

T H E W O R K S P R O G R A M

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-- Works Progress Administration --

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WPA Workmen Begin "Mopping Up" in Flood Devastated Areas.

As waters receded throughout the flood-swept Northeast yesterday and today, more than 250,000 WPA workmen prepared for the long haul of reconstruction, rehabilitation, and general "mopping up" which President Roosevelt promised to the stricken communities last week and strengthened by the appropriation Saturday of an additional \$25,000,000 of emergency flood relief funds.

Direct relief needs are being met by the Red Cross, local Welfare groups, and, in the case of food, to a large extent by the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation, Harry L. Hopkins, Works Progress Administrator, said. WPA workers are aiding in the distribution of these materials, and are actually contributing hundreds of thousands of garments, blankets, and comforters produced in WPA sewing rooms. The new flood relief fund, he added, will be confined strictly to the work of rehabilitation; reconditioning and reconstructing public properties damages to which constitute a large portion of the total bill of approximately half a billion dollars run up thus far.

Cities on the lower reaches of the Ohio River -- notably Cincinnati -- still faced rising waters today, but with flood crests substantially lower than they were further north, precautionary measures already taken are believed adequate to prevent any loss of life or undue damage to property. Elsewhere, the waters are going down and the job of "digging out" has begun.

The state administrator for Kentucky wired Mr. Hopkins today that several hundred WPA workmen have been busy for the last four days evacuating families and household belongings from threatened areas.

"Workers are exhibiting a splendid attitude", this communication said. "Willing to work overtime and Sunday regardless of pay for overtime". The American Legion and other groups, it was added, are helping to maintain the men's morale by keeping them supplied with hot coffee and sandwiches as they work.

"Every available WPA employee pressed into service throughout our State to save life and property", William P. Fahey, State WPA Administrator for New Hampshire advised in his latest telegraphic report.

"Flood danger now passed", he continued. "Our next big job is to aid in reconstruction".

A number of interesting sidelights, some of them grimly humorous, have been revealed in the daily accounts of WPA emergency rescue work which have poured hourly into Administrator Hopkins' office during the last four days.

The Ohio administrator recounted briefly the adventure of a two-man rescue squad fighting against the current of a swollen stream in a row boat to reach a family marooned atop their small barn. The swiftness of the waters snapped first one and then the other of their two oars, and the hapless rescuers were swept nearly a quarter mile downstream before they, themselves, were rescued by other workers.

One group of WPA workers in Bellaire, Ohio, braved the dangers of asphyxiation and explosion to remove a large quantity of carbide from a warehouse, the floors of which already had been undermined by high water. City officials generously praised the men's heroism, for had the carbide become wet, they pointed out, an explosion, and possibly fire, might have resulted which would have endangered a large section of the town.

Among those rescued at another point in Ohio were two women about to become mothers. Both were rushed to hospitals as soon as land was reached, where their babies were born in safety.

A WPA project completed some months ago is credited with saving the residents of Gilbertson, Schuylkill County, Pa., from the watery fate of many of their neighbors. The project was for the dredging, straightening, and walling of sections Mahanoy Creek, which in the past had frequently overflowed its banks with consequent loss and damage to the surrounding country. This time, it is reported, the Mahanoy stayed within its bounds, albeit by inches, and Gilbertson escaped with only negligible inconvenience while havoc raged all about it.

When usual communication facilities broke down in up-state New York -- due as much to snow and sleet as to the flood -- WPA officials took to the air to communicate instructions to their scattered rescue crews.

"Radio proved of inestimable value in keeping contacts when ordinary communications were paralyzed", Lester W. Herzog, State WPA administrator for New York, stated in a recent report. He gave high praise to stations WGY and WOKO, as well as to a league of amateur short wave operators in the affected zones.

The Civic Arts Theater in Syracuse will present a benefit performance by a unit of the Federal Theater Project Tuesday night, the total proceeds of which will be turned over to the Red Cross for the relief of flood sufferers. A program of vaudeville with a one-act comedy playlet will make up the program.

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