

T H E   W O R K S   P R O G R A M

- - - - -

--Works Progress Administration--

For release in morning newspapers  
Monday, March 30, 1936

Hopkins Says Works Progress Administration Reconstruction Work in Flood Areas  
Now in Full Swing.

Flood relief work by the Works Progress Administration has swung into its third stage of operation--that of reconstruction--throughout the fourteen states which were inundated a fortnight ago, Administrator Harry L. Hopkins stated today.

A steady force of approximately 275,000 men are working full time at the task, he said, and millions of dollars of individual flood relief projects are being approved and initiated each day.

"We have settled down to the important work of rebuilding streets and roads, putting up bridges, and generally restoring the facilities of normal life and commerce," he said, adding:

"Projects are being approved right on the spot where their need and desirability is clearly demonstrated, and it is seldom that approval has been delayed for more than 24 hours. State Administrators have been authorized to put every man necessary on flood relief work, and in some cases where there weren't enough men in one locality, they have been imported from another.

"We are doing the work as quickly and as effectively as possible, and arguing about procedures later."

Mr. Hopkins said he was more than gratified at the reports reaching his office of the manner in which Works Progress Administration crews were able to save life and property when the flood hazard first arose, and to carry on with the inevitable "mopping up" and reconstruction which followed.

In many localities, he said, the WPA was the first agency to become aware of the existence of danger, and actually evacuated many threatened families before the alarm became widespread. As waters encroached upon farmlands and low-lying city streets, Works Progress Administration workers and trucks were hastily withdrawn from their regular projects and rushed into the danger zones.

In the Pittsburgh-Johnstown area, where the first great thrust of the flood waters was felt in Pennsylvania, all available WPA forces were thrown into the battle. Hundreds of men labored around the clock without rest and with only coffee and sandwiches passed out to them by volunteer helpers for food. How many persons were actually saved from death, and how much property salvaged through the efforts of these WPA workers, is impossible to estimate, Mr. Hopkins said.

"In Wheeling, West Virginia, alone, the Works Progress Administration was responsible for at least 750 of the families who were moved to higher ground," Mr. Hopkins declared.

Thousands of rescues were made in cities and towns throughout the area. When the supply of boats became scarce in Pittsburgh, one gang of WPA workmen was set to making rafts from whatever lumber and driftwood was available. On one such raft, the entire stock of a small merchant, which he valued at around \$3,000, was moved to safety thus saving him, according to his own admission, from certain bankruptcy even had his life and building been spared.

Every WPA-leased truck in and around Johnstown was pressed into service when news spread of the impending break in the Quannohoning Dam. More than 2,500 people were carried to safety.

Work camps used by the Works Progress Administration in Connecticut were turned over to the Red Cross for the shelter of homeless families. In the City of Windsor, one gang of workmen evacuated a \$50,000 supply of tobacco stored in the basement of a local tobacco factory.

Throughout the entire area, crews are now settling down to the task of reconstruction. More than 1,000,000 cubic yards of mud have been removed from the streets of Johnstown, Elsewhere, cellars are being pumped dry, publicly owned utility properties being cleaned up and set to working again, roads and streets opened, and sewers unclogged. Thousands of wells have been partially filled by tons of mud and silt. These are being dug out and the waters rendered potable. So heavy was the deposit of mud on the river park of one New England city that the authorities have despaired of moving it. They have decided to let it dry out, grade and landscape it, and then plant grass and shrubs on the new level.

Mr. Hopkins said human suffering had been brought to a minimum today largely through the efforts of the Red Cross and other welfare agencies which have handled this phase of the emergency. Tons of food have been turned over to it by the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation, while sewing rooms of the Works Progress Administration have provided large quantities of garments and bedclothing.

---oo00oo---