Women on WPA projects provide hot school-lunches for needy children: Utah cited.

Hundreds of thousands of undernourished school children of needy families throughout the United States are receiving hot lunches prepared daily by women employed on the nation-wide, school-lunch project of the Works Progress Administration. More than 5,000 women who are the economic heads of families and who were on relief rolls are at work on this project in cities, towns, and isolated rural areas. For their labor they receive security wages, and the undernourished children receive the benefit of that labor.

As of January 2, there were 320,302 women breadwinners employed on all projects, including the school-lunch work.

The hot school-lunch project on a national scale was initiated by the Women's Division of the Works Progress Administration of which Mrs. Ellen S. Woodward, Assistant Administrator to Harry L. Hopkins, is the director.

In Utah, where many children ride from seven to forty miles in crowded busses to and from school, hot school-lunches are served daily to 137,000 children in rural schools. Three hundred centers have been established throughout the State.

Care is exercised on all hot school-lunch projects to protect the feelings of needy children so that no discrimination is apparent. The method of handling this delicate situation varies in different localities. Hot lunches are served to all children in the rural schools in Utah where supplies are donated by parents who are financially able to provide for their own and their needy neighbors' children.

A survey made in Colorado revealed that 50 per cent of all children attending school in the State are undernourished and that almost 50 per cent are dangerously undernourished, rural children suffering from inadequate diet the same as city children. All milk, butter, and eggs produced on farms are very frequently used as a source of revenue, and many farm families subsist principally upon starchy foods. With the cooperation of parent-teacher organizations and civic groups, the Works
Progress Administration now operates individual and county-wide hot lunch projects. Children are weighed monthly, and a report made to the school boards. A definite effort is being made to have the project become a permanent part of the school system.

The Works Progress Administration provides only for the payment of security wage to workers on the project. All materials, foods, space, light, heat, water, and equipment must be otherwise provided. Parents of the Utah children donated garden vegetables in the Spring of 1935 for the winter lunches for their children. Part of the food was canned in the food-preservation centers by work-relief labor.

More than one million cans of fruit and vegetables were set aside to be used for children's lunches. The Parent-Teachers Association, American Legion, Lions Club, Kiwanis Club and other service organizations contributed. Parents of the Utah children donated garden vegetables in the Spring of 1935 for the winter lunches for their children. Part of the food was canned in the food-preservation centers by work-relief labor.

The following is a copy of a form, which was sent to all parents of rural school children, as it was filled in by the parent and returned to the Works Progress Administration project director:

"Dear Parent: The Works Progress Administration plans to give eligible women employment and provide a lunch for all those who come on the buses.

"This is to be a cooperative enterprise. If you can furnish any meat, potatoes, carrots, onions, tomatoes, or cash, credit will be given you at the current price of same and your boys and girls will be given their lunch.

"If this plan meets with your approval, please fill in the blank below."

The response was hundreds of wagon loads of root vegetables which can be preserved through the winter. Sometimes a farmer donates a sheep or a goat or a calf or a hog. The farmer donor brings the vegetables to the center pit where it is buried along with the donations of others in the community for use when it is needed. Pits are dug in the earth and the rooty vegetables placed between layers of straw and covered to protect them from the weather. This method insures fresh vegetables the year around. Such donations may be made without working a hardship on the farm family because there is usually a surplus of these farm products.

The hot school lunch program is supervised by the head of the Home Economics Department of the University of Utah. All supervisors who direct the project in the 300 centers throughout the State are trained in the home economics department in the university before they begin work in the districts. They, in turn, instruct the women who work with them in the centers. All menus used on the hot school lunch project are prepared by the home economics department of the university. The same system is operative in Colorado, Arizona, and other States. Undernourished children of needy families receive the benefit of the knowledge and experience of the best experts in the field, some of whom serve without pay."