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Labor Shortage Charges Refuted by WPA.

"The perennial charge that the Works Program creates a shortage of workers for private employment has cropped up again," Corrington Gill, Assistant Works Progress Administrator, declared today in releasing the results of investigations of recent complaints from truck farmers in Nassau County, New York, and the canning industry in Delaware and Maryland.

"As usual the charge is false. The Works Program is not responsible for the alleged shortages of farm laborers and cannery workers in these districts."

Complaints received by the Works Progress Administration have charged that Negroes from the South were being imported into Nassau County on a large scale because of the unwillingness of men on WPA and local relief to accept farm jobs. Careful investigation showed that fewer than 20 Negroes had been brought into the county. Negro workers were receiving wages of $2.00 for a 12-hour day. Few local workers will accept this rate, as common labor in other local industries is paid $4.00 to $5.00 for an 8-hour day.

The survey found that the WPA files contain only a very small number of farm laborers and county relief rolls included only one farm worker. On the other hand, the National Reemployment Service had a generous supply of farm laborers on its register, but has been called upon in only one or two instances.
"In reference to alleged shortages of cannery and farm labor in Delaware and Maryland, reported by a Philadelphia commission house," Mr. Gill went on to say, "our investigation discovered a shortage of cannery labor at only one plant out of 29 visited, and that was of a strictly temporary nature. There were only 9 people employed on the Works Program in the town in which this plant was located—all older women clearly unsuited for cannery work. Many of the plants where shortages were alleged to exist had not even opened for the season.

"It is the regular policy of the Works Progress Administration to adjust project employment to seasonal demands for labor," Mr. Gill pointed out. "As in the case of the one area where a shortage of cannery workers existed, WPA projects are reduced or suspended whenever other jobs are available."

The report found that there are considerable numbers on WPA projects in large cities near the farm and canning areas. The canners and farmers alike, however, stated that they did not want city labor which has to be transported and housed and which is inexperienced.

Shortages of labor in certain areas and for certain highly seasonal industries are an old story, according to Mr. Gill. "The WPA is now being charged with contributing to these situations, when as a matter of fact if the WPA had never existed, the cry of labor shortage would still be raised by these industries.

"Among the surest signs of economic recovery," he said, "are those reports of labor shortages. The WPA is immediately blamed for them. The fact is ignored, however, that the WPA gives jobs to less than one-quarter of the nation's unemployed.

"It is charged that persons on WPA will not take jobs in private industry when offered. As in the case of alleged labor shortages, investigation
here also shows no foundation in fact. We have during the past two months followed up 75 separate charges in 20 states. In not a single case was the charge substantiated."\n
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