Hopkins' investigators reveal why WPA jobs not taken: Many already employed.

"Very few workers have deliberately refused to accept WPA jobs," Harry L. Hopkins, Works Progress Administrator, stated today.

"Not one worker in a hundred has shown a preference for relief rather than work," he declared. "The reason for popular misunderstanding on this point is to be found in hasty generalizations based on the fact that about 25 per cent of assignments to Works Program jobs do not result in placements. This by no means signifies unwillingness to work.

"Men who fail to report to works projects because they have already secured private jobs, or because they are ill or disabled, or because they fail to receive the notice, can scarcely be regarded as shirkers.

"About three-fourths of all WPA job assignments result in successful placements on Work Projects. The proportion of successful placements varies somewhat in different localities, as might be expected, but the average percentage of accepted job assignments is high.

"The range in percentages of successful assignments may be seen from the following figures for representative communities: Los Angeles County, California, 75 per cent; Detroit, Michigan, 52 per cent; Baltimore, Maryland, 79 per cent; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 83 per cent; Athens County, Ohio, 87 per cent.

"The unsuccessful assignments, which constitute the remaining one-fourth, are not what they have erroneously been called -- refusals of jobs. If a man has recently secured a job in private employment, naturally he does not accept work on a WPA project to which he has been assigned. Or if he has moved and has not received his assignment notice, he cannot be said to have refused a job."

Reasons why clients fail to accept job assignments have been investigated in a considerable number of communities. Surveys have been made by the Social Research Division of WPA in 15 urban centers and in the rural portions of Stark and Athens Counties, Ohio, and supplementary data have been assembled from a number of local relief agencies and assignment offices that have followed up all unsuccessful
assignments. The evidence brought to light by these various surveys was strikingly consistent. It checked substantially with the facts uncovered last summer by the FERA, which found that very few relief clients were turning down private jobs for unjustifiable reasons.

Showing definitely that deliberate refusals to take Works Program jobs are rare, the studies revealed several legitimate reasons why the 25 per cent of the assigned workers failed to accept jobs. The chief reason, according to the WPA studies, is that many eligible workers have already secured private employment. Since the whole Works Program has been set up to further the return of workers into private employment, the end is already accomplished in those cases where workers have been privately reemployed.

About 10 per cent of those receiving WPA assignments were already employed not in private industry when they received the WPA job notice and hence did not accept work on the project. The proportion is as high as 18 per cent in some localities, notably, Detroit, Michigan. Other proportions are 10 per cent in Los Angeles County, Calif.; seven per cent in Berks County, Pennsylvania; 11 per cent in Toledo, Ohio; and 13 per cent in Paterson, New Jersey, and seven per cent in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

Another important reason why persons assigned failed to report for jobs was that they did not receive the assignment notice because they had moved, were temporarily out of town, or could not be located. This was the situation for from one per cent to as many as six per cent of the assignments. In Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, the proportion of such cases was one per cent; in Toledo, Ohio, two per cent; in Paterson, New Jersey, six per cent; in Los Angeles County, four per cent.

The relief population, subject as it is to frequent change of residence, has a mobility which necessarily interferes with placement of relief clients on WPA jobs, the studies brought out.

Many workers were unable to undertake the jobs assigned them because of temporary or permanent disabilities, investigation revealed. Some of them were temporarily ill at the time of referral. Some had been erroneously certified as eligible for Works Program employment despite the existence of serious physical handicaps, and others had become unemployable since their certification.

These ill or disabled cases constituted the following proportion of all assignments: three per cent in Los Angeles County, California; two per cent in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; nine per cent in Paterson, New Jersey; and 12 per cent in Baltimore, Maryland.

Other reasons for failure to accept the job, not involving unwillingness to work include: inability to leave children or invalids at home alone; excessive distance from home to project; deceased; in school; in jail; already employed on WPA project; and unfitted for job to which assigned. Taken together, these reasons account for approximately four or five per cent of the total.