

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

For Release to Morning Newspapers
Monday, November 7, 1938

WILLIAMS REPORTS REVIEW OF SHEPPARD COMMITTEE FINDINGS SHOWS "NOT
A WORD OF TRUTH" IN CHARGES MADE BY SENATOR DAVIS.

Aubrey Williams, Acting Administrator of the Works Progress Administration, today announced that he had reviewed the ten charges submitted to the Special Committee to Investigate Campaign Expenditures by Senator James J. Davis of Pennsylvania and had found not a word of truth in them.

Previous reports of the Committee, indicating that WPA employees might be involved in three of the ten charges, prompted further investigation of these cases, Mr. Williams said, which established the fact that there had been no political coercion by anyone connected with WPA.

In a letter to Senator Morris Sheppard, Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Williams wrote:

November 6, 1938

Honorable Morris Sheppard, Chairman
Special Committee to Investigate
Campaign Expenditures
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

My dear Senator Sheppard:

In my letter to you of October 24, I stated that I was unable to establish any political activity on the part of persons connected with the Works Progress Administration involved in the 10 charges made by Senator James J. Davis and that there was not one scintilla of truth in

them so far as WPA employees were concerned. In your press release of November 3, the inference as it was carried in the press, was that your Committee had found evidence in three cases sustaining the charges of Senator Davis that WPA workers had been guilty of political activity. Based upon the press reports, which is the only material which has been made available to us, I have again reviewed very carefully the charges as to whether or not WPA employees were involved and I again can find no evidence of any WPA employees being involved in either of the three mentioned in the press release or the other seven which were a part of the former charges.

With relation to the first one of the three, a charge made by Senator Davis that truck drivers in Carbon County were requested by a WPA foreman to call at the home of William J. McGinley, Garage Inspector in the employment of the State of Pennsylvania, who solicited political contributions, our investigators interviewed each available truck driver on the project and not a single one of those interviewed, with the exception of Paul F. Schoch, the complainant, testified that the WPA foreman, Warren Mortimer, directed him to report to McGinley. All of this bears out the statement I made to your Committee on October 24. McGinley is not an employee of the Works Progress Administration. We have absolutely no control over his conduct and there is no evidence whatsoever that any truck driver was released for failure to make political contributions. Therefore, any finding by your Committee that Mr. McGinley, an employee of the State of Pennsylvania, solicited and received contributions from WPA workers, without any evidence establishing that employees of this Administration were connected with the solicitation, would be clearly misleading unless your Committee stated that the situation was not within our jurisdiction.

The second of these three charges has to do with WPA workers in Luzerne County being requested to change their registration. The charge was made that 23 persons had made affidavits that they were coerced to change their registration. In my statement to you on October 24, we pointed out that C. H. Killian, Campaign Manager for a Republican Candidate, had named 23 persons alleged to be in the employment of the Works Progress Administration who had been requested to change their registration. I also reported to you at that time that we had checked our pay rolls and had found only four of these persons to ever have been an employee of the Works Progress Administration. My report at that time disclosed that there was absolutely no evidence at any time that any of the four persons had been coerced to change their registration. I also pointed out that they have not changed their registration and that they are still employed by the Works Progress Administration. Again what this comes to then is a charge by a Republican Campaign Manager concerning which we are unable to find any supporting evidence.

In the third section of the press release of your Committee, it was stated that at the time I advised your Committee there was no truth in any of the charges made by Senator Davis, that officials of the Works Progress Administration in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, knew that WPA workers in

Luzerne County had received postal cards requesting them to report to Democratic Campaign Headquarters. In my letter of October 24, I informed your Committee that we had knowledge that truck owners had received a notice from a political organization that they were expected to make political contributions, but I also stated to your Committee that we could find no evidence of any contributions having been made by truck owners, including those who had received the notice. My point here is that your statement gives the impression that your Committee holds this Administration responsible for the action of persons who are members of a political party but over whom we have absolutely no control and I am sure your Committee would not want to place itself in any such position. Your statement also implies that local WPA officials were withholding information from the National office. That this is not true was borne out by the statement which I made to your Committee that our local staff had knowledge of this matter and were cooperating with this office to the fullest extent to prevent any use of the Works Progress Administration for political purposes.

I shall be happy to receive any information which your investigators have gathered where anyone has made any charges that persons employed on the Works Progress Administration are being coerced for political purposes and I assure your Committee that I will make a most careful investigation and will deal summarily with any person found to be guilty.

I have gone over the material and have sent people again into Pennsylvania with reference to these three charges and I find that none of the charges involve any person actually in the employment of the Works Progress Administration. This was the statement I made to you in my letter of October 24 in which I stated that there was not one word of truth in the charges which Senator Davis made and there is nothing in anything that your Committee has so far published or that you have sent to this office that shows any part of my statement to have been in error.

Sincerely yours,

Aubrey Williams
Deputy Administrator

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