DECLINING EMPLOYMENT DESPITE RISING OUTPUT FOUND IN CRUSHED-STONE INDUSTRY

A study of the crushed-stone industry, to determine the results of technological advances, shows that increased productivity made it possible for 33,000 men working in 1936 to produce a greater output than was produced by 67,000 men in 1913. The report on this study, prepared by the WPA National Research Project, was made public today by Colonel F. C. Harrington, Works Progress Administrator.

After noting that in 1913 total output was 80,000,000 tons and that the number of men employed in that year has not since been equaled, Assistant Administrator Corrington Gill, in charge of all WPA research, writes in his letter of transmittal:

"The great gains in productivity - from 0.49 ton per man-hour in 1913 to 1.38 tons in 1929 - brought about a drop of one-third in the number of men employed, despite a two-thirds increase in the industry's production. In 1936, output per man-hour reached an average of 1.85 tons. In that year only 33,000 men, working on the average three-fourths as many hours per year as in 1929, produced 93,000,000 tons at commercial crushed-stone operations."
The principal states producing commercial tonnage are Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio, New York, Illinois, California, Virginia, Indiana, West Virginia and Iowa, the report points out.

"The products of the crushed-stone industry are of outstanding importance in several large branches of the economic system, it is observed.

"Crushed-stone for use as furnace flux is one of the three basic raw materials of the iron and steel industry; it is one of the chief materials used in the construction and maintenance of highways and railway roadbed and in various other types of construction. Agricultural limestone constitutes a large part of total tonnage of soil rebuilding materials produced in the United States. Other important outlets for crushed-stone are the chemical industries, glass manufacture and sugar refining."

Mr. Gill emphasizes that the spread of technological improvements in the industry tends to reduce employment still further, and adds:

"Even if commercial output five years from now reaches its 1929 total of 132 million tons, the industry is likely to employ 19,000 fewer men than in 1929 to produce that tonnage at an estimated average of 2-1/2 tons per man-hour. If in five years production is no greater than in 1936, there will probably be a much smaller gain in productivity, but the number of men employed is likely to be considerably below the 33,000 who worked in the industry in 1936. The prospects for new jobs or reemployment in the commercial crushed-stone industry in the near future are therefore slight."
The report, entitled "Changes in Technology and Labor Requirements in the Crushed-Stone Industry," gives a complete description of the technological advances, embracing practically every operation. It is published as a pamphlet of 169 pages with many illustrations and tables. It was prepared by Harry S. Kantor and Geoffrey A. Saeger of the National Research Project under the supervision of O. E. Kiessling, Chief Economist of the Mineral Production and Economics Division of the Federal Bureau of Mines. This report is part of the series of "Mineral Technology and Output per Man Studies" being carried on in cooperation with the Federal Bureau of Mines by the National Research Project on Reemployment Opportunities and Recent Changes in Industrial Techniques directed by David Weintraub.