

L. F. Bauer, my assistant in charge of these men, deserves a great deal of credit for the way that these men have been handled on this work. Bruce Short, County Surveyor, and his deputies have been ready at all times to co-operate.

USING TOWNSHIP RELIEF MEN ON COUNTY ROAD WORK

By Lester Janney, Delaware County Surveyor

Using township relief men on county road work is just another effort of public officials to handle efficiently public funds, or, in other words, to show some practical returns for the taxpayers' dollars, flowing so freely through the channels of relief.

It seems rather general practice to assume that when funds are carefully distributed to the needy for food, fuel, and other necessities, a grand and glorious work has been accomplished and there ends the responsibility. But let you as hard-boiled engineers and superintendents just try to get some actual labor accomplished by this pit-run bunch of relief men and, bingo, the foregoing erroneous theory will almost explode in your face.

This relief work, in a large way, has been going on now more than three years; and, although most of the men are appreciative and willing to work, many on relief are living as well as and easier than they have formerly lived. At the beginning of this depression men wanted and demanded work as a right, and I feel that all were entitled to it. Especially for the actual needy, work should have been provided. Now many men, formerly willing to work, refuse work relief when they find they can get as much relief without work. I say many subscribe to this theory; but it has been so evident to all, over such a long period, that more and more are becoming willing to practice it. The former good habits of useful citizens are degenerating for the lack of work.

I have had only slight contact with work of this kind in Delaware County but am familiar with it and will attempt to tell briefly of results there. This work-relief plan was inaugurated in the spring of 1932, after more than two years of operation on a large scale of relief without work. Suddenly, without much ceremony, the Center Township Trustee issued to able-bodied relief applicants the usual tickets for food or fuel, but with the additional instructions to report on a specified day for work on a certain road.

Arrangements between the trustee and county commissioners provided that the county road department should superintend the work. Some men were transported in county

trucks to various locations where they were employed in cutting brush and weeds from the right of way of by-roads. But most of the men, under the supervision of an assistant road superintendent, were put to work widening the grade of a road at the edge of Muncie.

It would seem that the only thought in the minds of those proposing this plan was to provide work, with little consideration of other results that might be accomplished. Picks, shovels, and wheel-barrows were the only tools provided to move dirt as far as 1,000 feet. It was said, "If a man wheels earth five or six miles and moves only one load a day, he is busy and doing some good, which is better than giving him the relief without any effort on his part." This is most certainly true, but the glaring inefficiency is so apparent that the effect is bad on both the men and the public.

The first day about thirty men appeared on the job—those with no children, having tickets calling for \$1.50 in coal or provisions, and others with tickets calling for various amounts up to \$5.00, according to the number of children. In return for these varying amounts of relief, all were to work one day. This unequal reward for similar labor certainly did not contribute to the success of the venture.

Before starting work, the men were given a little talk by the superintendent and each assigned to one of the four positions of the project—picking, shoveling, wheeling, or spreading the earth. At noon some lunch was provided and the work went merrily on, although, as might be expected, not much was accomplished.

The following day an entirely new group of about 40 men appeared on the job with similar results. Each succeeding day a new crew appeared, but with ever-increasing numbers, until our superintendent was managing about 80 men strung out over one-half mile of road. The superintendent was given no authority with any kind of a punch to it and so about all he could do was merely suggest that the men do certain work and at the end of the day approve their tickets. Of course, we must realize these men were more or less undernourished and unused to work for a period of perhaps two years, but considering these unfortunate conditions, not a man had to be taken to the hospital. The quality of the handles in the shovels and wheel-barrows was unusual and stood up remarkably well under the strain.

About one month was spent on this half-mile of road and perhaps 1,000 cubic yards of earth was moved, for which the trustee issued tickets for approximately \$2,000 in relief. Earth moving at \$2.00 per cubic yard is high, but something was accomplished. Another short stretch of road was widened by relief men over a period of about two weeks, with similar methods and similar results.

In further consideration of plans for additional work relief, it was argued that the men of Center Township could not

do work in another township with Center Township paying for the relief. There were plenty of excuses and technicalities that different ones could think of as an objection to the continuation of the work. The officials had made an attempt, but did not like the extra responsibility. Furthermore, the relief men felt they could get along without such work, so just what was the use? And wasn't it lovely that excuses could be found to abandon further plans?

CAUSES OF FAILURE

I would say the attempt to use relief men on road work in Delaware County was practically a failure for several reasons.

First, because of the delayed start.

Second, the plan adopted and the equipment used were at least a little too crude and therefore discouraging to the best efforts of the men employed, whereas I am satisfied most men would take some pride and find some satisfaction in doing even a menial job like relief work, if it could be done in a modern manner with something near modern equipment.

Third, the unequal reward or value of the tickets was bound to create dissatisfaction, which should have been eliminated by varying the time worked according to the value of the tickets.

Fourth, the superintendent, although justly sympathetic with the men, should have had authority to discharge them as on other work, with the understanding that able-bodied men who refused to do a fair amount of work did not eat.

Fifth, there was lack of co-operation between the township, county, and city administration, as well as other relief organizations and the public in general.

All of the conditions favorable to the operation of a plan for work relief should be attainable in every county. Where is there a taxpayer who does not feel that the community should receive some material benefit for the enormous sums going into relief? And who would not agree that the morale of the men on relief would be greatly benefited by such employment, whereas without it they are bound to degenerate?

Delaware County, through the trustees, has expended more than \$300,000 on relief in the past year with practically nothing material to show for it, and with the character of a large percentage of her people lowered as a result of this antique plan of relief distribution.

Personally, I am so thoroughly convinced of the value of some plan of work relief and the ill effects of the lack of it during times of depression that I feel it should be compulsory under a state law. Relief to able-bodied men should be given only as some form of work relief, with perhaps a state director to aid counties in working out more or less uniform plans and to see that they are enforced.