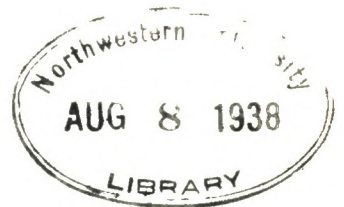


THE WORKS PROGRAM

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ONE FIFTH OF PHILADELPHIA WOOL, CARPET, UPHOLSTERY WEAVERS JOBLESS MORE THAN FIVE YEARS

Many highly skilled weavers and loom fixers in Philadelphia are as effectively stranded in this diversified industrial community as the coal miners and lumber workers who reside around the tipples of shut-down coal mines or in cut-over areas. This is one of the principal conclusions drawn in a report of the National Research Project of the Works Progress Administration entitled "Ten Years of Work Experience of Philadelphia Weavers and Loom Fixers," made public today by Administrator Harry L. Hopkins.

The study was made in cooperation with the Industrial Research Department of the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce, University of Pennsylvania. It was based on the ten-year work history of 357 weavers and loom fixers who were a representative cross-section of the labor supply for these occupations in 1936.

In his letter of transmittal, Corrington Gill, Assistant WPA Administrator and director of all WPA research, points out that "weaving and loom fixing in the woolen and worsted, carpet and rug, and upholstery-goods industries require a high degree of skill which cannot be used outside of the textile industries. These industries have been declining in Philadelphia ever since 1920." According to the report, the decline in this old center of the industry reflects mainly the general decline of the industry in the country as a whole and the migration of mills from Philadelphia to other areas. Greater declines took place in Philadelphia than in the rest of the country. While in the woolen and worsted industry, for example, the number of workers employed in the country as a whole declined only 24 percent from 1919 to 1933, in Philadelphia the drop amounted to 63 percent. Style changes in house furnishings resulted in a heavy drop in the demand for many of the textile products in which Philadelphia mills specialized: carpets and rugs, upholstery-goods, tapestries, plushes, and novelty house-furnishings fabrics.

Another cause of reduced employment in these industries was technological improvements. "With the best technology available 25 years ago a

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mill with an output of 22,000 yards of 32-ounce woolen overcoating per week of two 40-hour shifts, for example, required 48 semi-automatic looms and 96 weavers. Today a mill of similar capacity needs only 37 automatic looms attended by 26 weavers. Where such improvements as these were adopted in the textile plants which migrated out of Philadelphia, the number of weavers who could possibly have migrated with the plants was therefore much smaller than the number displaced."

"The loss of a job under such conditions, especially when the loss is due to a permanent shut-down, usually means extended unemployment and reemployment, if not at weaving or loom fixing, is almost always at a less-skilled occupation," said Mr. Gill. "Almost 7 percent of the workers studied reported more than 60 months of unemployment during the 10 years 1926-35. In May, 1936, 29 percent of all the Philadelphia weavers and loom fixers were unemployed. One-fifth of those unemployed in May, 1936 had lost the last regular job earlier in that year. Twenty-eight percent had lost their last jobs in 1935, 13 percent in 1934, 12 percent in 1933, 7 percent in 1932, and 20 percent prior to 1932; that is, one-fifth had been unemployed continuously for more than 5 years. The weavers and loom fixers in this last group are a part of the 'hard core within the hard core' of unemployment. As a recent British report has put it, they are in the 'remotest of all back-waters, five years or more without work.'"

"In view of the high average age of those who were unemployed in 1936 (51 years) and the obstacle which that presents to adjustment to a new occupation, they are bound to remain subject to a great deal of unemployment. This is especially true of those who had worked in mills which have either moved away or are no longer in operation. They are not even in a position to accumulate credits toward a pension when they reach the age of 65. On the other hand, since advanced years do not seem to be an obstacle to retaining a job at these skilled occupations, many of those who are still attached to operating plants are likely to remain in the industry. Their periodic lay-offs will be at least partly compensated by unemployment insurance, and on reaching 65 they will become eligible for old-age pensions."

The report is issued in a 100-page booklet with numerous charts and illustrations and with an appendix of statistical tables. It was prepared by Dr. Gladys L. Palmer and her assistants as one in a series of studies conducted by the National Research Project on Reemployment Opportunities and Recent Changes in Industrial Techniques directed by David Weintraub and Irving Kaplan.