ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES TO BE OPENED TO ADDITIONAL 500,000

Adult education classes of the Works Progress Administration will be thrown open to an additional half million people this winter and the total enrollment is expected to reach 2,000,000 before the end of the year, Administrator Harry L. Hopkins said today. Maximum enrollment heretofore has been slightly above 1,500,000, which was reached last April.

Mr. Hopkins said that the experience of the last five years under the FERA and WPA had left no doubt that the educational needs of adult citizens justify an expansion of the program. Applications for enrollment have, in a great many instances, he added far exceeded the facilities for teaching.

"The education program, in its work with adults and in nursery schools, has been one of the outstanding achievements of WPA," Mr. Hopkins said. "More than 1,000,000 illiterate persons have been taught to read and write, and the educational horizons of several million others have been greatly extended. In our 1,500 nursery schools, health service, nourishing food and supervised play have been provided annually for tens of thousands of small children from needy families, while the teachers have helped the parents of these children to improve conditions of living in their homes."
"This is a real contribution to the cultural wealth of the Nation; something that succeeding booms and depressions can't wipe out, and I want to see those opportunities extended to more of the people who need them."

To put the new plans into effect, Dr. L. R. Alderman, Director of the Education Division, has called a conference of state WPA education directors to be held in Washington early in November. Efforts will be made at that time to assure the expansion of the program in directions where the greatest need exists. As state directors of recreation will also be meeting here at the same time, one or more joint conferences will be held for the purpose of securing a greater degree of coordination between the two programs in the various states and communities.

Literacy education is one phase of the program definitely to be enlarged during the year, Dr. Alderman said. In addition to carrying on with many of those who already have been taught to read and write in WPA classes, another 250,000 illiterates will be enrolled for the first time. While standards are not uniform throughout the country, the WPA program aims in general at teaching an illiterate person to read a newspaper and write an ordinary personal letter before he is considered literate. The Bureau of the Census in its decennial tabulations demands only the ability to write one's name as the test of literacy.

WPA teachers are now preparing a series of readers for use in such classes which differ radically from the instructional material commonly used, Dr. Alderman announced. Foreigners learning English in Americanization classes and illiterate adults customarily are required to learn
from books used by children in the primary grades. The new readers will take subjects of normal adult interest such as health, safety, occupations, family life and government, and present them in simple, assimilable form.

One of the most recent and rapidly growing fields of adult education is that of highway safety and automobile operation. Six states have added such classes to their programs during the last year and in every case enrollments have far exceeded the facilities for teaching. Cooperation in this work has been assured by the American Automobile Association, as well as numerous state associations and local safety and police departments, and it is expected that classes in this field will be multiplied many times during the coming year.

Education for workers is another field in which expansion is contemplated this year. The rapid advance of social legislation in recent years—social security, minimum wages and maximum hours, the National Labor Relations Act, etc.,—have created an active demand from unions and other worker groups for educational assistance. Instruction by correspondence is another field offering great possibilities for expansion. Several states already have demonstrated the popularity of education by mail for persons living in remote mountain and rural districts, and for enrollees in CCC camps.

Dr. Alderman said that the quality of instruction in WPA classes this year undoubtedly would reach a new standard of excellence, due particularly to the outstanding success of the teacher training program pursued during the summer. Courses of from two to six weeks' duration, conducted for the most part in conjunction with state universities and teachers' colleges, were attended by approximately 24,000 WPA teachers.
last summer—nearly 90 per cent of the entire teaching staff. Courses were offered in all but two states. At eight state universities and 14 other universities and colleges, full college credits were given qualified persons taking the WPA courses.

Other phases of the program in which an active interest has been expressed, and which officials hope to expand this year, include nursery schools for the day-time care of small children from low-income families; courses in homemaking and problems of family life, which are carried on in cooperation with specialists in those fields in other agencies; health and first-aid instruction, and study groups on public affairs. Dr. Alderman added that there would be no lessening of the effort to spread the benefits of the adult education program to the Negroes of the South, where the need is particularly acute.

Attendance at general adult education classes is open to the public without restriction. Vocational classes are restricted to those certified as in need of relief or unemployed persons unable to pay for such instruction, while nursery schools are open only to the children of low-income families.