WPA RECREATION PROGRAM STIRS COMMUNITIES TO INDEPENDENT ACTION, SURVEY SHOWS

The recreation program of the Works Progress Administration has served as a stimulus to the initiative of most municipal recreation bodies and has inspired steady increases in local expenditures for recreation purposes, Eduard C. Lindeman, director of the division, reported today to Administrator Harry L. Hopkins.

A study of expenditure trends in 148 representative cities over a period of the last three years shows an increase of 22 per cent in municipal appropriations devoted exclusively to recreation, he said. Salaries to directors, leaders, counselors, etc., increased 12.3 per cent.

"Communities are not throwing the whole burden of recreation on the WPA as some authorities feared they would," Mr. Lindeman declared.

"Instead, there is every evidence that they are becoming more aware of the vital place of recreation in community life, and are expanding their facilities independently of the WPA or other Federal agencies. Many cities
which never had an organized recreation program prior to the inception of
the WPA have now installed such programs on a permanent, full-time basis.
Others have materially expanded existing programs by the addition of
salaried personnel or the improvement of facilities.

"One of the chief aims of the WPA recreation program is to provide just
such a stimulus, to the end that public recreation may become universally
recognized as an integral part of community life."

Mr. Lindeman's statement was based on an analysis of data published by
the National Recreation Association in its annual yearbook. From reports
for the years 1935, 1936 and 1937, it was possible to trace expenditures for
recreation in 148 cities of various sizes, well distributed geographically,
and containing an urban population of 11,600,000.

The study showed that total expenditures of local funds for recreation
increased from $4,461,214 in 1935 to $5,171,466 in 1936 and to $5,444,810 in
1937, an increase throughout the period of 22 per cent. Local funds spent
exclusively for leadership salaries advanced from $1,617,675 in 1935 to
$1,735,133 in 1936 and to $1,817,384 in 1937, a total increase of 12.3 per
cent.

An interesting sidelight developed by the study is that during recent
years smaller cities, those under 25,000 population, have been more
aggressive than their larger neighbors in making independent provisions for
recreation programs. For leadership, the average annual per capita expendi-
ture for the period was 40 per cent greater in cities under 25,000 population
than in the largest cities (100,000 and over), and 30 per cent greater than
in the middle-sized cities (25,000 to 100,000). For all recreational
purposes, the average annual per capita expenditure for the period was 58 per cent greater in the smallest cities than in the largest cities and 55 per cent greater than in medium sized cities.

Mr. Lindeman pointed out that small cities traditionally have given less thought to organized recreation than large metropolitan centers with their population congestion. The data indicates, he said, that smaller communities have begun to recognize the need for public recreation programs. Its importance to the health of the community and to the cultural development of its citizens, whether in large or small cities, is becoming universally acknowledged, he said.

Typical of the comments reaching his office concerning the influence of WPA in stimulating local recreation activity, Mr. Lindeman quoted the following excerpt from a letter recently received from one of the commissioners of Champaign, Illinois:

"On May 12, Champaign voted a permanent recreation program. I feel that the result of this election is due to the two and one-half years of WPA's fine administration of recreation here. There's no way of estimating the tremendous value to the community brought about through this program...."

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