For Release in Sunday Newspapers
May 31, 1936.

Works Progress Administration Plans Exhibit at International Conference of Country Women in Washington, D. C., June 1 to 6, 1936.

Projects ranging from saddlebag and houseboat libraries, to campaigns against malaria, typhoid, trachoma and other contagious diseases, as well as the more familiar sewing room and school lunch work, will be covered by a display under auspices of the Women's Division, Works Progress Administration, at the world-wide conference of 6,200 country women in Washington, June 1 to 6.

As part of the general exhibit of work being done for rural sections by the various governmental departments, this display will be presented in the south building of the Department of Agriculture during the conference of the Associated Country Women of the World.

"The influence of these projects on rural life is perhaps even more important than the construction projects such as farm-to-market roads, community centers, prevention of soil erosion and flood control, though the results are not as apparent physically," Mrs. Ellen S. Woodward, Assistant Administrator in charge of women's activities, explained. "They reach into even the most isolated areas, to put women heads of families, as well as men, back into some kind of gainful employment.

"But their social value extends beyond mere unemployment relief, for behind each project is a definite idea of community betterment."
Circulating libraries are carrying reading materials into thousands of rural homes where not even a magazine or newspaper was before available. With books in their saddlebags, women ride horseback along the mountain trails of eastern Kentucky, and even up the middle of the streams, to penetrate the inaccessible sections of the state. This project is known as the Packhorse Library.

Mississippi, long known as "the bookless state," has a Works Progress Administration library system which makes books available to readers in its every section. From county libraries, books are distributed by wagons, carts, school busses, automobiles and even by boats. In Issaquena county a librarian operates her book route with a skiff and reaches many tenant families who seldom leave their homes except for food. In Leflore county a houseboat is a travelling reading center for those who live in houseboats on the Sunflower River.

Some form of travelling library is in operation in many other states. In Nevada, 35,000 magazines were issued during the month of January to county indigents and people on relief. One elderly man told the supervisor on his project that if he had to give up either his magazine reading or his food, he believed he would give up his food.

To provide books for this increased distribution, women have been put to work mending and re-binding old volumes which would otherwise have been discarded, and in binding magazine serials into book form. The Works Progress Administration has furnished assistance in many established libraries to help catalogue and index books and do repairing and re-binding. In South Dakota, during February, 9,394 books were
mended and rebound, 5,395 cleaned and carded, 4,486 catalogued and indexed, 4,118 loan magazines made available for service, 432 scrap books constructed. Nine story-hour units were conducted and 237 hospitals visited with library service. Over the entire country library work employed 14,865 women as of May 19.

Examples of the book repair work will be part of the Works Progress Administration exhibit at this conference.

Production of clothing for needy families employs more than 200,000 women heads of families eligible for relief. Mrs. Woodward said that because sewing has proven the quickest way to put large numbers of women to work, it occupies by far the largest place in the Works Progress Administration women's program. Sewing centers in village or country communities have brought into socialized groups thousands of formerly unemployed and lonely rural women. In these Works Progress Administration training centers, they have learned how best to clothe their own families while making wearing apparel for other needy families of their neighborhood. The skill which some of them have acquired is evidenced in the garments which will be on display at the country women's convention.

The preparation of hot lunches for undernourished children in both rural and city schools employs the services of 11,783 women from relief rolls in the United States. In Colorado, the Works Progress Administration is daily feeding 20,000 undernourished school children in public and parochial schools. The State Agriculture College loaned the Works Progress Administration a group of 15 home demonstration agents who went into every county to help organize the school lunch program. The menus are
planned by expert dieticians and consist of two or more appetizing
dishes, and a hot drink. The cost is held to an average of four cents
a meal.

A similar program is being carried out in the other states. In
Tennessee, 1,994 community meetings have been held in the promotion of
school lunches. The county superintendent is the sponsor and the com-
munity furnishes all food and equipment. In many cases, rural school
boards furnish the supplies. A relief client in the neighborhood
prepares the lunches in her home, if she lives near the school, or comes
to the schoolhouse to prepare them. As the children increase in weight,
they become more alert and efficient in their work, and attendance has
markedly increased in schools where hot food is served at noon. Parent
Teacher Associations all over the country have cooperated in this program.

To provide wholesome leisure time activity for people of all ages,
the Works Progress Administration has launched a recreation program which
has been carried out extensively in many of the states. In Mississippi
there are 42 bi-county directors with 168 assistants who are organizing
people of city and country communities into leisure-time groups. They
teach games to children in the day nurseries, promote plays for schools,
coach athletic teams in rural schools where there are no coaches, teach
folk dancing, foster community sings and dramatics, teach home handicraft,
and conduct other activities designed to provide wholesome leisure time
entertainment, especially in the isolated areas.

There are 44 recreation projects in operation in Minnesota on which
1,395 workers have been assigned, 366 of whom are women. A recent report
from Ohio says that the program was originally set up for those unable
to finance their own recreation, but the various activities have proven so attractive that an average of 37,741 persons are enrolling in the classes each week. Reports indicate that this recreation program has proved very effective in checking juvenile delinquency.

Closely associated with this work is a federal music project through which the Works Progress Administration is seeking to preserve hitherto unwritten folk songs of America. It has often been said that in the mountaineers of Kentucky courses the purest Anglo-Saxon blood in America. Songs, dances, and even speech, have been handed down to the inhabitants almost intact from their English descended Virginia ancestors. In that region, 14 persons are engaged in seeking out, recording and assembling folk lore and folk songs.

Through adult education classes some of the crafts which were perfected in the early days of America are being revived. They utilize native products as far as possible. Baskets made of Florida's native grasses — vases, bowls and platters pounded from Arizona copper, — coverlets, spun and woven from Missouri wool — Navajo Indian rugs from Colorado — these are types of products which tell the story of the old-new industries now operating to furnish employment to relief workers in fields which do not compete with private industry.

As markets for these products are established, the craftsmen are able to go off relief and into business for themselves, Mrs. Woodward said. The making of early Spanish patio furniture, in authentic Moorish design, has furnished private employment for the entire village of Chupadero, New Mexico, where formerly practically every family was on relief.

Beyond its primary purpose of giving emergency work to thousands of unemployed, the Works Progress Administration is endeavoring to train
or re-train these people to get as many of them as possible back into regular industry. This endeavor is reported to be especially successful in the field of nursing. In the Emergency Relief Administration program, which preceded the Works Progress Administration, many graduate nurses, most of them young and inexperienced, were put to work as visiting nurses under supervision of the Department of Public Health. A great many of those who proved proficient in that type of work were absorbed into the regular government public health program.

Under the Works Progress Administration nurses go into homes where medical care is especially needed but cannot be financed. They teach relief clients the principles of home hygiene and child care. They aid doctors and dentists in examinations of school children. They act as assistants in clinics. They help with the surveys incidental to such projects as the immunization for whooping cough, typhoid, malaria and other contagious diseases. Under the supervision of physicians, they give inoculations. In short the Works Progress Administration nursing program, in various capacities, extends the arm of the State Departments of Public Health.

Trachoma, a dread contagion which affects the eyes and which, unless checked, will eventually cause blindness, is especially prevalent in rural areas in Southern Illinois. Here the Works Progress Administration busses travel from 50 to 75 miles out into the country to bring trachoma victims to the clinics for treatment. Thousands of cases of blindness have thus been averted and much pain alleviated. At present there are approximately 7,000 patients under care in the five clinics. Treatments are given three times weekly. Besides the bus service,
the Works Progress Administration furnishes 38 nurses and clerical workers to help in the clinics.

Sanitation is improved and living standards raised by the help of the housekeeping aides. Many unemployed farm women are used in this work. They are sent into homes where the mother is ill, where the family is broken, or for some other reason housekeeping help from outside the home is necessary. The aides often follow the visiting nurses; after the crisis of illness is past, they help the family until such time as the members are able to resume their own work. The housekeeping aides also instruct the family in sanitation.

Besides these projects which concern both urban and rural folk, there are a few which are strictly rural in their nature. In South Carolina there is a project which furnishes assistants to home demonstration agents. In Kansas there is a research project which provides for the summarization of farm account records. It is sponsored by the State Agricultural College. Ohio also has a project for the analysis of farm accounts, including factors influencing farm income.