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Hopkins Issues Statement on Drought Effects.

After receiving reports from officials in affected areas, Works Progress Administrator Harry L. Hopkins asserted today:

"We should realize by now, in dealing with the drought that has been withering crops, destroying livestock and reducing so many families to destitution in the Great Plains and many Southern States, that we are confronted with a chronic, or a recurrent, tragedy."

Continuing, Mr. Hopkins said:

"The Works Progress Administration has gone out of the Emergency Relief business. It isn't interested in mere temporary palliatives. Yet it is coming to the rescue of many thousands of families in these drought-stricken areas in what is admittedly an emergency.

"We could be accused of inconsistency in that, if emergency relief and work of permanent value were not going forward together, combined in a single program.

"Just as the floods in the East last spring gave new impetus to flood control work, so the drought is prompting greater efforts in water storage and control. It is all a part of a too-long-neglected conservation program.

"There are always some critics who decry this sort of thing. They did little or nothing along these lines, to make nature serve man better, when they had a chance. And now they continue to counsel a do-nothing policy. But we cannot be seriously concerned with such protests. Americans are no longer satisfied to see vast numbers of their people condemned to poverty and sacrificed to the whims of nature.

"Where control measures no longer can be effective—where there is no
longer fertility to conserve—we must prepare for a fresh start on richer soil.

"Where intelligent measures can reduce losses to a bearable minimum, we must no longer delay that effort.

"And that is just what we are doing today.

"Out in South Dakota they are building half a hundred dams to store the water that may mean the difference between starvation and a money crop for thousands of farm homes.

"In Minnesota, work is under way on an artificial lake that will be 20 miles long and 2 miles wide, bringing water conservation to a number of counties that are now in the heart of the drought district. And that is only one of many such projects of the Works Progress Administration in this State. There are 64 smaller water conservation projects in Minnesota alone that are now authorized for work or in operation.

"Wyoming, plagued by insect hordes and seared by forest fires as well as drought, has determined that never again will it be caught in so helpless a position. Small dams, reservoirs and wells are being added to its defenses by impoverished farmers who know too well the price of neglect.

"The same story could be told of the other drought-stricken states in the Great Plains and will be repeated in the seven Southern States now feeling a parching blight.

"Every one of these projects has been sponsored locally. The farmers know what they want—and they are getting it.

"Our part, however, has not been merely to make funds available and to direct this work. Foreseeing the need, a carefully studied program is being worked out on the basis of earlier drought surveys.

"The actual operation of this program is under the direction of the various State Administrators, but to bring Federal supervision closer to the Great Plains States most severely affected, we have established a headquarters in Chicago.

"The entire program is now moving forward without a hitch. And there will be no stopping it until these repeatedly-stricken drought areas are on a safer economic basis. Such work will pay dividends to every taxpayer in the Nation."