

# Participation Of The Negro In The WPA Summarized In Report

WASHINGTON, D. C. — Wages paid nearly four hundred thousand Negro workers employed on projects of the Works Progress Administration in 1938 and the early part of this year benefited some 1,304,000 persons including dependents, counting an average of 3.76 persons in each WPA worker's family.

Southern States having the highest percentage of Negro workers to total WPA employment were Louisiana, South Carolina and Georgia; lowest percentages were in Tennessee and Arkansas. The proportion of Negro women to total employment on projects was highest in Texas, Virginia and North Carolina and lowest in Tennessee and Florida.

The facts are brought out in the annual report of the race relations office of the WPA, prepared by Alfred Edgar Smith, staff adviser in WPA headquarters.

The report commends the aims of the WPA in providing an opportunity for honest work at a fair wage. Negroes along with other workers have been enabled to preserve their morals, the report comments, while the experienced worker has maintained his skill and the inexperienced worker has gained training and experience.

"The Works Progress Administration," says the report, "saved the unemployed Negro worker from privation and want, and in a great many instances from actual starvation. It provided the Negro training in some types of work in which private industry had refused him opportunity for apprenticeship, and at the same time refused him employment because he lacked experience and training. Undoubtedly the Works Progress Administration in 1938 and during the early part of 1939 will be the means of opening some hitherto closed doors in private industry for the Negro in 1939 and 1940."

Through the efforts of the race relations office of the WPA a drive was made to secure sponsors for projects which would employ Negro workers. The cooperation of Negro welfare organizations, Negro leaders and the workers themselves was secured, and the results are described in the report as gratifying.

### Complaints Against South

It was complained from some Southern communities that city governments sponsored large construction projects as auditoriums, armories, parks and the like intended for the use of white persons only, although the sponsors' and Federal funds, came from tax monies paid by colored and white citizens alike. Comparatively little municipal sponsorship of such facilities for use by Negroes was reported according to the report of the race relations office.

Projects initiated in the District of Columbia leading to the employment of Negro workers totaled \$407,813 during the past year, it is reported. These work relief opportunities included a map tracing project of the Rural Electrification Administration now employing 124 colored workers and the clerical workers who are restoring and modernizing old land records. There is also a project in operation at Howard University. The cooperation of the federal race relations office extends to some degree to house-keeping aids household demonstrations, handicapped children, school matron, adult education, nursery school and recreation projects. Special efforts aimed to integrate Negro workers into existing projects sponsored by the various departments and agencies of the government met with considerable success, the report reveals.

Benefits of the WPA applying directly to Negro citizens centered in

the erection and renovation of hospitals, public schools, land grant college buildings, stadiums, athletic fields swimming and wading pools, community center buildings, playgrounds; sidewalks, gutters, sewers and street surfaces in neighborhoods occupied predominantly by Negro citizens.

Non-construction projects, the race relations report continues, provided modern records in land grant colleges and public schools; clerical aid in public schools, cataloging books and reference material; economic social and educational surveys; classes for pre-school children, workers and adults; training in the arts and crafts and preservation of folk songs and dances.

The library services of the WPA were extended to some three million persons ordinarily without such services in rural and urban areas. Over one-half of these library service projects were in southern states where Negro citizens have been restricted in using public libraries. The race relations' report indicates that a special effort has been made to allow library services to be available to the Negro public in the South.

The report describes the work done on the union catalog of books relating to Negroes in libraries all over the nation. This WPA project employed twenty-three workers. The Founders Library at Howard University is the clearing house for catalog and bibliographical service for students of Negro history and problems.

### 700 Letters A Month

Community art centers the guide book series of the Federal Writers' project the restoration of the Frederick Douglas Memorial Home as a historic shrine in Anacostia, D. C., are cited in the report as other work and service benefits accruing to Negro citizens through the WPA.

The administrative work of the race relations office of the Federal WPA is described in the report. A total of 8,502 incoming letters was handled by the unit in 1938—over 700 letters a month. Alabama is reported as the leading source of correspondence from or concerning the Negro and the WPA. The race relations office dealt with 771 letters from this State during the past year. Of the total 8,502 letters, 731 dealt with complaints of racial discrimination and dismissals.

### Wins \$5 On Radio Program

Ten-year-old Ruth Thornton, 6-A pupil in Public School 119, won \$5 and a game on the "What's My Name" program over radio station WEAJ on Wednesday night.

Accompanied by her mother, Mrs. Hazel Thornton, of 236 West 149th street, Ruth went to the studio on invitation of the sponsor and deposited her ticket stub with attendants. She was surprised to learn that her ticket, number 1616, had been drawn making her one of the contestants on the program.

When she appeared before the audience she was asked several questions about movie stars and if she had answered the questions correctly she would have been given \$10.



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