For Immediate Release
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Williams Reports Works Progress Administration Putting 1,200 Farmers a Day at Work in Drought Area.

"With 45,000 farmers and farm laborers at work in the drought area of the West, the Works Progress Administration is putting men to work at the rate of 1,200 a day," Aubrey Williams, Deputy Administrator of the Works Progress Administration, announced today.

"With those cared for by the Resettlement Administration and other agencies," Mr. Williams added, "the total increase in the rolls to date is 75,000."

Mr. Williams' announcement came after he had fixed a drought employment quota of 5,000 for Oklahoma. This addition brought the total quota for the 12 states in the western and southwestern areas up to 98,500.

"The vast majority of farmers who are in need prefer work to relief and for this reason they are being put to work. Fortunately the program is elastic. There are enough projects on our lists to provide for everybody in need, even though this calls for modification and revision of restrictions that were eminently proper under conditions that prevailed before the drought became a major disaster, and made modifications necessary.

"It is a real situation and our people on the ground and here are realists."
"Cooperating with the Resettlement Administration and local agencies, we are making certain that applicants in need of jobs get them.

"In most of the area the projects fit the needs of the distressed. They are small on which men can be employed almost, if not quite, within sight of their farms. This is necessary because there remains a lot of stock on the farms of these people, and as everyone knows, stock has to be tended at least once and probably twice a day. Transportation of these men to big jobs distant from their homes would complicate matters seriously.

"These men are in the main working on small dams, digging wells, and building farm-to-market roads.

"In the Dakotas the projects are chiefly small dams. In Iowa and Nebraska long-needed secondary road projects predominate. In Kansas and Missouri wells and farm-to-market roads are the rule.

"It may be asked why, if these ponds and dams and wells are needed now, they were not provided in the half century or so since the Dakotas where they are needed most, were opened to settlement. The fact that they were not is unimportant. The fact that they are being set up now is important.

"That these improvements will be of permanent value is also important and the perfect answer to those who think only in terms of present cost.

"In this connection, it is tragic to recall that what we are doing now was recommended just 47 years ago when the Dakotas were admitted to statehood, when the late Major Charles Francis Powell, director of the Geological Survey, told the members of the North Dakota Constitutional Convention, conservation of water was the basic essential to
prosperity in the new States.

"'All you have to do', he told them, 'is to learn the lessons taught by history and that is in lands like these you have to depend on placing water on the soil. When you have learned to do that, you are in no unfavorable condition.

"'In Dakota you are to depend hereafter in a great measure on the running streams. These waters are to be preserved and stored during the season of non-irrigation. There are, say two months of the year when you need it to irrigate and ten in which you should store the water.

"'All other wealth falls into insignificance in comparison with that which is to come from the pouring on them of the running streams of this country.'

"There is nothing in moralizing or criticising over the failure to follow Powell's sage advice.

"There is much in the fact that on the anniversary of Major Powell's address that throughout the area he knew so well, farmers turned from their barren fields are busy with pick and shovel building the small dams that are the chief feature of the Works Progress Administration's drought program. Behind these dams the rainfall, plentiful in the spring, will be stored for the dry summer months, when crops must be made.

"These dams will not make that country over. It would be silly to so assert. But there is no doubt that they will serve to make less severe the drought that came year after year. The country will not be drought-proof, but it will be vastly less dependent on summer rains that do not fall. There will be water for cattle and, if the engineers be correct in their conclusions, they will also serve 'to lift the water table', as they term it.
"All our reports from the field emphasize the splendid spirit of the afflicted people. It is admirable. They are not whining. They are not complaining. All they are asking is work with which they can buy food for themselves and feed for what cattle they have remaining.

"In this connection the Resettlement Administration is making grants and making loans to those who need them. But too much emphasis cannot be laid on the fact that these people in need prefer to earn their money.

"Not being a prophet nor the son of one, I cannot say, and I doubt if any one can, how long this work must continue. One may, however, say with safety and certainty that the work will continue until the job is done. It may, it probably will be, tough sledding this winter, but that will be provided against. It is too early to say how, or to announce plans, but we will be ready when the time comes."