WPA ANNOUNCES NEW SCHEDULE OF MONTHLY SECURITY WAGES

Colonel F. C. Harrington, Work Projects Commissioner, today announced a new schedule of monthly security wages for WPA project workers in accordance with the requirements of the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1939 and the intent of Congress as expressed in debate. The new wage schedules were transmitted by Colonel Harrington to state WPA Administrators in the form of a general order and will be effective September 1.

In general, the new schedules will mean a substantial increase in WPA wages in southern states and, in northern states, the retention of present scales with some exceptions, which include reductions.

The order provides for three wage regions by geographical areas and within these wage regions provides for five classifications of workers; namely, professional and technical, skilled, intermediate, unskilled "A", and unskilled "B". Each of the wage regions is broken down by counties into four population classifications. These provide differentials in wages for counties, first, with no town of over 5,000 population, second, with the largest town between 5,000 and 25,000, third, between 25,000 and 100,000, and fourth, those in which the largest city has 100,000 or more population. This will make a total of only 60 different wage schedules as against the present number of more than 4,000.
Unskilled WPA rural wages in Region III, which comprises the southern states, will jump from $26 to $35 a month. Unskilled wages in this region in cities of 100,000 or over will be $30.70 a month as against a present schedule of $40.

In northern and western cities of 100,000 population and over the unskilled wage rate will be $57.20 as against the present schedule of either $55 or $60 a month. Previous to revision under the new law, the base security wage for unskilled workers in these cities in the North was $55 a month with discretionary authority given to increase this by 10 per cent. In a number of cities, including New York, Cleveland and Detroit, this increase had been granted resulting in an unskilled wage of $60.50 a month; whereas other cities, including Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco, had continued at the $55 base level. The new wage schedule gives all such cities a WPA unskilled rate of $57.20 a month.

Colonel Harrington stated that in determining the new wage schedules the controlling factors were the language of the Act and the obvious intent of the Congress as to the application of the wage provision. The Act provides that no substantial change in the National average WPA wage shall be made. In June the average WPA wage was approximately $53 a month throughout the country. The Act also provides, however, that variations in WPA wages for the same type of work within different geographical areas shall not be greater than differences in the cost of living. In this connection, Colonel Harrington called attention to the obvious intent of the Congress, as evidenced by statements
made in the debate on the bill and subsequent to its passage that no substantial reductions in present WPA wages in the North should be made.

Colonel Harrington stated that the WPA had considered all available data on the cost of living in both urban and rural areas, and taking these facts into consideration, together with the language of the Act and its interpretation as evidenced in debate, had arrived at the new schedule. This schedule increases the national wage average by approximately $2.50 a month, which is considered to be permissible under the terms of the Act.

(Attached are copies of Colonel Harrington's general order outlining the new wage schedule and a copy of Section 15 (a) of the Act requiring such revision.)