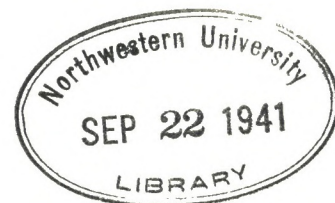


FEDERAL WORKS AGENCY  
WORK PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION

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## WPA RECORDS ASSISTANCE PROJECT TO SPEED WORKERS INTO DEFENSE PLANTS

A nation-wide program to accelerate the flow of workers into defense industries by speeding up the issuance of required birth certificates was announced today by Howard O. Hunter, Commissioner of Work Projects.

Under a project approved by the President, the WPA will provide emergency clerical workers to State and local vital statistics registrars who have fallen behind in the job of furnishing copies of birth certificates requested by candidates for employment in plants which have defense contracts. Such industrial workers must be American citizens, with but few exceptions, and birth certificates are generally required by employers as proof of citizenship.

The project is sponsored by the Office for Emergency Management and co-sponsored by the Census Bureau.

"The offices which handle vital statistics have been swamped with requests for birth certificates because of requirements that workers in plants filling government defense contracts be citizens of the United States," Mr. Hunter said. "The number of such requests has been estimated at as high as 1,000,000 a month. Inevitably there have been delays in the recruiting of industrial workers, often those with much needed skills.

"WPA has been providing assistance to State and local

registrars for the past year on a local project basis. Now, with the problem assuming far greater proportions, we have set up this special nation-wide program at the request of the Census Bureau to provide more effective assistance in meeting the increasing demands."

The problem confronting the various registrars has been greatly aggravated by the fact that 60,000,000 Americans, according to a Census Bureau estimate, were not registered at birth. When workers from that group apply for certificates, it is necessary to institute a complicated and time-consuming procedure to establish the fact of birth in the United States and then issue a "delayed certificate."

Local WPA projects to assist in issuance of birth certificates have been operated in 26 States and some of the major cities, including New York, Chicago and Cleveland. The problem facing States and local registrars of vital statistics in issuing certified copies of birth certificates would have been much greater, Mr. Hunter pointed out, if the WPA had not already operated projects to index birth records in all but one State and indexed phonetically the Federal censuses of 1880, 1900 and 1920 to assist in establishing facts essential for the issuance of delayed certificates.

With proof of citizenship essential for more and more persons, the number of requests for assistance in establishing the fact of American birth has multiplied wherever records are to be found. The Census Bureau alone is currently receiving such requests at the rate of 650,000 a year as compared to 97,000 in 1937. A large group of WPA clerical workers has been assigned to the Bureau to help meet the emergency.

Mr. Hunter pointed out that the new nation-wide program, although sponsored by the OEM and co-sponsored by the Census Bureau, was approved primarily to provide assistance to State and local vital statistics registrars, who are the agents legally authorized to issue certified copies of birth certificates. The Director of the Census has repeatedly emphasized that persons desiring proof of birth should first write to the State or local registrar in the State where he was born. Only when no certificate is available should a request for a census report be made to the U. S. Census Bureau.

Units of the new nation-wide project will operate only where the evidence shows that the increase in the number of requests for copies of birth certificate has been so great that the registrars with their present facilities are unable to service them expeditiously, thereby delaying employment of needed persons in defense plants.

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