, solid stuff than parks and playgrounds? There were selected up to November 1, for immediate operation more than 2,500 such projects, calling for 9.6 percent of the funds.

"There were 1,761 flood control and conservation projects representing 5.3 percent.

"There were 2,788 projects to expand or repair water supply and sewer systems, representing 8.7 percent of the funds. If anything will add to the wealth of American cities and towns, it is such direly-needed improvements. There isn't anything dramatic about building a sewer, but everybody knows that it furnishes one of things that help to make a civilization civilized.

"There were 257 airport projects, representing 2.7 percent of the money. There will be more of these, and if these projects aren't any good, why is there such a clamor on the part of communities all over the country for them?

"There were 54 projects for the demolition of slums in cities, involving .8 percent of the funds. I think this slum clearance work, and I know that the mayors of America believe, too, that it is one of the finest things that can be done.

"There were 1,461 sanitation and drainage projects, representing 4.6 percent.

"There were 2,600 professional and white-collar projects, representing 4.6 percent.
There were 1,763 projects designed particularly for women, representing 4.4 percent of the funds, and 3.3 percent of the funds were for 1,620 projects including miscellaneous projects.

Now let me be even more explicit. It seems to me that any reasonable person will agree that we are under a definite responsibility to provide suitable work for women. Now, one type of our projects is a sewing project where sewing rooms are provided for women who are skilled in this work, are employed to make clothing which is in turn given to the poor.

A year ago, in our work rooms approximately 12,000,000 garments were made and all distributed to those on relief rolls. This year as many more garments will be made, which in turn will be given to the welfare departments of the several cities for distribution to those in need. These women are given dignified work to do. They earn the money they get. Their work is useful. Probably 100,000 women will work in these sewing rooms throughout the Nation. This is the type of project designed particularly for women.

Now, there are those too who find it difficult to reconcile themselves to our employment program for clerks, salesmen, stenographers, bookkeepers, accountants, and other white-collar workers, although they are doing a useful work for the cities and States in a thousand and one capacities. These people have been held up to ridicule as though they were scarcely human. We have given them decent work to do. Honorable work. Work which they have been willing and anxious to do, and yet they are exposed to the derision of selfish small-minded people who would separate them even from the modest jobs which we have undertaken to provide for them in this crisis.

These people represent a sizeable part of the cross-section of America. They are citizens of America. Prior to this depression they never had relief and they don't want it now. It is the least we can do to offer them jobs suited to their abilities under this program. We have no apologies to make whatever for our interest in and our program for that great army of white collar workers in America.

And may I say a word at this time about the unemployed themselves. It is said by some that they don't want to work, a statement which is belied by the fact that in every city in America the tens of thousands on the relief rolls have literally struggled for the opportunity to work.

There is no authenticated evidence whatever that those on the relief rolls wish to remain idle. There are those who would have us believe that these people who have been hard-working citizens of America all their lives have suddenly changed their character and become chisellers and hopeless dependents. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

These people who have taken most of the kicks and bruises of this depression deserve better at the hands of America than to be treated as outcasts.