

CHAPTER 16

FULL EMPLOYMENT

“There is no reason inherent, in the real resources available to us, why we can not move rapidly within the next two or three years to a state of genuine full employment.” William Vickery



A JOB FOR EVERYONE

In order to have full employment providing a subsistence living for all Americans, my Administration will bring back the Works Progress Administration (WPA). In 1935 with unemployment soaring, President Franklin Roosevelt established the Works Progress Administration. Congress made an initial appropriation of \$4,800,000,000.00 or \$84,111,761,194.02 in today's dollars.

The WPA offered work to the unemployed on a scale never seen before. It spent money on a wide variety of projects including highways and building construction, slum clearance, reforestation, and rural rehabilitation. The economic impact to private business during the depression was huge and provided the states with services, bridges, roads, parks and buildings that the States had not been able to provide for themselves.

We can see evidence of WPA everywhere in America.



The projects financed by the WPA were wide in reach and affected all different sectors of society. For instance, the Federal Writers Project prepared state and regional guide books, organized archives, indexed newspapers, and conducted useful sociological and historical investigations.

The Federal Art Project created jobs for artist's that were unemployed. These jobs included the opportunity to decorate hundreds of post offices, schools, and other public buildings with murals, canvases, and sculptures; musicians organized symphony orchestras and community singing. The Federal Theatre Project experimented with untried

modes, and scores of stock companies toured the country with repertories of old and new plays, thus bringing drama to communities where it had been known only through the radio.

By March, 1936, the WPA rolls had reached a total of more than 3,400,000 persons; after initial cuts in June 1939, it averaged 2,300,000 monthly; and by June 30, 1943, when it was officially terminated, the WPA had employed more than 8,500,000 different persons on 1,410,000 individual projects, and had spent about \$11 billion. During its 8-year history, the WPA built 651,087 miles of highways, roads, and streets; and constructed, re-paired, or improved 124,031 bridges, 125,110 public buildings, 8,192 parks, and 853 air-port landing fields.²⁶

The WPA was disbanded in 1943 because of full employment—a testament to its effectiveness. In today's economy, only the US government has the ability to provide the capital necessary to finance the infrastructure needs of this country. A partnership of the public and private sector—as was the WPA—would insure full employment, provide major