Completion of a new system of straight-line administration, designed to provide more effective supervision of the Works Progress Administration with a minimum of overhead costs, was announced today by Colonel F. C. Harrington, Federal Administrator.

The basic plan already is in effect in the national headquarters and is rapidly nearing completion in the new regional offices, Colonel Harrington said. The same system is being worked out in the state administrations. One of the principal features will be the application of a merit system for administrative employees generally, closely paralleling the classified civil service in appointments, job ratings, promotions and dismissals.

Colonel Harrington's announcement summarized a series of changes begun early in February and completed or approved on March 1.

One of his first acts as Administrator, when hearings on WPA appropriations for February 1 to June 30 were completed, was to establish a Division of Administration, which was charged with the business management of the organization. Dallas Bort was appointed Assistant Administrator to head this division, and work out the detail of the plan.
In addition to installation of the merit system, based upon classifications previously worked out with the assistance of Civil Service officials, the functions of the Division of Administration include making studies and recommendations concerning administrative economy and efficiency throughout the organization, the coordination of procedures issued by the Washington office, and the administration of all service functions in the Washington office including the preparation of payrolls, authorization of travel, handling of printing and processing, building maintenance, space control, correspondence, the Library, and operation of the Tabulating Unit.

All administrative and supervisory functions throughout the organization have been consolidated into four divisions, exclusive of the Division of Administration. These four divisions, which will be maintained in all regional and state organizations, are the Engineering Division, handling the construction program that accounts for approximately 80 per cent of all WPA operations; Division of Professional and Service Projects which now embraces all non-construction activities; the Division of Employment and the Division of Finance, Research, and Statistics.

The five large areas in which field representatives previously operated have been reduced to smaller and more homogeneous regions, nine in number and each under a Regional Director charged with coordinating and supervising the program.

Changes in state organizations to conform to the general plan of straight-line administration will not be made simultaneously, but will be worked out as rapidly as possible and the system is expected to be in operation throughout WPA in the spring.
No drastic reductions of administrative personnel are anticipated, Colonel Harrington explained, but more effective and economical supervision is expected.

As to the application of a merit system, in lieu of classified civil service which was eliminated from provisions of the joint resolution on WPA appropriations at this session of Congress, the Administrator said:

"While, under the terms of the supplemental Relief Appropriation Act, administrative employees of the Works Progress Administration cannot be placed under Civil Service, it is my purpose to establish a merit system for the Works Progress Administration which will operate as nearly as possible in accordance with Civil Service standards and practices. We are intending to install a sound salary classification scheme, establish minimum qualifications for the various positions and develop comprehensive training, rating and promotion programs."

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