Surveys Indicate National Appeal for Clothing May Be Necessary for Drought-Stricken Farm Families.

Works Progress Administration officials in the field reported to Deputy Administrator Aubrey Williams today that surveys indicate that a national appeal for clothing may be necessary to provide for families on drought-devastated farms of the Dakotas and possibly other states.

Conferences with welfare officials have revealed their unanimous opinion that this will be necessary, Howard S. Drew, Field Representative of the Works Progress Administration, reported from Pierre, South Dakota.

Meanwhile, the work of storing surplus clothing, to be renovated and repaired in the sewing rooms of the Works Progress Administration is under way, Mr. Drew explained, and many farm women of the drought area are employed in this work.

"We must begin to prepare now if we are to be ready this fall," Mr. Drew added. "No one can survey the hardest hit areas in these states without realizing the heavy demands that will be made when there are no crops this fall to bring in money for the winter. And winter comes early to these states. Experienced observers predict that human needs will be far greater here after October 15 than at any time
during the blistering summer heat."

Even the welcome respite brought by cool nights in the drought area during the last week when temperatures dropped into the fifties and seemed, by contrast with the long hot days to suggest frost, brought a reminder of grim winter days ahead.

"To understand the severity of conditions in these states," Mr. Drew continued, "the long succession of misfortunes that preceded this drought must be recalled. I asked a South Dakota farmer today when he had last realized a profit on his crops.

"His memory faltered as he recalled the blight last year, the drought of 1934, and earlier troubles. 'We had a heavy yield of wheat in 1932', he remarked, 'But we got no money for it. We were offered as little as 18 cents a bushel in Pierre. You couldn't afford to ship it. In some places they raised more than fifty bushels to the acre, but didn't ever cut all of it. We had a good crop in 1930, too, as I remember, but in those days we didn't make anything out of it. The trouble is that all of us have been going farther in debt and we haven't any place to turn but to the Government. We don't want charity, but we've got to have work. That's why I'm glad to be here,' he concluded pointing to the water conservation project on which he and his neighbors had been working."

Similar stories are heard everywhere on the brown, parched prairies, according to Mr. Drew, who is making a survey of all the drought areas in the West and Central West.

Even the leaves of the cottonwood trees and others that occasionally provide a bit of shade in the lowlands are about half their normal size this year and other vegetation that has survived previous droughts is now brown and seemingly lifeless.

"I notice that a long-range weather prophet of some local repute is now
predicting that floods will follow this drought," Mr. Drew concluded. "His guess may be right, but in any event it merely suggests the possibility of further demands for water control, such as the Works Program Administration is now developing. That will help in times of flood as well as drought.

"Near Mandan, North Dakota, we have a flood control project to curb spring freshets in a stream now almost dry, but every dam and pond now being built in the drought area will provide a measure of flood control, too. They simply keep the water off the fields when there is a surplus and release it when there is a shortage. In many of these districts we find that ponds once existed, but were drained by farmers who thought only of increasing their acreage, not realizing the importance of water. Those costly mistakes are now being corrected.

"When water from swollen streams can be stored in the spring throughout the area where the average annual rainfall is below 20 inches and unevenly distributed through the year, the prairies will come into their own again as an important factor in the world's grain supply. The same system of dams and irrigation ditches will serve equally well in dry and wet seasons regulating the water table. The problem then will be one of crop control and proper marketing.

"But the immediate problem is to provide for the human needs arising from successive crop failures during the years in which farmers have been subject to the laws of chance. The outlook for next winter is dark, indeed, but whatever comes, we intend to be ready for it."