THE WORKS PROGRAM

--Works Progress Administration--

For Immediate Release,
Tuesday, January 19, 1937.

Three Thousand WPA Workers in Flood Area Aid Rescue Work and Reinforce Levees.

As the flood crest swept down the Ohio river, fed by swollen tributaries in five States, approximately 3,000 project workers of the Works Progress Administration were working day and night to save weakening levees and rescue residents of the stricken area, Administrator Harry L. Hopkins announced late today.

Flood control projects completed in these States by the Works Progress Administration have averted serious damage in many sections where water rose to the level of the devastating 1913 torrents, Mr. Hopkins said, but breaks in unimproved levees have forced workers to turn to rescue work elsewhere.

Three States--Missouri, Illinois and Indiana--already have thrown WPA forces into the emergency and Administrators in Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia and Pennsylvania have prepared to give immediate aid if local officials call for help.

As the water begun to recede at Pittsburgh, no immediate danger was seen in Pennsylvania and West Virginia, WPA Administrators reported, but 2,600 WPA workers were ready for immediate duty in Allegheny county and additional hundreds at other points in Pennsylvania, while several hundred men were available at both Point Pleasant and Parkersburg, West Virginia, if needed. Kentucky and Ohio WPA forces also were ready with trucks, boats, sand bags, and other equipment.

Many regular Works Progress Administration projects in the flooded regions, particularly road and street projects, were forced to close. The men were shifted to levee work and to aid in moving families and livestock to higher land.

Harry Easley, Missouri Deputy Works Progress Administrator, announced that 2,000 WPA workers in Dunklin, Pemiscot and Butler counties had so far managed to stave off serious damage along the St. Francis and Black rivers by "sandbagging" under the direction of United States Army Engineers sent from Memphis. Federal surplus commodities to feed several hundred homeless families were shipped into the area and clothing was provided from WPA sewing rooms with the aid of Red Cross workers.

More than 300 Illinois WPA workers were operating a day and night shift to save levees on the Kaskaskia River near Vandalia, where five breaks were counted this morning. Others were being mobilized along the lower Wabash and from Golconda to Cairo on the Ohio.

Wayne Coy, Indiana WPA Chief, was steadily increasing his forces, which originally numbered 500, and said 1,000 would be at work along the lower Wabash and White rivers by Thursday when the crest is expected. They will be at the disposal of local officials, he added, either for levee work or to aid in evacuating families from bottom lands.