Pennsylvania WPA Administrator Denies Political Charges.

Categorical denial of charges by William Hard, radio commentator for the Republican National Committee, that politics governed employment on Works Progress Administration projects in Pennsylvania was made by Edward N. Jones, State WPA Administrator, to Administrator Harry L. Hopkins.

Investigation of each case cited by Mr. Hard revealed the attack to be without foundation in fact, Mr. Jones said. The charges were made in a national broadcast Monday evening.

Allegations of Mr. Hard and the results of the State Administrator's investigation follow:
"Mr. Hard stated that the Philadelphia District of the Works Progress Administration had in its employ Mrs. Winnie Booker, Wilfred Booker and Coffield Booker, all members of the same family, who were politically active for the Democratic Party in that vicinity, having party registrations of others changed to that of Democrat.

"This charge was carefully investigated by the Philadelphia Office of the Works Progress Administration for which John H. Rankin is District Director. It was found that Mrs. Winnie Booker is not employed by the WPA and never was employed by this agency. There is no record of anyone by the name of Coffield Booker ever having been employed in that District of the WPA. Wilfred Booker, the third party, mentioned by Hard in his broadcast, did work for the WPA in the Navy Yard at Philadelphia but resigned on July 31, 1936. In order to make the denial complete another member of the Coffield group was investigated and it was found that he, John Coffield, never worked for WPA. This decedent died on March 3, 1936.

"The commentator for the Republican National Committee broadcast that one Edward Jones of Wilkes-Barre was told by Oliver Troup, a WPA Timekeeper on Project 4183, that if he did not want to change his Republican registration to Democrat, he would be 403'd or dismissed from employment.

"In a sworn statement, Oliver Troup, the Timekeeper mentioned by Jones, and by Hard in his broadcast, denied same in detail stating:

"I, Oliver Troup, residing at 19½ Evans Lane, Wilkes-Barre Township, employed as timekeeper on WPA Project 4183, river job, hereby make the following voluntary statement the Sixth day of October 1936. Mr. Edward Jones was a laborer with Group 8, River Project 4183 for a period of about eight months with me. He was given the job as straw boss on account of his physical condition. A survey taken by the Compensation Department of WPA proved that Mr. Jones was afflicted with a double Hernia and he was then given lighter work. An order came through for the national reduction of force in 1936 and Mr. Jones as well as others was laid off. Mr. Jones was never, according to my knowledge, asked to change his registration or to discuss politics. The statement made by him was purely and simply a malicious lie with no foundation thereto. Some weeks after the national reduction I was approached by Mr. Jones and asked to have him reassigned to a job. He was told by me to see members of the WPA in the proper department of such requests. I would be willing to face Mr. Jones and Mr. William Hard, who broadcast this information over the radio last evening over WIP and accredited these malicious lies to me. I deem this a cheap brand of petty politics on the part of a few petty politicians."
Mr. Hard also charged that Joseph G. Schuler, District Director for the Works Progress Administration in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, told one Nicholas Casper of Wilkes-Barre that he would have to change his registration from Republican to Democrat if he wished to be assigned to a WPA job. Casper stated he had been on relief ten months without any assignment.

District Director Joseph G. Schuler in a sworn statement emphatically denies these allegations stating:

'I, Joseph G. Schuler, Director of the Works Progress Administration, District #2, Luzerne County, heard the radio broadcast of Mr. William Hard, News Commentator, from station WIP, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, last evening, October 5, 1936 at 7 P. M., and wish to make the following statement: Mr. Hard said that Nicholas Casper came to my office looking for work and that I refused him unless he would change his registration. This is an absolute untruth. I never asked Mr. Casper or any other person to change their registration. I never talked politics to anyone in the office. Many wanted to talk with me but I refused to discuss politics with them. To the best of my knowledge Mr. Casper was never in the office seeking employment from me. As I recall Mr. Casper, was when I was acting Mayor of the City of Wilkes-Barre after the death of Daniel L. Hart in February 1932. Several of Mr. Casper's friends called at my home and got me out of bed on Sunday morning to intercede for him to get him out of jail. This I did for Mr. Casper's friends. The WPA program in District #2 is being conducted according to procedure and the WPA does not select its workers. Ninety percent (90%) of these workers are taken from the State Emergency Relief Rolls where they are certified as to their eligibility for work. We then requisition these workers from the State Employment Office where all referrals are made.'

The radio commentator for the Republican National Committee stated that Joe Martin, a WPA foreman on Project 2817 told James Maloney of 57 Willow Street, Bear Creek Township near Wilkes-Barre, that if he did not change his registration as Republican to Democrat, he would be dismissed from WPA employment.

This charge was definitely and emphatically denied in its entirety by Joe Martin, the WPA foreman mentioned by William Hard, who, in a sworn statement said of these accusations:

'I, Joseph Martin residing at R. D. #1, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, employed as General Foreman on WPA project 9219, hereby make the following voluntary statement: The best way to answer Mr. William Hard, News Commentator, who spoke over the radio on Monday evening, October 5, 1936, regarding accusations made by Joseph Maloney against me, is to recall some of the history of Joseph Maloney. It happens that I have known Joseph Maloney all my life. On numerous occasions he made the following
statement to me: "Why should I work when I can get more on relief and make more panhandling around the square and get a kick out of it." Such statements as these he has made often in my presence. At one time or other he was employed as an orderly at the Mercy Hospital. He never really wanted to work but because of his training as an orderly he thought he should be entrusted with a first aid kit to render first aid on the job. Such a thing is impossible as there are no such classifications on the project. When registration day came along he simply took this means of getting out of work. He had been knapping stone and his work was not satisfactory. In the presence of many witnesses, I told him to take either a pick or shovel and I thought he had obeyed orders until about an hour later when I was checking over the project and found him absent. That evening the Wilkes-Barre Times Leader published the story to the effect that I discharged Maloney, which was untrue. The following day I reported for work and about halfway to the job I noticed him on the truck and asked this question, "Joe, I thought you were fired", he replied, "I thought so too". At that time I told him that I would arrange for a transfer to another project and that I would have him work for me no longer. Before the transfer went through, I received orders from my superior to issue a 403 (a discharge slip) on Maloney. About a year and one half ago I was employed as timekeeper on one of the Gypsy Moth projects and Maloney was working on this project. The operation was about a mile out of town and Maloney was working only a couple of days when he pulled a strike because they did not have heated buses for transportation. Soon after that he was discharged, all of which proves that he does not want to work. On numerous occasions he reported to work intoxicated. I would suggest that before Mr. William Hard use these unreliable statements of Mr. Maloney that he first consult the records of the Luzerne County Jail or the Luzerne County Court House for the true picture of Mr. Joseph Maloney."