WPA ANNOUNCES BEGINNING OF PROGRAM IN PUERTO RICO COMBINING BENEFITS TO NATIONAL DEFENSE WITH ECONOMIC AID.

The Work Projects Administration in Puerto Rico is organized and ready to begin operations, Corrington Gill, Assistant WPA Commissioner, reported today to Colonel F. C. Harrington, Federal Commissioner, upon returning from the island. Administration of the new program is now in the hands of Admiral William D. Leahy, Governor of Puerto Rico.

All activities in the territory have been accelerated with the strengthening of the army garrison, Mr. Gill said, and the work program of WPA has been received enthusiastically as promising benefits both to national defense and the civilian population.

Projects of direct benefit to national defense will include cooperation in development of the large naval airport, Isla Grande, at San Juan, and improvement of the army airport at Boringuon, north-western coastal point. Camp Buchanan, army base at San Juan, also is to be improved with the aid of WPA labor.

Public health measures such as rural sanitation, malarial control and hookworm eradication also may be carried out by WPA and are important to national defense as well as to the public welfare, Mr. Gill reported. He called attention also to the need for eliminating innumerable curves and improving the surface of roads that have both commercial and military value.
As WPA develops its construction program, the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration will curtail its activities in this field and concentrate on rural rehabilitation, Mr. Gill added.

One of the first WPA projects approved for Puerto Rico provided for the distribution of surplus commodities already available from the Federal Surplus Commodity Corporation. Other work is expected to include restoration of historic El Morro, to prevent further disintegration of this landmark long familiar to tourists arriving at San Juan. The fort no longer has any military value, but is a link with the days of Spanish rule like the Casa Blanca, erected four centuries ago during the governorship of Ponce De Leon.

From the latter, where Mr. Gill was the guest of Brigadier General Edmund L. Daley, commander of the Department of Puerto Rico, he observed the arrival and departure of army and navy airplane squadrons, the aircraft tenders, two cruisers and a destroyer based nearby.

"Puerto Rico already shows the effect of national defense measures and the WPA program soon to be under way," Mr. Gill concluded. "Although the total WPA employment may be relatively small, it will have a very stimulating effect and promises a wide range of lasting improvements."