"How to employ able-bodied men and women constructively constitutes one of the foremost problems created by changes in our social, industrial and economic life," Ellen S. Woodward, Assistant Administrator of the Works Progress Administration, told her audience last night at a meeting sponsored by the Women's Democratic Club in Atlanta.

New social conditions, she said, call for new methods. "The crisis which faced the country in 1933," she asserted, "made it mandatory for our Federal Government to assume responsibilities that State, county and city Governments and private agencies could no longer shoulder."

The Government had only one of two roads that it could follow, she pointed out. One road led to the Dole and the other to Work Relief. Quoting Administrator Harry L. Hopkins, Mrs. Woodward said, "Give a man a dole and you save his body and destroy his spirit. Give him a job and pay him an assured wage, and you save both his body and his spirit." The work program, she declared, grew out of the American tradition of work.

Comparing the cost of the World War to the cost of the war on depression, she stated: "In the World War we increased our national debt by 22 billion dollars. In the war on depression, we increased it by 10 billion dollars. The 22 billion were spent across the seas — for destruction. The 10 billion were spent at home — for re-construction.

"Today those nations of the world which are piling up armaments for purposes of aggression, and those other nations which fear acts of aggression against them are spending from 30 to 50 per cent of their national income in preparations for war. The proportion that we in the United States spend is about 11 or 12 per cent."

Quoting from the President's peace address at Chicago, Mrs. Woodward continued, "How happy we are that the circumstances of the moment permit us to put our money into bridges and boulevards, dams and reforestation, the conservation of our soil and many other kinds of useful works rather than into huge standing armies.
and vast supplies of implements of war."

The WPA program today employs approximately a million and a half needy men and women, and practically all types of work are being done by WPA workers, Mrs. Woodward said.

Citing a few of the accomplishments in communities throughout the country, she pointed out that in the State of Georgia more than 1400 miles of roads had been built or repaired by WPA labor; that airplane landing fields had been increased from 27 to 45; that approximately 250 educational buildings had been built or repaired; that 21 stadiums and athletic fields and golf courses had been constructed.

"Total wealth created for the nation, through the construction of material things alone, runs into billions of dollars," she continued. "But many of those intangible services, which cannot be measured by the yardstick or appraised in dollars and cents, are, in my opinion, of even more lasting value."

The Division of Women's and Professional Projects, for which Mrs. Woodward has administrative responsibility in Washington, employs about 425,000 needy men and women under a widely diversified program. Under this program come such projects as library extension, nursing and public health, housekeeping aid, book repair for public schools and libraries, Braille, museum and research, sewing, household service demonstration, school lunch for needy children, archaeological and other scientific surveys, public administration projects such as real property appraisals, tax delinquency surveys, engineering surveys, and codification of laws; art, theater, music, writing and many others.

Such authorities as President Hutchins, of the University of Chicago, and the American Library Association itself, have declared that 45,000,000 of our people, or one-third of our population, are without access to free public library service. Mrs. Woodward said that in many instances the WPA has helped to remedy this condition. She cited the small town of St. Matthews, South Carolina, which for ten years prior to the inauguration of the WPA had entirely lacked free public library facilities. Now more than a thousand readers are making regular use of the reading materials available at the WPA library in St. Matthews.

The Arkansas Legislature of 1937 appropriated $100,000 for library service for a two-year period. It is the consensus of opinion that this appropriation was due to the interest created by the WPA library projects. During 1936, 130 WPA library projects served an estimated population of 190,000 persons, most of them in rural areas. Of these projects alone there was a circulation of almost 700,000 books although the total number of volumes available was only 125,000.
North Carolina reports show that 156 new libraries have been established under the WPA program. Eighty traveling units are in operation and 180,000 additional books have been made available to about 33,000 additional persons.

As a result of WPA tax survey projects, a great deal of property which previously escaped taxation has now been added to the tax rolls. A survey in Texas, for example, shows that property officially assessed at $22,170 in 1935 actually had a value of $351,708; and that another piece of property assessed at $3,000 actually had a value of $85,000.

Continuing, Mrs. Woodward told of the Mississippi historical research project, whereby various articles, papers, and authentic lore are being located daily by WPA workers. These workers have laid the groundwork for a small museum collection in almost every county of the State, Mrs. Woodward added.

"One of our most outstanding nursing and public health projects was in Georgia," Mrs. Woodward pointed out. "It was carried on so effectively that in recent months the State Department of Public Health succeeded in obtaining an appropriation for this service. Many of the WPA nurses have now been taken over on the State payroll. Dr. T. F. Abercrombie, State Director of the Department of Public Health, has stated this establishment of the public health nursing division to be directly due to the inauguration of the State nursing project operating under the Federal Works Program."

Citing also a fever therapy project which operates at the United States Marine Hospital in New Orleans, Mrs. Woodward said: "The results of experiments made in this study are expected to be of great value to the medical world. Seven WPA nurses working in conjunction with the regular Marine Hospital nurses care for six patients a day both during their fever treatment and during the period required for the patient to return to normal temperature."

Referring to the WPA school lunch program, Mrs. Woodward declared: "The expensive machinery of education is wasted when it operates on a mind listless from hunger. Whether the cause be poverty, ignorance, or carelessness, the child is the sufferer." This project which has operated in more than 1,000 rural schools of Tennessee, has fed altogether about 100,000 children in 91 counties of the State.

WPA Art Galleries in Tulsa and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma — where the attendance in each averages 60 visitors a day — are believed to be as well equipped as any in New York City, Mrs. Woodward told her audience.

WPA Federal Music Project has met such a cultural need in Florida that 12 county school boards are now either supplementing or paying in full, the salaries of the WPA music teachers.
The theatre project in Alabama is known as the Play Bureau of the South. It is gathering material which is being incorporated in plays with a definite regional background.

In Virginia, WPA workers are spinning and weaving flax and wool into a variety of useful articles such as towels, blankets and dress material. In many instances these articles are colored with natural dyes -- made on the project from native barks, plants, roots and insects. This project has been the means of making a number of the workers entirely self-supporting.

"To appreciate fully the work that is being done one must have contacts with the workers themselves," Mrs. Woodward said. "One of the happiest experiences I can have - especially after being in the program for over four years", she continued, "is to leave my desk, visit the projects, and see at first hand the rehabilitating effects of work upon the men and women in this program."

In conclusion, Mrs. Woodward urged her listeners to take stock of the benefits that have accrued under the WPA program; to re-evaluate the achievements in their own localities; to consolidate the gains that have been made in all the social programs.

"We have lived to see many of the principles for which we have fought translated into law. Can we afford to lose any part of what we have gained?"

"Remember," she said, "that while Congress may legislate principles into law, only the people themselves can make a law effective. Legislation must be backed by public opinion if its effects are to be felt by all the people."