

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

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ADVISORY COMMITTEE APPRAISES WPA EDUCATIONAL WORK

The emergency education program of the Works Progress Administration has made one of the most significant contributions to the progress of education in the history of the United States, according to the report of a survey recently completed under the auspices of the Advisory Committee on Education, of which Floyd W. Reeves is chairman.

"That there was and is a demand for the services rendered is manifest in the persistence and growth of enrollments," the report states. "The people can learn; the people want to learn; the people intend to learn. What the regular educational agencies have failed to provide, the people have found in a relief program.

"The impetus given to education by the emergency program constitutes one of the most significant developments in the history of the United States."

The report, entitled "Educational Activities of the Works Progress Administration," is one of a series prepared at the request of President Roosevelt on the general relationship of the Federal Government to education. The report is a staff study published with the approval of the Advisory Committee, but the staff members who wrote the report, Doak S. Campbell, Frederick H. Bair, and O. L. Harvey, are responsible for the opinions expressed. Dr. Campbell is Dean of the Graduate School of Education, Peabody College, Nashville; Dr. Bair is Superintendent of Schools, Bronxville, New York; and Dr. Harvey, since completing his work for the Advisory Committee, has been on

the staff of the Federal Committee on Apprentice Training, U. S. Department of Labor.

The report gives a full discussion of the general background and scope of emergency educational activities, beginning with the Federal Emergency Relief Administration in 1933; analyzes the program content, and offers an evaluation both of organization and administrative procedure as well as of program accomplishments.

The WPA education program "has sought and found its principal application in the ranks of the underprivileged," the study points out. "Although not deliberately so intended, this is the reverse of the usual procedure of providing educational facilities to the wealthier groups first..."

In evaluating the outstanding phases of the program, the report lists the following, in order of importance:

"The literacy and naturalization programs constitute the outstanding contribution of the emergency program If within themselves they carry the seed of development into other fields of interest, they may serve as the key to the education of the masses.

"Of almost equal significance is the program of education for family living. It goes into the homes of the people, of the underprivileged and needy, to help them to meet and overcome the problems which are most immediate and intimate in their lives. . . . It is the program above all others which, under some auspices, should be developed and permanently continued.

"Public affairs education, a relatively small program in its present form, comes next on the list. It is based fundamentally on the practice of democratic government If democratic procedures are to persist, this type of educational service will have to become one of the most important in the field of adult education. . ."