Jobless Mechanic Repays Government $100 For "Shelter"

Harry L. Hopkins, WPA Administrator, today transmitted to Secretary Morgenthau a postal money order for $100 made out to the "Treasurer of the U. S." from Fred Hohner, an unemployed mechanic of Newark, New Jersey, sent to repay the government for what Hohner described as "shelter" provided to him in 1935.

Mr. Hopkins said he was informed by New Jersey WPA officials, whom he asked to investigate, that when Hohner sent the money on April 18, he was left with only $12, and that he had no job. The way in which Hohner transmitted the money, Mr. Hopkins said, left him no course except to pass it on to the Treasury.

Hohner told the investigator that he had not intended to send the money until he found a job, but "my money was getting so low that if I hadn't paid it when I did, I might have had no money to pay. The government did its best to me and I wanted to do my best to the government."

Hohner computed his debt to the Treasury at a round $100, he said, because "the government" gave him shelter at a Newark mission house for 97 days early in 1935 while he looked for work and awaited enlistment in a Transient Training Camp. "Call it a hundred days, just to be fair," he said, "at one dollar a day. I owed the government $100." He said he felt he owed the money because during this period he did not work for it.

The WPA frequently receives small amounts of money from former relief workers, Mr. Hopkins said. State relief offices also receive "repayment" sums from their former clients. The largest "pay-off" of this type that Hopkins could remember came from James J. Braddock, the pugilist, who repaid several hundred dollars in relief money after he became world heavyweight champion.

* * * * *