BLACK EDUCATION AND THE NEW DEAL: THE URBAN EXPERIENCE

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February 1, 1973

A dissertation in the Department of History submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Science in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at New York University.

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Contents

INTRODUCTION ... 3

Part I: PRELUDE TO REFORM ... 7

I. CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARDS BLACK EDUCABILITY ... 8

II. EDUCATION IN THE GHETTO: THE SEARCH FOR NEW DIRECTIONS ... 17

PART 2 ... 28

III. THE FERA AND BLACK EDUCATION, 1933-1935 ... 29

IV. THE WPA AND BLACK EDUCATION, 1935-1939 ... 40

PART 3 ... 55

V. HARLEM IN THE 1930's: THE SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL MILIEU ... 56

VI. THE NEW DEAL'S EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS IN HARLEM ... 71

VII. CHICAGO'S BLACK BELT FACES THE DEPRESSION ... 88

IX. THE PHILADELPHIA NEGRO: THE DEPRESSION YEARS ... 112

X. THE WPA IN THE BLACK WARDS OF PHILADELPHIA ... 123

XI. DISMANTLING THE WPA, 1939-1942 ... 133

XII. CONCLUSION ... 141

ENDNOTES ... 144

OUTLINE FOR BIBLIOGRAPHY ... 190

INTRODUCTION

On January 25, 1971, a bill designed to curb unemployment in the 1970's was introduced in the Senate by Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin. In his speech proposing the bill's adoption, Senator Nelson referred to what he called "America's great unfilled public needs," and declared that during times of high unemployment "it was incumbent upon the federal government to provide public service employment for unemployed persons and to assist state and local communities in providing needed services." The Senator concluded his remarks by noting that the nation was united in its demand that these needs be filled promptly. "Any delay at this time," he warned, "would be nothing less than catastrophic."(1)

Seven months later, despite Presidential doubts that "dead-end WPA-type jobs ... were inappropriate and ineffective remedies during the seventies," the "Emergency Employment Act of 1971" was passed by Congress and signed into law. In its final form, the act authorized the spending of $2,250,000 over two years for 150,000 public service jobs for state and local governments in the fields of health care, housing, neighborhood improvement, recreation, and education. Observers predicted that the act's provisions would greatly benefit large urban centers where unused human resources were abundant and where the quantity and quality of municipal services were at comparatively low levels. (2)

Passage of the first general public service employment program since the Works Progress Administration of the 1930's was greeted with an unexpected lack of enthusiasm in the urban ghettoes of the North. Although well aware of the potentialities of such a program, black community leaders expressed the fear that the people whom it was designed to help would not share in its implementation. Decision-making by Washington, they argued, was not enough; power had to trickle down to the grassroots before urban communities could hope to mobilize their citizens in an effective, broad-based fight against poor housing, inadequate health facilities, and ignorance. (3)

For these critics, the use of Emergency Employment Act funds to create public service jobs in the ghetto opened up a number of sensitive areas for questioning. One of the first questions asked by black leaders was whether such aid would be used to perpetuate existing educational inequalities in black neighborhoods. Educational militants expressed their concern with the government's concept of the urban school. Their fear was that federal bureaucrats would be out of step with current conceptualizations of the expanding role of the school in the urban complex. No longer confined to academic teaching, the school's mission now included branching out into community activities and involving itself in the entire range of the child's education and welfare. Schools were not simply staffed with teachers; social caseworkers, community workers, health and recreation experts, and mothers working as paraprofessionals were all part of the "team" organized to create a sense of mutual respect between the community and its schools. With so much at stake, it was easy to see why the creation of federally-subsidized employment in ghetto schools could be greeted with a certain amount of trepidation by local community leaders. (4)

A similar reluctance to accept the use of federal funds to improve the quality of ghetto education had been voiced by black leaders on the eve of the New Deal. Regarding with suspicion the federal government's massive entry into the educational field, these leaders refused to support any program which accepted the racist notions that blacks could not benefit from an increased exposure to education and that the ghetto school should remain aloof from the black community. In no uncertain terms, black educational militants demanded proof that Rooseveltian educational reform was both nonracist and sensitive to the intellectual and social needs of the urban Negro.

The New Deal's efforts to satisfy these demands have been largely downgraded by historians who have examined the subject of the urban Negro and the New Deal. The general picture one receives from the literature is neither complimentary nor inspiring. Some of the most uncomplimentary evaluations have come from New Left historians, like Barton Bernstein, who stress the incompatibility of the goals of the Roosevelt Administration and the goals of those seeking a better life for Negroes in the ghetto. For the New Left, New Deal programs were simply the products of a racist society and, as such, appeared content to limit their activity on behalf of the Negro to the distribution of relief checks. According to Bernstein, whatever was given to the Negro by the New Deal (e.g. WPA jobs and relief) "was given to them as poor people and not as Negroes," an indication of Roosevelt's willingness to leave intact the race relations of America. By "capitulating to the forces of racism," the New Deal did little to make the black communities of the North less atomized, less ignorant, and less preoccupied with the grim struggle for individual existence. (5)

More moderate historians, examining the racial policies of the Roosevelt Administration from a broad national perspective, have generally concluded that there was "nothing really new in the New Deal for the Negro." Two of these historians, Alan Kifer and Leslie Fishel, have found encouraging signs that many New Dealers were sincerely interested in improving the lot of the Negro. These sincere individuals, however, were hampered by a combination of factors including the President's desire to placate Southern politicians and the persistence of local racial traditions. The result was that progressive-minded social programs in the North became "easily fused into the segregated patterns of the South." Any progress that was made during this period was confined to the appointment of fair-minded persons of both races (e.g. Mary McLeod Bethune, Clark Foreman, Harry Hopkins, Harold Ickes, Aubrey Williams, Robert Weaver) to policy-making posts within the Administration. In short, according to Kifer and Fishel, prominent names rather than prominent policies in the streets of the ghetto, constituted the extent of the New Deal's legacy to the black American. (6)

Previous evaluations of the New Deal's educational ventures vis à vis the Negro have also been largely critical -- although, here, the picture presented is not completely negative. George Rawick's 1957 study of the youth-related programs of the New Deal was a case in point. While admitting that the National Youth Administration failed to solve the problem of equal educational opportunity for young blacks ("that would have required a total and long-range revolution in the social and economic status of the Negro and the NYA was only a temporary relief organization"), Rawick managed to conclude that the NYA "made wide gains for Negro education," especially in the South. A year later, a study by Harry Zeitlin of

federal relations in American education during the 1930's devoted six of its over 300 pages to an examination of the racial implications of the Works Progress Administration's educational efforts. Zeitlin, acknowledging that "a dearth of evidence makes it difficult to evaluate the special importance of this program for the Negro," advanced a "tentative" conclusion that "the program helped to provide a number of educational arrangements which had not existed previously for this race. (7)

The increasing demand for community control over the processes of education which has characterized educational thinking since the mid-1960's has brought to the fore the suspicion and, in some cases, the positive certainty, that federally-financed educational activities during the Depression Decade failed to make significant inroads in the Northern ghetto. John A. Salmond's research into the operation of the Civilian Conservation Corps uncovered evidence of "a deliberate effort" on the part of local CCC administrators in the North as well as the South "to prevent the full participation of Negroes in government education programs." An even more devastating argument along these lines has been advanced by David Tyack, who is convinced that federal aid to education has acted to perpetuate existing educational inequalities. In an article published in 1969, Tyack strongly suggested that a relationship existed between heightened federal bureaucratization and centralization and the stifling of community control in Negro neighborhoods. Although admitting that "strikingly little" had been written about the pre-1954 schooling of blacks in Northern cities, he hypothesized that educational projects controlled by Washington bureaucrats "may well have blocked access to teaching jobs and policy-making, leaving black people seeing themselves as subjects rather than as citizens of the education system. (8)

The purpose of this study will be to test the often harsh judgments and conjectures of historians who have directly or tangentially discussed the urban Negro and his relationship to the New Deal's educational and community-oriented activities. Unlike previous studies which have examined the racial implications of the New Deal from a broad national perspective, this study will focus its attention on one facet of Rooseveltian reform -- the WPA's educational projects -- and how they functioned in three Northern black ghettoes -- New York City's Harlem, Chicago's Black Belt, and the black wards of Philadelphia. While emphasis will be placed on the operation of the WPA's Emergency Education Program, the role of the WPA's National Youth Administration in the social and educational rehabilitation of these three ghettoes will also be discussed.

Preceding an examination of the WPA's educational activities on the local level will be a discussion of important intellectual changes vis à vis black education prior to and during the New Deal period, and an analysis of how these intellectual changes influenced the formulation and implementation of the New Deal's educational programs on the national level.

In order to determine whether or not these educational programs represented a step forward or backward for the urban Negro, this study will attempt to answer these heretofore unanswered questions: (1) Did the WPA's educational activities reflect progressive attitudes toward Negro educability or did they serve to perpetuate racist myths of Negro intellectual inferiority? (2) Did the WPA in these

three cities accept the traditionally narrow concept of the ghetto school or did it try to bring the school in the ghetto closer to the black community? (3) Did the WPA attempt to come to the aid of existing black social welfare organizations or did it allow these organizations to fall by the wayside? In short, did the WPA's educational and community rehabilitation projects in the ghettoes of New York City, Chicago, and Philadelphia operate as a force hostile to educational and social change, or as a force interested in improving the quality of urban life for the black American?

Part I: PRELUDE TO REFORM

I. CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARDS BLACK EDUCABILITY

The full-blooded Negro has never achieved anything in Arts, Letters, Sciences, or along any line. (9)

-James Denson Sayers (1929)

Educational achievement cannot be considered in isolation from the correlated psychological, social, and biological factors in the school's environment. (10)

-J. E. Maller (1933)

Genius draws no color line. (11)

-Harold L. Ickes (1939)

Much of the criticism directed towards the New Deal's race-related programs has been in response to the belief that these programs were conceived and implemented in the spirit of America's deep-seated racial attitudes. The accuracy of this belief is of crucial importance to this study. The label of "progressive" could hardly be used to describe a program that consciously or subconsciously accepted stereotypes, myths, and pseudo-scientific facts attesting to the Negro's mental inferiority, nor could such a label be used to describe a program whose underlying philosophy consistently questioned the ability of the Negro to profit from an education.

Pessimism as to the ability of New Deal planners to reject racial myths three hundred years in the making was understandable. Few people in the 1930's were willing to admit publicly that the Negro was the mental equal of the white man. Black conferees attending an educational symposium at Fisk University in December, 1928, were in unanimous agreement that acceptance of the Negro's innate mental inferiority had become part and parcel of the American grain. Most disturbing to the conferees was the fact that the myth of Negro inferiority had actually "matured" over the years to a point where it now consisted of a collection of myths, some allowing for the possibility of black progress, but all concluding that measurable racial differences in social adaptability and native intelligence existed. (12)

The first of these myths viewed differences in black and white intellectual performance as simply a question of differences in physical anatomy. The relationship between mental and physical differences, made popular by French scientists in the mid-19th century, was generally known as the suture theory. According to the theory's proponents, "the coronal suture of the Negro skull closed before the lambdoid, making the bony encasement bear down upon the brain at an early age, gripping it like a prison and arresting growth." This "discovery" attracted a good deal of attention in phrenology-conscious America; during the 1890's, but it received its greatest boost a decade later through the writings of R. B. Bean, a

noted Professor of Anatomy at the University of Michigan and later at Johns Hopkins. Bean's investigations into the anatomy of the brain led him to the conclusion that not only was the Negro brain quantitatively smaller than that of the white man, but that qualitatively the black man's brain approached the intelligence of the "higher Apes." In words that put into cumbersome sentences the thoughts of many white Americans of the period, Bean claimed that The Caucasian, more particularly the Anglo-Saxon, is dominant and domineering and possessed primarily with determination, will power, self-control, self-government and all the attributes of the objective and aesthetic high development of the ethical self, with a comparative omission of the subjective emotions and faculties. The Negro is primarily affectionate, immensely emotional. There is love of ostentation, there is love of music and a capacity for melodies articulation ... there is instability of character incident to lack of self-control and there is lack of orientation and recognition of position and condition of self and environment, evidenced by a peculiar bumptiousness, so called, that is particularly noticeable.

More simply stated the Negro, by virtue of his brain structure, possessed the lower mental faculties (smell, sight, skill at handicrafts, body-sense, and melody), while the more fortunate white man possessed the higher mental faculties (self-control, will power, ethical and aesthetic senses and reason). (13)

The Bean thesis that intelligence was a matter of physical rather than cultural characteristics did not vanish quickly from the American scene. In editions published as late as the 1920's, the Encyclopedia Britannica spoke authoritatively of "the arresting of the Negro brain by the premature closing of the cranial suture and the lateral pressure of the frontal bone." As popular as this theory was, however, the scientific community remained unconvinced that anatomy alone could explain mental differences between races. While accepting Bean's initial premise of the Negro's "obvious mental inferiority," scientists during the 1920's began challenging the work of the craniologists. One of these challengers, a transitional figure in the twentieth-century debate over the basis of intelligence, was Professor George Ferguson of the University of Virginia.

Writing in the June, 1921, issue of the prestigious journal Scientific Monthly, Ferguson offered a psychological explanation for racial differences in intelligence. "The Negro," he wrote, "is not at all at home when he deals with the abstract. He is well-equipped to handle concrete education, manual and industrial training, and for acquiring the simpler skills by rote memory work." Ferguson suggested that there should be corresponding differences in the organization of the schools of both races, especially in the North, "where the amount of retardation among colored pupils is far greater than among whites." Wherever possible, the Negro should be kept in contact with white people in the hope that this contact with the psychologically superior race will enable him to use appropriate for his own use the products of white genius. (14)

Although Ferguson was one of the first scientists to recommend that the black man be given a special education to compensate for his "inferior temperament," his solution to the problem of equalizing

educational opportunity was hardly new. Howard Odum, a Georgia-born but Columbia University-trained sociologist, made it clear in his 1910 volume, Social and Mental Traits of the Negro, that while blacks could benefit from white supervision, their "intrinsic mental laziness, lack of ambition and perverted conception of the meaning of virtue, truth, honor, manhood and integrity," created insurmountable obstacles for educators. Asserting that the Negro teachers interviewed in his study felt it was "the weakness of the race" rather than educational inequalities that was to blame for the poor performance of blacks on standardized tests, Odum proposed the adoption of a totally new set of curricula to be used exclusively by nonwhites. The new lesson plans consisted of dramatic stories of famous Negroes who were, in the author's words, "the epitome of fidelity to duty and trust." (15)

The poor showing of blacks on the Stanford-Binet verbal intelligence tests administered during World War I added grist to the arguments of those who claimed that intelligence was psychologically based. Utilizing the marks of students in several New York City high schools, Marion Mayo, in The Mental Capacity of the American Negro, concluded that "colored pupils are about 75 per cent as efficient as the whites in the pursuit of high school studies." Anticipating the criticisms of a growing band of environment-minded liberals. Mayo quickly added that his study controlled for environmental factors, having been conducted in the Northern milieu "where opportunities for improvement have been largely identical." Mayo's conclusion with regard to the Negro's educational future was grimly pessimistic. "There seem to be," he wrote, "real differences in the mental equipment of the two races; a fact which can never be equalized by the processes of education and training."(16)

Behind the pseudo-scientific formulations of Ferguson and Mayo lay the nagging problem of how to account for those blacks who were clearly the intellectual superiors of many whites. This embarrassing discrepancy was explained to the satisfaction of many Americans by the mulatto hypothesis. Argued most effectively by authors Edward East and Edward Reuter, the hypothesis declared that an increase in the proportion of white germ-plasm in the blood of the "mixed" Negro served to reduce the amount of "negro mental backwardness." Alain Locke's widely-acclaimed book The New Negro thus became, in the eyes of East, "the work of a man at least 90 percent white who gives no evidence whatever of Negro capacity, and who demonstrates conclusively what mixed blood can do." According to East and Reuter, hope for the black man lay not in increasing his access to better school facilities, but in increasing the amount of white blood in his veins. By turning white, the Negro, in effect, was turning bright. (17)

On the eve of the Depression, the mulatto hypothesis had taken its place in the pantheon of racial myths. The theory's advocates, with their ready access to influential science monthlies and publishing houses, were not exclusively Southern firebrand types. Many were solid, upper class, Ivy League-educated Northerners concerned; for a variety of reasons, with the specter of racial amalgamation. A case in point was James Denson Sayers, the product of a wealthy New York family and editor of The White Race Herald, a monthly journal dedicated to "preventing the mongrelization of the white race." Published in New York City, the journal expired after ten issues; but its central theme spelled out clearly Northern racial prejudices and fears. The Herald pictured the Negro as "carefree, singing, basking in the sun, having no care for the future and never capable of producing an Aristotle or an Edison." Mary Hood,

a young contributor to one of the early issues, presented a classic statement of the mulatto hypothesis. "It is only," she argued, "when the Negro has white blood in his veins and has the white man's strong arm and brain to lean on that he can accomplish anything. Unless this basic fact is grasped by the masses in the North they can never really understand the Negro race." (18)

The last stage in the pre-New Deal maturation of the theory of racial differences in intelligence was provided by the genetics-minded hereditarians. The latter claimed that they could satisfactorily plug the loopholes of existing racist ideology and prove, once and for all, that the Negro was no mental match for the white American. The hereditarians rejected outright the craniologists' contention that a direct relationship existed between intellectual prowess and brain weight and structure. Instead, they postulated a direct relationship between human genes and the development of basic human personality traits. "In Man," wrote Johns Hopkins Professor of zoology H. S. Jennings, "the general efficiency of the brain ... is known to depend on genes, for alteration of a single gene may produce feeblemindedness, while a "small degree" of an individual's potential might be realized if his environment changed for the better; by and large, less favorable gene combinations accompanied people born into unfavorable environmental conditions, thus genetically freezing the individual for life. Not only were Negroes more likely to inherit unfavorable gene combinations, they were, according to Jennings, at a distinct disadvantage when it came to competing with the white man in civilized society. This was so because the white group had "the superior gene pool for the handling of matters of judgment and adjustment to conditions." (19)

The claim that a "real mental lethargy exists on the part of the blacks which places doubts as to their ability to benefit from improved educational opportunity" was only one aspect of the hereditarian position. Another aspect involved the belief that blacks with a relatively superior gene pool for intellectual dexterity could eventually, like oil in water, come to the top of their race. This argument, heavily laced with Darwinian overtones, was used extensively by racists in the late 1920's and early 1930's to explain the disturbing fact that blacks in the North scored consistently higher on Army and school tests than their brethren in the South. To understand this "phenomenon," it was necessary to take into account "the great tendency of the Negro with the best intellectual ability (i.e. the best gene pool) to move North in search of economic opportunity." Armed with this explanation, Joseph Peterson and Lyle Lanier, two sociologists examining the New York Public School System in 1929, discovered that there was apparently developing in New York, under the more severe struggle for existence, a highly selected Negro population which represents the best genes of the race -- whether pure or mixed with white and Indian blood. In this select group ... there seems to be no correlation between intelligence scores and the degree of white characteristics ... The result of this sort of selectiveness of the best genes in the Negro doubtless impoverishes considerably (20) the Negro stock in the South and the West Indies.

The conclusions of these and related studies linking intelligence to race seemed all too clear. By reason of his peculiar physical anatomy or his psychological, social, and genetic characteristics, the black man was confined by the opinions of white America to a limited sphere of intellectual activity. Since the crux of the problem lay within his own personality and physical being, increasing the Negro's exposure to a

wider range of educational opportunities would only be self-defeating. The verdict handed to the black American by racist scientists, psychologists, and sociologists was "Guilty by Nature;" the sentence: perpetual mental inferiority. (21)

The pre-New Deal development of the case linking the Negro's personality traits to his alleged mental incapacity was far from airtight. At least two important questions remained unanswered. If blacks were cursed with the racial trait of mental lethargy, how did one account for the black geniuses who were not mulattoes? Secondly, was it fair to expect nonwhites to equal white test scores when the educational training the former group received was clearly inferior? Was the Negro's "nature" at fault here, or must his societal condition, his "nurture," be given more attention by professionals in the physical and social sciences?

The search for the answers to these questions paved the way for a concerted assault during the 1920's and 1930's on the doctrine of black intellectual inferiority. Influenced by the writings of anthropologist Franz Boas, proponents of the "nurture" approach to the study of human intelligence worked hard to rebut the racist manifesto that blacks were incapable of being educated past a certain point. A pioneer in this effort was Katherine Murdock, a New York sociologist who, in 1930, undertook a study aimed at discovering the differences which existed in the intelligence patterns of Italians, Jews, native-born Americans and Negroes. Defining intelligence as "the power to deal with certain situations that required the correct use of words and symbols," she chose as her laboratory P. S. 5 at 8th Avenue and 140th Street, a school with a student body of 500 white and 230 Negro boys. Miss Murdock's findings proved highly provocative. "The colored boys," she declared, "of nine and ten seem to be well up toward equaling or exceeding (in intelligence) the native whites and Hebrews .... On the whole, the colored boys seem to be about halfway between the Hebrews and the Italians."

Miss Murdock offered no hard and fast explanation for the "surprising" results of her study but wondered if the performance of the black children was in response to the higher quality of education they received in the schools of the North. (22)

The possibility that black Americans could benefit from an exposure to quality education proved a tempting thought to many liberal scientists dissatisfied with previous measurements of native intelligence. Before the decade was out, a number of scientists were openly voicing their considered opinions that the customary proofs of mental inequality were "scientifically worthless." Challenges were hurled at the concept of a "pure racial stock" and at the scores obtained when intelligence tests were given to groups with differing backgrounds and life experiences. One psychologist, Florence Goodenough went so far as to invent her own intelligence test based entirely on pupil drawings of the human figure, a criterion that she claimed more clearly represented native mental ability. Finding that blacks of low socio-economic status often performed poorly on her tests, she concluded, "It is unquestionably true that the home surroundings of certain racial groups .... are far less favorable than those of average American children." and that this difference probably explained why children varied in intelligence. Goodenough also noted that the problem of educating the poor was "complicated by the tendency of

persons of low intelligence to gravitate to those neighborhoods where the economic requirement is minimal. Once in this environment, the individual reacts toward his surroundings along the line of least resistance." By placing the burden of guilt on the home and its immediate environs (a theme made popular by eugenicists such as Dr. Thomas Garth, head of the University of Denver's Institute of Race and Psychology), Goodenough had, in effect, made the Negro prisoner not of his inherent mental lethargy but of the physical and moral decadence of his environment. (23)

Significantly, this early attempt to redefine the nature of the black American's intellectual limitations was not accompanied by an admission that if the Negro child were given a similar environmental upbringing to that of his white counterpart he could equal the white child in mental and scholastic ability. Caution was decidedly the byword in these controversial waters; with many early environmentalists content to downgrade previous results of experimentation as "inconclusive" or to call for a new battery of tests that would take into account the present living conditions and the past heritage of the race. Others, like Albert Beckham, a clinical psychologist at the University of Chicago's Institute of Juvenile Research, and Howard Long, Assistant Superintendent of public schools in Washington, D. C. were a bit more forthright raising the possibility that if the Negro child were placed in a wholesome mental and physical environment his scores on I.Q. tests would improve "dramatically." However, as Long quickly pointed out, changing the quality of the black man's environment was much easier said than done.

The majority of Negroes are found in isolated social islands. In these neighborhoods they are essentially small community dwellers … Incompetence is condoned under a veiled "what's the "use" attitude. The social pattern thus engendered must exert a negative influence upon the mental life of the child. He either rebels with little result or adopts the attitude of his elders on whom an inferior status has been fixed. The wonder is not that the colored children of Washington fail to equal the whites in I.Q. scores, but that their I.Q.'s are as high as they are. (24)

Attacks against the use of standardized intelligence tests in measuring black mental capacity grew bolder as more evidence appeared linking environmental conditions to test scores. A study conducted in 1930 of black and white college students of similar socio-economic status showed no substantive difference in scholastic performance or I.Q. scores. Four years later a team of educational psychologists uncovered a group of gifted black pupils on Chicago's South Side with I.Q.'s approaching 200. Their outstanding performances were said to be the result of "improved opportunities for educational and cultural development." A noted New York psychologist Dr. Annette Bennett seconded this explanation and warned her colleagues not to make the I.Q. test "an intellectual straitjacket within which the Negro must live and move and have his being." A year later sociologist Julius Hertz emerged as one of the bolder breed of environmentalists by sharply criticizing those in his profession who put their faith in such tests. Such a reliance he claimed, "insured a shortened stay in school for precisely those who needed it the most." Metz added that the children of the poor were prevented by the sordid character of their environment from giving full expression to their "innate mental ability." To remedy this tragic situation, a three-fold strategy was. unfurled: First, get rid of the notion that the Negro was mentally inferior;

second, get rid of tests created by, and standardized for Northern whites and third; revamp the curricula in schools with large black enrollments to allow for more exposure to academic subjects. (25)

While these attacks were being mounted against I.Q. tests, a great deal of critical attention was being given to the mulatto hypothesis. Robert Park, a pioneer in the study of human ecology at the University of Chicago, estimated in 1931 that approximately 20 per cent of the mixed bloods among Negroes produced 85 per cent of the race's cultural advance guard. Their evident superiority was not, however, the result of having greater amounts of white germ plasm in their systems, but simply a matter of relative social opportunity. Lighter-skinned blacks, Park explained, enjoyed an advantage over their darker-skinned brethren because they were allowed "greater association with the dominant social group." "Intelligence and intellectual life," he concluded, "are incidents of action and it is only the sense of participation in the great action that gives individuals and races the courage and the élan that is necessary to rise from a higher cultural level of intellectual life." (26)

The critique of racist ideology reached its high point when liberals attempted to dismantle the theory of selective migration. In a series of articles and books published in the late 1920's and throughout the New Deal period, Otto Klineberg, a Columbia University sociologist, almost single-handedly dealt the selective migration theory a mortal blow. Klineberg's initial assumption was a bold one: "we have," he declared, "no right to accept the hypothesis of the innate superiority of any one race over another until certain factors, independent of race, have been examined." Among the factors mentioned by Klineberg as determinants of an individual's intelligence level were (1) the cultural status of the home (2) the sanitary conditions of the community (3) earliness of exposure to formal schooling (4) efficiency and extent of schooling and (5) nutrition and general health. As these environmental factors approached equality among black and white pupils, he asserted, differences in intelligence scores also approached zero. (27)

The Columbia sociologist noted that those blacks who scored lowest on I.Q. tests were, to a large extent, recent arrivals from Southern school systems where expenditures for school operation, length of school term, and provisions for extra-curricular activities compared unfavorably with conditions in the school systems of the North. His analysis of Northern test results also revealed that increasing numbers of children who were labeled "retarded" in the ghetto schools of New York City had begun their education in the South where they were made to suffer "certain educational handicaps which they have not been able to overcome." Klineberg rejected the notion that the smartest Southern blacks migrated Northward, and advanced, instead, the hypothesis that blacks who did well in the New York Public School System did so in spite of their previous educational background and in response to "a New York environment capable of raising the intellectual level of Negro children to a point equal to that of whites." "While we have no complete proof," he admitted, "that an improvement in the Negro's background can bring him up to the white level, we also have no right to conclude the opposite. What we can safely say is that as the background improves so do the scores of the Negro approximate more and more closely the standards set by the whites." Kleinberg argued that unless the Negro was given an equal opportunity to

better his societal condition and to compete successfully with the white man in the economic and social sphere, there was little point in continuing to compare the intellectual abilities of both races. Tests purporting to measure the capacity to learn without at the same time measuring the impetus to learn were essentially worthless. (28)

While it is difficult to estimate precisely what percentage of physical and social scientists were influenced by the findings of Park and Klineberg, it seems safe to conclude that by the end of the Depression Decade the proponents of the "nurture-before-nature" approach to the study of human intelligence were clearly in the ascendancy. The scientific community, once in the forefront of racist propaganda efforts, had made notable progress in discrediting some of the more blatant racial myths. One of the first to be discredited was the suture-closure theory which fell under the weight of documented evidence showing the great similarities between white and black brain development. To the satisfaction of many American scientists, a noted Russian brain expert, Dr. I. G. Webber, exploded the concept of racial classification by brain formation by advancing the view that "ape-like brain ridges are not peculiar to the darker races." Sharing a similar fate was the notion that the black man's "abnormal" mental development relegated him to an inferior intellectual status. This idea was roundly denounced in a policy statement of the American Anthropological Association which flatly declared that "no scientific basis exists for discriminating against any people on the grounds of racial inferiority." Even more encouraging were the results of a 1934 survey of 150 leading American scientists on the question "Do inherent racial differences exist?" to which a substantial majority of biologists and psychologists responded in the negative. Slightly over 70 per cent of all respondents rejected the mulatto thesis, while only 19 per cent were willing to state categorically that the Negro was incapable of equaling white intellectual accomplishment. Dr. Charles Thompson, the survey's supervisor who had concurred with the pessimistic findings of the Fisk University Conference six years earlier, was pleasantly surprised with the results, viewing them as "testimony to the fact that very few scientists are willing to conclude that the American Negro is inherently mentally inferior to the American White." (29)

A similar consensus was developing among social scientists during the 1930's on the subject of intelligence testing. The traditional view, reinforced by the results of the Army Alpha tests and the National Intelligence Test of 1926, made no distinction between acquired intelligence and native intelligence. Consequently, the black American was cast in the role of a sick patient who could only recover after an extended exposure to the dominant (i.e. superior) culture of the white man. The new view of intelligence testing rejected this paternalistic relationship. Society itself was now the patient, and the low average scores made by blacks on standardized tests were increasingly being regarded as a manifestation of a sick society rather than as evidence of the Negro group's incompetence. Inferiority was clearly not genetically based but was instead, as one sociologist asserted, "a disposition of the individual to sense a limitation of performance and to refrain from acting because he believes he cannot do it." (30)

The placing of society and its inequities on trial marked a crucial change in the American intellectual and social attitude towards the limits of black educability. According to the new attitude, the entire question

of human intelligence was better handled by a sociologist rather than by a scientist, for it involved the problem of determining whether the effects of schooling had been equalized for all races. To many observers, it seemed ludicrous to expect a child who felt nothing could be gained from an education to do as well in school as someone with an opposite viewpoint. Although some social scientists continued to believe that an equalization of the effects of schooling could be accomplished without the intervention of the federal government, a growing number were convinced that governmental intervention to remove some of the ambition-stifling inequities surrounding black education was essential and long overdue. (31)

The role of government was considered especially acute when it became obvious that the attitudinal changes among intellectuals toward the problem of black educability were hardly being felt by the average white American. Tragically, the public's attitude toward the black American seemed chiefly determined not by personal contact with the Negro, or by exposure to the published findings of liberals in the physical and social sciences, but by contact with the prevalent misconceptions, myths, and rumors about black people. Such was the conclusion of a national survey taken in 1939 which revealed that over 71 per cent of those interviewed believed that the Negro was still inferior to whites in intelligence, while 31 per cent felt that because he was innately inferior, the black man could not significantly improve his position in society through education. Discoveries of nonwhites with I.Q.'s of 200, or of pure-blooded blacks with high scholastic achievement were interesting, but produced very little in the way of public acceptance of the notion that blacks were the intellectual equals of whites. (32)

What remained important, then, was the perceptible shift in American intellectual circles away from the belief that intelligence was genetically based and thus unchangeable by human effort, to the position that intellectual competence was the very antithesis of a fixed, predetermined capacity. Because of its flexible quality, intelligence (a product of inherited traits plus environmental experiences), could be stimulated to greater heights by an improvement in the quality of an individual's education and training. By the mid-1930's, liberals in the physical and social sciences were subscribing in increasing numbers to the latter school of thought. The result was the creation of an intellectual atmosphere conducive to a nationwide assault by the federal government on the problem of unequal educational opportunity. The fact that environmental improvement and educational opportunity were closely related, and the realization that the federal government could, through its actions, take the initiative in informing the American people of this fact, helped to persuade New Deal planners to approach the problem of black urban education in a way previously regarded as futile.

II. EDUCATION IN THE GHETTO: THE SEARCH FOR NEW DIRECTIONS

My own belief is that education will finally solve the race problem.

-Booker T. Washington (1900) (33)

Learn or Perish.

- Baltimore Afro-American (1935) (34)

The damage that has been done to black people by inferior schooling over the last one hundred years is worse than that inflicted by any lynch mob.

-Roy Wilkins (1970) (35)

Convincing white America of the ability of nonwhites to profit from education was only half the battle. The other half was the job of convincing blacks that a white-controlled educational program could be made to work for the benefit of blacks. For a number of Negro leaders, the prime question was not whether the Negro needed a good education, but whether or not he was willing to trust the white man to give it to him. (36)

Although black criticism of white-controlled educational institutions during the New Deal period was generally directed at Southern school systems, Distrust of the so-called "mixed" or integrated schools of the North was widespread. There, amid the rubble of "The Promised Land," disillusioned blacks discovered that "ignorance, as far as the education of the black child was concerned, seemed a more profitable investment than intelligence."

Revulsion against the hypocrisy of Northern school administrators (of which more will be said in later chapters) led some black leaders in a number of localities to demand that Negro children be given the option of attending all-black separate schools, run by and for nonwhites. The question they asked of their white and black critics was a simple one: could a black child receive a decent education from a white teacher working in a white-controlled institution, and using a curriculum designed for the white child? (37)

While pro-separation blacks preferred a "voluntary" rather than a "forced" implementation of the separate school concept in the North, they supported the position that black-controlled facilities would be of great positive benefit to blacks of all classes. They argued persuasively that separate schools would inevitably lead to more employment for trained Negro teachers, which, in turn, would result in a much-needed strengthening of the black middle class. While anti-separatists characterized this rationale as "a cynical attempt by black professional men to secure positions for their wives and friends," black schools

equal black jobs was a hard question to disprove. Also hard to refute was the charge that white teachers often had unsympathetic attitudes toward their nonwhite pupils; one study of racial attitudes in Chicago in the mid-1930's found 40 per cent of adult Negroes questioned convinced that white teachers were prejudiced. Surveying teaching practices in the ghettoes of the North, Julia Clark, Secretary-General of the separatist-oriented United Negro Improvement Association, concluded that white faculty members often "talked down" to their students ("They're going to be maids and elevator operators anyway, so why bother?" was the usual attitude). As a result, the Negro child developed a minority complex before he or she could develop a defense psychology against prejudicial treatment. The only way to avoid this kind of traumatic experience was for blacks to attend black-controlled schools where, as a young Negro student from the nation's capital noted, "the teachers seem to take a great deal more interest in Negro students than whites would ever take in us." (38)

Closely connected with the desire for a teaching staff in sympathy with the aspirations of black children was the desire for a new curriculum in the ghetto schools of the North; a curriculum designed to meet the needs of Negro youth and one which did not trumpet the superiority of the dominant cultural group. While whites saw the need for such a curriculum as a means for compensating for the black American's "special mental problems," blacks saw the matter quite differently, agreeing in essence with Booker T. Washington's classic remark that "the real trouble with the education given to Negroes was that the textbooks were written in Boston." (39)

Efforts to counter what was called "the gross misrepresentation of the Negro experience in America" were successful in a number of Northern ghetto schools. At the Garfield School in Detroit, Michigan, the school's library was stocked with books by Negro authors or about Negroes. Each student was required to write a career book in which he selected the profession he expected to follow, listed the qualifications and training necessary for the job, the career's attractive and unattractive features, and the biography of a black person who was successful in this field. Evaluating the program, the Negro principal of Garfield felt it had increased the child's pride in his racial heritage, and had contributed significantly to "a fine understanding between pupils, parents, and teachers." The success of similar experiments in the segregated schools of Chicago and Philadelphia led Kelly Miller, Dean of Howard University, to marvel at "the keener incentive and zest that these schools elicited from their students." (40)

Shifting their attention from personality development to community development, black advocates of the "voluntary" separate school concept rejected the idea that by succeeding in the white man's educational system the Negro could achieve full social and economic equality in American society. Following this unattainable goal, they argued, would leave the black man in a perpetual state of serfdom -- exactly where the dominant group and its educational system felt he belonged. By molding blacks into "good niggers," the "mixed" schools of the North were making blacks passive and accepting of the opinions of others, and thus creating generations of Negroes unable to assume leadership roles in the fight for Negro rights. (41)

The most articulate spokesman during the 1930's of the position that extensive contact with white people weakened the race (and was thus detrimental to black survival) was W. E. B. DuBois. Previously an uncompromising advocate of the belief that no differences at all should be made in the teaching of Negro and white students, DuBois changed his mind in the wake of what he called "the growing animosity of whites."

"I am no fool," he wrote in the summer of 1935, "and I know that race prejudice in the U.S. today is such that most Negroes cannot receive proper education in white institutions." Under black control, he argued, "our schools can become centers of a new and beautiful effort at human education." Such an educational arrangement was infinitely better "than making our boys and girls doormats to be trampled upon and lied to by ignorant social climbers, whose sole claim to superiority is the ability to kick 'niggers when they are down'." (42)

Despite his colorful rhetoric, DuBois' prescription for a stronger Negro race was disputed by the great majority of black intellectuals during the New Deal period. Most black Americans, irrespective of social, economic, or educational status, were opposed, in principle, to the maintenance or extension of school segregation in the South as well as the North. In the North, the prevalent attitude seemed to be one of optimistic resignation: integrated schools were a permanent fixture of the educational system, and it was crucial for the race to make the best out of a promising, although admittedly hostile, environment. (43)

Pro-integration blacks wasted no time in pointing out to their critics that whatever their psychological limitations, the Northern school systems represented a considerable advance over the kind of education black children were receiving in the separate schools of the South. In matters of teacher training, faculty salaries, and length of school term, the North, unlike the South, made identical provisions for both races. Furthermore, as noted by Dr. Charles Thompson of Howard University, there was little evidence to indicate that the separate school had any advantage over the "mixed" school either in the "retention of Negro pupils, in the promotion of inspiration and social activities, or in the fostering of educational achievement." While it was true that the Negro child in the North often attended the older and less desirable schools, he did so largely because of economic factors (Negroes had moved into the older sections of the city after whites had moved out), and not because of any inborn policy part or prejudiced whites. (44)

Those discriminatory policies in the North schools, which were too numerous and well-known to be easily excused, were often interpreted by pro-integration blacks as less the result of white racism than of what was considered the "unfortunate recalcitrance" of many blacks to air their private feelings on these matters in the public arena. "In every case," declared Charles Thompson, "where the Negro has waged a persistent and consistent fight to compete for teacherships on equal terms with whites, discrimination in teacher hiring practices have been reduced to a tolerable minimum if not actually overcome." This reluctance to speak out against educational "jim crowism" was attributed to the influence of "a little group of Negroes gunning for teaching jobs for their daughters at the expense of the group as a whole," and to the work of "politicians looking for an extra opportunity for petty graft or patronage." According

to the proponents of integrated education, the time was long past for the black American to speak forcefully and unequivocally against an undemocratic educational system. "I am truly convinced," Mary McLeod Bethune told the First Annual Conference on Adult Education and the Negro, "that our white friends and Boards of Education leave Negroes out of white not because they feel Negroes should not have it, but because the Negro has not approached them to bring forth his needs." (45)

Pro-integrationists were not so naive as to believe that white-controlled schools could do a better job of educating blacks; such schools, they claimed, were staffed "with many who daily assist in the mental crucification of the Race's children." Unlike the separatists, however, they rejected as "absurd" the idea that Negroes in an integrated environment received less inspiration for advancement. Pointing to the fact that both Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois attended schools with all-white faculties, black integrationists challenged the often heard contention that placing the black child alongside his white counterpart in the classroom would lead inevitably to psychologically disastrous results. Fisk University professor of sociology Charles Johnson argued vehemently that just the opposite was true. Johnson noted that the problem would be simplified if blacks were only being educated to live in an all-black world. Since this was not the case, a narrow and parochial education would create in the nonwhite mind intense feelings of "disillusionment, frustration, loss of ambition, bitterness, anti-social impulses, a deep sense of inadequacy" -- in short, the creation of a warped black personality. To impose this type of education at an early age, as advocated by DuBois, was particularly damaging because it neglected the integrative function at precisely the period which it would be the most effective. Thus, by the late 1930's (a full 15 years before the Brown vs. Board of Education decision) the link between educational segregation and impaired personality development was being used to counter the proposals of black educational separatists. (46)

The sharp differences which divided blacks on the issue of separate versus integrated education did not conceal the black community's essential agreement on two important points: (1) that nonwhites needed an educational program that would allow the black student to familiarize himself with the skills needed for economic survival in white America and (2) that the ghetto school in the North was in an advantageous position to improve both the mental health of the black student and the social health of his community. (47)

As the Depression tightened its grip on the nonwhite working class, the hypothetical question of what constituted the best framework for black education took a back seat to the very practical question, "Education for what?" Faced with the crushing logic of the "last hired, first fired" syndrome, many in the black community saw little point to forensic debate -- unless that debate concerned the very real issue of black economic survival. W. E. B. DuBois' call for "a self-supporting industrial organization sufficiently independent of the white organization" was considered by many to be an illusory and impractical approach to the survival issue. The more popular approach conceded that the Negro was an integral part of America's economic order, and saw the nation's economic crisis as a test of the federal government's commitment towards making the black American "an organic part of the general organization of American life." (48)

The job of changing the black man's role in American life from a spectator to that of a participant was more easily said than done. By the 1930's, the myth of the Negro's inferior mental capabilities, erected on a foundation of outmoded intelligence tests and pseudo-scientific briefs, had taken on an added economic dimension. In addition to his alleged poor mental traits, the Negro worker was widely regarded as inefficient, careless, inconsistent, and unable to profit from vocational training. Even his low accident rate in industry was taken as suspect, the theory being that "the Negro's phlegmatic attitude helps to reduce the toll of accidents due to nervousness and hasty motions." Significantly, increased education seemed to have little influence in diminishing this myth of black inefficiency. A majority of white college business students surveyed in 1934, felt that Negroes were, on average, "lazy, lacking in individual initiative and possessed of little ability." Over 25 per cent of the students expressed opposition to allowing Negroes to travel anywhere they pleased, due to "their personal odor and careless and dirty dress." These future employers were generally willing to permit the black American to seek work as porters, valets, and waiters, but they were found to be much less willing to allow the Negro to occupy a position of responsibility on an equal footing with whites. (49)

While the charge that the black man was a lazy and ineffective job holder was not left unanswered (critics argued that there were few inducements for efficiency in terms of promotion and higher salaries), the rebuttals seemed almost irrelevant. The major damage was reflected, not in time-honored racist attitudes, but in grim economic statistics. Occupationally, the Negro on the eve of the New Deal, constituted from 50 to 80 per cent of the nation's bootblacks, cooks, porters, laundry workers and domestic servants. Fully 65 per cent of the race's labor force were unskilled workers employed as marginal laborers with little, if any, job security. Government studies indicated that the economic storm was striking the nonwhite American with greater impact than it did unemployed whites. On average, the urban Negro worker in 1932 was in debt seven times as heavily as his white counterpart, and his situation was made even more desperate by what was termed "an increase in the intense traditional discrimination practiced in the private business sector and by many of the nation's trade unions." where the crust of tradition had been broken, it was "broken downward to admit white workers into such jobs as the Negroes had formerly pinned their security upon." Observers ominously warned that unless positive action was taken, there was real danger that the Negro, with his back up against an economic wall, "will lose faith in established channels for correcting societal wrongs." (50)

There were, however, some signs to indicate that the black worker in the urban North had begun his slow climb out of the submarginal class of the unskilled. Statistics published in the 1930's revealed that the percentage of blacks employed in the white-collar field was 4.6 per cent, compared to 2.7 per cent in 1910. Negroes were represented in all but four or more than 500 occupations listed in the 1930 census, while the percentage increase of blacks librarians social workers and engineers over the ten-year period 1920-1930 exceeded the percentage increase of whites employed in similar fields. Although far from conclusive, these statistics, along with those reporting an absolute increase in black civil service employment and a corresponding decline in black-held domestic positions, were indications that Negroes were taking advantage of the national trend from productive to nonpersonal service occupations, and gradually entering the professional and business arenas. (51)

Taking their cue from these figures, a number of black educators cautiously advanced the proposition that the Negro, through hard work and education, could vault the distance separating his submarginal economic status and economic security. Adopting this passive approach to black economic survival was Faye Everett, a black high school teacher from St. Louis who claimed knowledge of a list of black success stories that read like "the Tales from the Arabian Nights." Miss Everett volunteered this advice to all aspiring black youth:

"The young Negro is the captain of his own destiny and a splendid future awaits him in all fields of labor, if he will stop 'looking under the bed' for danger and into the skies for help. It is a common belief of our leaders that when the Negro stops complaining and begins to think clearly and accurately for himself, and behind each clear thought puts forth a unit of intelligent and systematic effort--then --and only until then will his economic and vocational status rise to a creditable point."

Echoing the contention that the remedy for black unemployment rested with the power of positive thinking was Dr. Fred Patterson, the president of Tuskegee Institute. Fond of telling graduating seniors that "thousands of young men and women shall find desirable vocational outlets because they will command respect and satisfactory conditions of employment through their ability," Patterson argued that the efforts of the race to improve its economic position would bear fruit only if impatience were replaced with thoughts of eventual success. (52)

The only difficulty with these unbridled expressions of faith in open racial competition was that they ignored many of the social, economic, and educational realities of the 1930's. The "ego-glow" philosophy wrongly assumed that Northern whites were willing to accept blacks as competitors at a time in history in which hard times created white antagonisms and animosities "often more intense than those found in the South." The second reality overlooked was the tremendous gap which existed between black and white in the areas of vocational training opportunities, guidance services, apprenticeship education, library services and facilities, adult education and many other fields of specialized training. The gap was so large, and seemingly so impossible to bridge, that black columnist George Schuyler felt the need to denounce "those charlatans who pretend to see a time when this vast army of young Negroes will be employed privately." "Most of them," Schuyler added "will have to work for the State, earning just enough to keep them alive and out of mischief." (53)

Both the integrationists and the separatists, among the blacks, were in agreement that the ghetto schools of the North contributed to the creation and the perpetuation of this wide vocational opportunity gap between the races. Such schools, Ira DeA Reid noted, "regularly commit atrocities in the name of occupational guidance for Negroes." As outlined by the 1935 Atlanta Conference on Vocational Guidance and Education For Negroes, these atrocities normally took two forms: (1) guiding Negroes into

or preparing them for occupations that were either closed to blacks or rapidly disappearing and (2) preparing blacks for jobs that merely served further to entrench them in the sub-marginal class. (54)

Although united in the belief that a serious guidance problem existed, blacks were divided as to the root causes of the problem. A majority affixed the blame on ignorant white counselors who often acted without knowledge of vocations blacks desired to enter or had already entered successfully. "The chances are two to one," quipped one critic, "that the Negro students themselves know far more about these opportunities than the person or persons counseling them." A growing number of blacks, however, viewed the problem with a more jaundiced eye. They argued that the crux of the matter was not naivete or lack of information but simply conscious and deliberate misrepresentation of the facts. (55)

To support their charges of willful neglect, critics pointed to the variety of techniques used by Northern school systems to stifle black ambition. In a Boston school, for example, a separate school assembly for Negro students was ordered for the purpose of "extolling to them the virtues of manual training and of Negro schools." In New York City, an attempt was made by the Board of Education to restrict course offerings in the vocational schools of Harlem to the trades "where Negroes can expect jobs." Under this plan, electrical training would no longer be offered to nonwhites as long as electrical contractors continued their refusal to employ Negroes, and as long as union leaders, working in close cooperation with vocational school counselors, continued to exclude the Negro from most apprenticeships in the skilled trades. Also condemned were the rulings of local school boards on the West Coast barring Negroes from taking vocational courses unless they could provide letters from employers promising them jobs after graduation. When questioned as to why such letters were so hard to come by, employers invariably claimed that while they wished to hire local blacks they were unable to do so on the grounds that nonwhites very often failed to present evidence of training received on the secondary school level. (56)

Critics of white-controlled vocational guidance programs also blamed the established educational system for leaving a majority of Northern black high school seniors "in apparent confusion as to the actual possibilities of work and the methods of training." Reports reaching observers of the educational scene in the 1930's indicated clearly that a large percentage of black adolescents in their senior year of high school had made no choice of a future occupation and were in desperate need of vocational guidance. Studies of black students in Chicago and Columbus, Ohio, revealed that black expressions of job preference were "little more than the illusory hopes of an uninformed youth." "Ignorance is our most important product" seemed to be the motto of many ghetto schools when it came to the vocational guidance of Negroes. (57)

Not surprisingly, these conditions led many black parents to resign themselves to the attitude, "Why should I send my boy or girl to school when the only hope he has for a livelihood is to take a job which requires practically no education?" In an attempt to counter this feeling of hopelessness, progressive guidance counselors of both races offered a blueprint for change. Their first recommendation called for

the removal of the stigma that Negro public opinion had traditionally placed on vocational training. Continuation of the black man's preoccupation with achieving white-collar status, they argued, was harmful to the gradual integration of the Negro into the nation's work force. Stressing the theme that "It is better to be trained for work even though you do not get it, than to have the opportunity arise for which you are not prepared," the promoters of a new guidance program vociferously attacked those institutions in society which actively intervened to curtail black economic opportunity. Among those institutions indicted were lily-white unions with their stranglehold on apprenticeships in the lucrative building and mechanical trades, businesses which advertised in the open market for "intelligent, experienced, and light-skinned help." Northern school boards which excluded blacks from certain vocational courses, and teachers and guidance counselors who kept alive the myth of Negro inefficiency by deflating the ambitions of their black students and then telling the public that the black American was lazy and unambitious. (58)

The realization that the ghetto school was unalterably linked to what was happening to the urban Negro in the economic arena was of great importance to the development of black educational militancy in the 1930's. Previously criticized for their complicity in alienating the black American from his heritage and culture, the "mixed" schools of the North were found guilty of another sin -- that of perpetuating the Negro's sub-marginal economic status by denying him equal access to vocational training courses and unprejudiced guidance services. It became all too clear that the ghetto school did not function in a vacuum. Existing curricula and vocational guidance programs were now seen as double-edged swords, capable of including or excluding the Negro from the nation's economic mainstream. (59)

The decline of the concept of the ghetto school as simply a vehicle for the purveyance of academic knowledge was quickened by the scope of social dislocation which characterized black neighborhoods during the Depression. Reports of deteriorating conditions in the ghetto convinced many black leaders that there was too much at stake, both in terms of the black child's personality development and the social development of his community, to allow the school to cling to its traditionally passive role in the urban setting. One of the first to grasp the potentialities of the situation was black educator Horace Mann Bond:

Strictly speaking, the school has never built a social order; it has been the product and interpreter of the existing system, sustaining and being sustained by the social complex Schools for Negro children can perform the older function of the school, but even more, they can venture beyond the frontier and plan for a new order in those aspects which affect the race. To do this, however, they must function as coordinate elements of a unified system, and not in utter isolation in the world of action and social change. (60)

Bond asked those interested in the Negro's social condition to focus their attention on the ways in which "the school can effect its surroundings and elevate the generation now in school above the cultural and economic level from which the parents were drawn." Such an investigation, the Negro educator added,

would result in a better understanding of what institutions in a child's social milieu "were not conducive to study or sustained application." (61)

The black child's home life was seen by Bond and others as being a definite hindrance to study or sustained application. Crowded into an environment of cold water flats, cursed with shorter life spans, increasing rents, and an astronomically high unemployment rate, the black family in the urban complex barely functioned as a unit. Aggravating the situation was the callous indifference displayed by municipal authorities who often regarded the signs of disorganization in black neighborhoods as purely pathological phenomena, whose side-effects were reflected in a rising crime rate and whose solution called for the creation of greater restraining institutions to cope with social disorder. Adding further to the problem were the patronizing attitudes of those who used the image of the black American in his slum environment as a means of soliciting sympathy for the plight of what were termed the "downtrodden colored masses." (62)

Efforts by black organizations to stem the tide of social dislocation in the ghetto were generally feeble. Faced with a continual shortage of funds during the early years of the Depression, institutions like the black "Y's" and settlement houses strove vainly to counteract the breakdown in cultural controls over conduct and the growing popularity of commercialized recreation. Only the black church in the ghetto achieved a modicum of success in this area, but here too, a well-planned and well-financed educational and social program was a luxury enjoyed by only a handful of institutions. Decreasing contributions by church membership, plus the practice of white philanthropists and social workers of avoiding direct subsidization of non-church-related programs, placed the black church in a weak position to meet the social and intellectual needs of its constituency. (63)

The failure of the ghetto's social institutions to meet these needs left black neighborhoods at the mercy of the existing public school system. The results of this dependence were clear. By the early 1930's, educational programs which existed outside the confines of the formal classroom were largely unknown in black neighborhoods of the North. Superintendents of school districts, whose permission was necessary to establish courses in adult and nursery school education on school property, were hardly representative of minority groups and could not be counted on to replenish the great scarcity of black community centers and forums. Unwilling to accept this reality, the National Urban League introduced adult education and nursing and domestic science courses as part of its operational agenda in the ghetto. The League set up visiting teacher services in Philadelphia and New York to advise parents on the causes of retardation. In other Northern cities, child welfare programs in the form of day nurseries and kindergartens independent of the public school system made their appearance. While League director Eugene Kinckle Jones found these incipient programs commendable, he acknowledged that unless an outside source of funds were soon located, the programs would have to be discontinued. Their discontinuance, he gloomily predicted, would leave dormant a huge reservoir of educational potential and creative talent in black communities. (64)

For many blacks, any real hope of improving the intellectual and social climate of the ghetto rested on the willingness of governmental agencies to develop the full potential of the ghetto school. With a firm commitment from these sources, blacks argued, schools in black neighborhoods could play the role of a unifying agent, bringing together under one roof programs designed for all phases of urban life -- intellectual and cultural, vocational, and recreational. Without such a commitment, the ghetto school would continue to act as a stultifying reactionary force, undermining the attempts of individuals to better their conditions and the attempts of the community to replace chaos with a sense of community cohesiveness. (65)

The call by Bond and others for an expansion of the ghetto school's traditionally narrow function was in line with the increasingly popular educational philosophy of the period. Heavily influenced by John Dewey's thinking on the subject, this philosophy held (1) that the educational process could be manipulated to bring about social and economic change and (2) that the school could aid in the construction of a new social order "based on wholesome community values of cooperation and a more equitable distribution of both wealth and responsibility." The "new educational philosophy" also held that the school should be made into a social center capable of participating in the daily life of the community. Expounding on this point was progressive educator Harold O. Ruegg.

The community school organized the people, old and young, to meet the urgent needs of the community by its work, its health, its recreation. There was no distinction between the school and life outside. Instead of having the school go out into the community to observe, survey, diagnose, and recommend, the school and the community became one. The whole enterprise became a real School of Living where useful place where learning and living converged. The schoolhouse became the geographical center, the recreational, the intellectual center, and the spiritual center. All the sons of 'community' were present to some degree the school itself became a true community and the community a school. (66)

Known as social reconstructionists, this growing breed of reform-minded and progressive pedagogues generally steered clear of the racial issue. An exception was L. A. Pechstein who, in a controversial 1929 article, advanced the thesis that the Negro school in the North should be made the center of community activity. "Out of such a school," Pechstein claimed, "shall go guidance into all phases of living -- intellectual, vocational, recreational, and religious." Although he clouded the issue by insisting that only blacks teach in such schools (whites could not develop an attitude of complete dedication to the needs of the black child), Pechstein's ideas won the support of William Kilpatrick, one of the architects of social reconstructionism. For Kilpatrick, it was not enough that teachers in the slums teach their students how to read. Faculty members in such schools had two additional responsibilities:

first, to make themselves "socially intelligent in the highest possible degree," and second, "to help all others within reach to grow in social intelligence." (67)

By the mid-1930's, black educational militants and progressive white educators were in agreement that education, depending on its application, could bind people together or split a community into shreds. Unwilling to accept the latter possibility, black leaders laid aside differences in racial philosophy to present a united front on the question of what constituted educational change and reform in the ghetto. At minimum, they demanded enlightened and sensitive teaching personnel, a curriculum based on the needs and experiences of the Negro child, a nonracist vocational guidance program, and most important, a broad-based educational program which linked the ghetto school to its life-giving source -- the black community. Black demands for equal educational opportunity and for a wide-angled view of the ghetto school provided a benchmark by which blacks and progressive whites could measure the appropriateness of federally-sponsored educational programs during the Depression.

Just how well the New Deal's educational activities measured up to these new standards will be the subject of the following chapters. (68)

PART 2

BLACK EDUCATION AND THE NEW DEAL: THE NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

III. THE FERA AND BLACK EDUCATION, 1933-1935

The pot was empty.

The cupboard was bare.

I said, Papa.

What's the matter here?

I'm waitin' on Roosevelt, son,

Roosevelt, Roosevelt.

Waitin' on Roosevelt, son . . .

—Langston Hughes (1934) (69)

You may send your boy to school

but the community teaches him his

lessons.

—Lewis Alderman (1934) (70)

The Presidential election year of 1932 offered Americans of both races an opportunity to change the status quo. But for most black intellectuals, a change in the status quo required something more substantial than simply a changing of the guard at the White House. Conservatives, moderates, and radicals alike spoke with one voice in their determination not to settle for less than a Presidential candidate who agreed fully with the principle that "the New Negro cannot, for a moment, accept the Depression as the best of all possible worlds." (71)

By the summer of 1932, the mood among black intellectuals had become one of "a growing impatience with the paternalistic and philanthropic schools of race improvement and advance." Demands were increasingly being heard for greater federal intervention on behalf of the black American, who, it was argued, was bearing the brunt of the economic storm. The need for greater governmental involvement was seen as particularly necessary in the field of Negro education. Citing the deplorable conditions in black schools across America, critics wondered out loud why the Hoover Administration continued to see the educational needs of nonwhites as exclusively a Southern problem. Their wonderment was directed primarily at the series of surveys commissioned by Hoover in 1930 to investigate what could be done to insure the continuation of adequate educational facilities for Negroes in Southern states. The narrow focus of the surveys, plus their lack of interest in the relationship between the ghetto school and the social and economic health of black neighborhoods, won the Republican President few friends among black educators. (72)

Fortunately for the black American, the election of Franklin Roosevelt brought into national prominence a number of men and women whose educational views were neither conservative nor shortsighted. Convinced that the school was capable of acting as a social catalyst in urban communities, and unreceptive to the racist notion (expressed by President Harding) that black education should be "based on a pride of race but never on an aspiration of social equality," these New Dealers bridged the gap between the federal government and the liberal intellectual trends among educators and social scientists. (73)

One of these progressive-minded individuals was Clark Foreman, a Georgia-born white liberal and grandson of a former slaveowner. Foreman, who was later to become President Roosevelt's trusted advisor on racial affairs, wrote his doctoral dissertation at Columbia University while serving as Director of Research Studies for the Julius Rosenwald Fund. At Columbia, Foreman came under the influence of Otto Klineberg and Ruth Benedict (both former students of Franz Boas) and consequently chose as the subject of his dissertation a defense of the environmentalist theory of education as it related to blacks. Completing the dissertation in 1931, Foreman concluded that the educational achievement of Negro pupils was greatly influenced by conditions which obtained in their immediate social environment. Noting the correlation between a pupil's mental and physical health and his academic performance, he defined a healthy community as one where "the members of the community are linked together by groups." "This organization into groups," he added, "seems to sharpen the life of all the members, and is manifested in better homes, better dress and health provisions and more interest in the children, including their education." (74)

Three other white liberals who achieved influential positions in the Roosevelt Administration echoed Foreman's belief in the stable community as a pre-requisite for the black man's social and economic advancement. One of these was George Zook, FDR's choice for Commissioner of the U.S. Office of Education, and long-time advocate of the nonpassive urban school. Unlike many progressive educators, Zook specifically came to grips with the problem of the ghetto school. "Such schools," he wrote in January 1934, "are in effect community centers which will go far toward solving the problems of social life among the colored people...... In this way, the school becomes for the colored people the center of recreation, the inspiration of continued effort." Zook's theme was further embellished by Dr. Lewis Alderman, a Hoover appointee to the U.S. Office of Education who was later to play a key role in shaping New Deal educational policy. Renowned as a specialist in the field of adult education, Alderman was a staunch supporter of Horace Mann's idea that "it almost impossible to educate children past their parents and their communities." Alderman viewed the neighborhood school as an institution which must "gear itself to the education of the whole community and not just its disparate parts." In this way, he concluded, youths of all races stood a good chance of overcoming the social and economic roadblocks which prevented their parents from succeeding. (75)

Roosevelt's choice for the post of Secretary of the Interior, Harold L. Ickes, needed no introduction to those in the forefront of the civil rights struggle in the 1930's. A former president of the Chicago branch of the NAACP, Ickes was placed in over-all charge of the U.S. Office of Education and of the newly formed Public Works Administration. In these capacities, he had direct control over policy-making decisions affecting black education during the entire life-span of the New Deal. Often fond of claiming that "the Negro had a special New Deal of his own," Ickes bent over backwards to assure militant black educators that the Roosevelt Administration was sensitive to the educational needs of the black American. Speaking before the National Conference on the Fundamental Problems of Negro Education held in 1934, Ickes expressed his admiration of the "high native ability of the race," and assured his listeners of the New Deal's deep concern for the education of blacks and for the pressing need to expand the federal government's efforts in this area. (76)

As for the incoming President himself, there was little in his past to indicate that he shared the concerns or attitudes of these white liberal appointees. As Governor of New York, Roosevelt made it clear that he was willing to let the facts of economic confusion dictate the needs of the schools in his state. When confronted with the fact that over 7,000 New York teachers had been laid off as a result of the Depression, the Governor responded by reiterating his claim that the situation was the result of a teacher oversupply and that better vocational planning would have prevented the training of so many teachers. (77)

Roosevelt's conservative views (he was also against federal aid to education) did not prevent others in New York from suggesting more positive solutions to the school crisis. One of those unwilling to wait for Smithian economics to begin operating was Harry Hopkins, director of New York City's Welfare Department. Early in 1932, Hopkins requested the New York State Education Department to set up an educational program which would employ out-of-work white-collar workers to teach academic and vocational subjects. After consulting with state and local school officials, Hopkins announced the start of a pilot program in the city to be handled administratively by the New York City Emergency Work Bureau under the guidance of the New York State Temporary Emergency Relief Administration. The new program was divided into four educational divisions (general, cultural, commercial and vocational) and was designed specifically to provide socially useful positions for unemployed professionals. (78)

The Hopkins-inspired program was to have its first national test on May 12, 1933, when the new President signed into law the Federal Emergency Relief Act. This Act gave authorization to the federal government to channel $500,000,000 in relief money through state and municipal relief agencies and into the hands of those Americans most in need. Roosevelt appointed Hopkins as administrator of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, the agency created to dispense this massive dose of federal aid. One of Hopkins' first steps after taking office was to establish an Emergency Education Division within the FERA. The new Division was assigned the task of handling the nation's educational needs during the economic crisis and it wasted no time in beginning its operations. By the fall of 1933, all 48 states had received FERA authorization to begin development of educational programs in the areas of general adult education, literacy and citizenship training, vocational education, vocational rehabilitation,

and nursery school education. These programs were to be implemented by the states in accordance with the following five guidelines:

(1) to provide work for unemployed teachers and other professionally trained persons in the field of their experience and training (2) to assist those teachers to find their way back into permanent, non-relief unemployment (3) to utilize the services of those teachers to bring educational opportunity to men and women who stood in greatest need of them, either because they had been denied such opportunity in the past or because new educational needs had grown out of a condition of employment and economic change (4) to give small children of low-income families a better chance for a fair start in life through pre-school education and (5) wherever possible, to cooperate with other agencies in the task of national economic and social recovery through the expansion of educational opportunity. (79)

Aware that such a far-reaching program would be greeted with hostility by conservative educators, Hopkins was quick to emphasize in a news conference that "this new program will not conflict with existing programs of education. It is strictly an emergency measure designed to afford temporary relief on constructive lines and to prepare people for jobs it is expected the NRA will open up." The FERA's director also added that no course funded by the Emergency Education Program would be permitted to duplicate existing educational arrangements by local authorities, nor would any non-certified teacher on a project replace a regularly-appointed teacher in the local school system. Furthermore, the EEP was required to integrate its activities with the already established programs of local agencies. This latter policy was considered by Hopkins to be flexible enough to allow federally-aided education projects the opportunity to adjust to the particular needs and conditions in the localities where they were to operate. (80)

With the fears of conservative educators temporarily assuaged, Hopkins turned his attention to personnel and administrative matters. Lewis Alderman was taken out of his post as adult education specialist in the U.S. Office of Education, and assigned to the overall direction of the Emergency Education Program, which became the educational arm of the FERA. Hired along with Alderman were five educational specialists who were each assigned to head one of the EEP's five major educational divisions. The actual administrative duties of the program were to be accomplished through the coordinated efforts of state and municipal FERA authorities who were held responsible for the smooth functioning of the EEP in their specific localities. The expectation was that a local sponsor would submit a plan for a desired educational project to the state's FERA administrator, offering, at the same time, to provide the facilities and materials needed for the proposed project. The EEP agreed to supply and pay the teaching personnel needed for the project, and wherever necessary, aid in the administration and organization of EEP classes. Although local sponsoring agencies were expected to pick up the major share of the project's expenses (excluding the monies paid to staff), in practice upwards of 75 per cent of all operational costs on the local level were ultimately covered by federal funds. (81)

Since the EEP was specifically prohibited from competing with the offerings of the public schools, it was forced to concentrate on educational areas generally neglected by public education prior to the New

Deal. Two of these areas, adult education and nursery school education, were in desperate need of both funds and municipal attention. In an October 1933 memorandum to all State Emergency Relief Administrators, Harry Hopkins called attention to the "young children of preschool age in the homes of needy and unemployed parents who are suffering from the conditions in the home incident to current economic and social difficulties." In light of this tragic situation, he added, "the education and health programs can aid as nothing else in combatting the physical and mental handicaps being imposed upon these young children." Hopkins concluded his message of concern with an administrative order allowing the rules and regulations of the FERA to be interpreted in such a way as to provide work relief wages "for qualified and unemployed teachers and other workers on relief who are needed to organize and conduct nursery schools under the control of the public school systems." (82)

In ordering the beginning of federally-sponsored and locally-supervised nursery school programs, Hopkins and his close advisor, Lewis Alderman, were convinced that such a program could perceptibly raise the morale of many poverty-stricken communities in America. Both men gave a large measure of credence to the environmentalist belief that the child must be exposed to a semi-organized environment early in life so that he might develop a healthy and many-sided personality. The nursery school was considered the best vehicle for this development because it directed the child into secure, active and socially approved efforts under the trained eyes of professionals and safe from the anxieties of an unstable household. (83)

From its inception, the nursery school program geared its activities towards the economically disadvantaged urban family. Federal guidelines restricted participation in the program to children of parents on Home Relief, from broken homes, and of working mothers. To accommodate the latter, the daily schedule of nursery classes was extended until late afternoon. Valuable assistance was also sought and received from existing social welfare agencies with previous knowledge of the particular problems of a child or a family in distress. Applauding the early success of the program, Alderman termed the EEP's modern, progressive nursery schools, “the first opportunity that many poor families had to see their children clean, wisely fed, and happy in a new and sympathetic atmosphere." "These schools," he exclaimed, "are an extension downward of the public schools and an extension outward to include such aspects of the child's development as health, physical growth and nutrition, play, social life, and mental hygiene. They provide an all-day program including lunch and nap. They become centers for medical and dental care and for the education of parents in essentials of child growth and guidance. (84)

The wide-ranging benefits of such a program extended beyond the nuclear family. Given enough leeway to grow, the emergency nursery schools could begin to play the role of a social catalyst, bringing the child, his parents, and the entire community into a close and mutually rewarding relationship. Such was the thinking of Grace Langdon, a child guidance specialist hand-picked by Alderman to head the EEP's nursery school project. Writing in the February, 1935, issue of Opportunity, Miss Langdon asserted that "the community must have a larger share in the operation of the program," and that "the teacher, sensitive and eager to mobilize for the conservation of the nation's human resources, must begin to take an active part in organizing the services of the community." To make these goals a reality, Langdon urged

that EEP teachers establish close teacher-parent relationships, and that local advisory committees composed of wide community representation be created so as to insure full and active community participation in the program. (85)

Not surprisingly, the initial administrative set-up of the nursery school program relied heavily upon the cooperation of local community groups. The requirement that the local contribution equal at least 25 per cent of the total cost of the project meant that close working relationships had to be established with sources in the community to provide against inefficient and fiscally unsound projects. Nursery school officials also recognized that there were a number of psychological benefits to be realized from requiring contributions from local sponsors. Having the community invest in the project, they reasoned, made it appear to be a community effort in which the federal government lent a financial hand. Thus, the EEP encouraged local communities to staff the nursery schools with a wide variety of neighborhood people, including unemployed nurses, nutritionists, clerical help, cooks, janitors, as well as teachers. Neighborhood people were hired by the agency to remodel and repair old buildings for use as nursery schools, while concerned citizens and private welfare agencies were asked to contribute equipment, clothing, and their time towards making the emergency program a success. (86)

A similar commitment to the development of human resources on the local level was exhibited by the EEP's adult education projects. These projects were the subject of a nationwide radio address by Lewis Alderman in December, 1933. Alderman bemoaned the fact that adult education had long been neglected as a necessary component of American education. As evidence of this neglect, he pointed to the "over four million persons in this country who cannot read or write in any language, and the eight million persons who cannot read or write well enough so that they can read a newspaper or write a letter." "It has been demonstrated," Alderman assured his audience, "that adults can learn as well as the boy of 14, provided that the man of 70 is interested in the subject studied." The purpose of the federal government's involvement in the field of adult education was "to help such individuals make the transition from things physical to things mental and spiritual," but more important, to insure every person the right "to be creative and to be aware of the achievement of others and the accomplishments and aims of his race." A year later, the EEP director, once more sounding the call for "the education of all the people and all the children," spoke of the great need during the Depression for educated parents and educated communities. "We can," he wrote to local EEP administrators, "make America literate in one year if we wish. All we have to do is to use the machinery we have, the school houses, the churches, libraries, playgrounds, gymnasiums, and clubs. Nor do we need to import talent into any locality. Plenty of unused talents are there." (87)

The fact that federal officials in positions of influence had placed a high priority on the intellectual needs of economically disadvantaged families proved gratifying to many in the black community. The New Deal's eagerness to expand the public school system to include those formerly excluded from its services was an undeniable improvement over what the federal government had done for the education of the underprivileged in the past. Despite this improvement, however, black leaders were unwilling to accept without question the sweet-sounding phrases from Washington authorities. Their reluctance to give the IEP an immediate clean bill of health was indicated by the swift steps taken by black leaders to insure that "education for all the people" really meant all the people. John P. Davis, President of West Virginia State College and Executive Secretary of the Joint Committee on National Recovery, wrote to Alderman in October of 1933, inquiring as to "what plans have been made under your administration for Negro adult education." Davis, whose frequent criticisms of New Deal racial policies later earned him the title of "Administration Bad Guy," received a quick reply from the EEP's director indicating that although the program required the official approval of Washington, the general administration and supervision of the education work was in the hands of local school authorities. Anticipating that Davis would not be satisfied with buck-passing, Alderman added that while no specific statements had been released giving special attention to programs for different races, he had noticed "through personal conversation with State representatives who have come into my office that they are fully conscious of the problem of providing adult education for adult Negro men and women." Alderman concluded by once again reiterating the importance of local responsibility for project initiation, stating that "since the FERA does not directly conduct any programs, no attempt is being made to dictate to the States the exact type of plan they should submit." (88)

As the result of past experience, blacks expressed a high degree of skepticism at the prospect of having the individual states plan and supervise educational projects independent of federal guidelines. These fears surfaced in April, 1933 when Northern black leaders approached progressive members of the new Administration seeking positive directives on the subject of black education. The first contacted was Harold Ickes who assured black skeptics that "the new President shares with me an abiding interest in your people." The Secretary of the Interior also pointed out that "the very able Ambrose Caliver," (a black Ph.D from Columbia University appointed by Hoover in 1930 as Specialist in Negro Education in the Office of Education), had been relieved of his regular assignments to concentrate solely on the subject of the federal government's relation to Negro education. Ickes, however, cautioned that "it is not always practicable to develop plans for the relief of particular groups, and consequently, I am unable to make any definite statement at this time on just what can be done directly in aid of the Negro." Under similar pressure, Clark Foreman expressed his conviction that Negroes would inevitably benefit from a federally-subsidized education program, but privately urged Ickes to use his influence with FDR to get the Administration to more explicitly "recognize the potentialities of the situation." Foreman also volunteered some political advice aimed at lessening the political repercussions of a strong pro-Negro stand. "I think," he wrote to Ickes, "it would be better if the President appointed an advisory committee for race relations, rather than having a committee just for Negroes." (89)

Black demands for a positive statement of New Deal racial policies increased in intensity during the winter of 1933-1934. Congressman Oscar DePriest, representing Chicago's South Side ghetto, questioned

Harry Hopkins' awareness of the problems incident to Negro education, and reminded the FERA's director that "the one ray of hope in preventing the irreparable damage being done to the Negro comes from the educational projects that are aided by the FERA." Citing the fact that lack of information and lack of initiative and leadership on the local level were "threatening to dissipate even this small ray of hope," DePriest called upon Hopkins to provide Ambrose Caliver with "at least two or three field workers' whose job it would be to stimulate interest in the EEP in black communities across the nation. Fully convinced that the FERA did not, "at this time" require any black public relations aides, Hopkins wrote to Alderman asking that he try to convince the Chicago congressman that the educational projects would be administered fairly. Aldermen quickly gave DePriest his "personal assurances" that the President and his advisors were in sympathy with his proposal, but pointed out that "unless some foundation or outside agency came across with funds to pay the salaries of Dr. Caliver and his staff," there was no immediate possibility that such a proposal could be realized. (90)

While this exchange of views was taking place, Caliver himself made an attempt to furnish information to Negro leaders in the hope that existing social welfare agencies could somehow help blacks reap the benefits of emergency education funds. Addressing a memorandum to all branch secretaries of the YWCA, Caliver called attention to what he termed "the present opportunity to obtain teachers for Negro workers and to make possible the employment of some of your fine Negro teachers." "If this is possible," the Negro education specialist continued, "you will need to write out a plan for the class and ask your Association to send a request to the Superintendent of Schools in your city. A copy of this request should go to the State Superintendent of Schools. If you know of an unemployed teacher who is capable of teaching the class, you may request such a person. (91)

Despite Administration efforts to assure black leaders that the New Deal's reluctance to act on their behalf was nothing more than a question of insufficient funds, and despite Ambrose Caliver's efforts to alert blacks to the potentialities inherent in the EEP, skepticism about the sincerity of Washington officials on the race issue continued to grow. Although many agreed with Robert Weaver's assessment that the program, "if allowed sufficient monies, could mature into a very useful operation," there still remained the nagging problem of having the states exercise an almost unlimited hold over the functioning of emergency education projects. The problem grew when word leaked out concerning a memorandum sent on January 2, 1934, by George Zook to all state EEP Administrators, requiring that all local programs "be responsive to the expressed needs of that portion of the public to be served," but leaving out any mention of the Negro and the race's special educational needs. This apparent "slight" occasioned still further demands from the black community that Washington recognize, in some positive fashion, the seriousness of the black man's social and educational plight. Hopkins responded quickly to these demands. At a February 1, 1934 news conference, he announced the establishment of the Office of Director of Negro Work for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. The man chosen to fill the new post was Forrester B. Washington, the black director of the Atlanta School for Social Work; who was placed in charge of adjusting complaints directed by blacks against the New Deal's relief operations. Hopkins followed up Washington's appointment by officially transferring Ambrose Caliver from the U.S. Office of Education to the FERA where the Virginia educator was given an all-Negro clerical staff and the

title of Specialist in Educational Relief for Negroes. Temporarily, at least, the FERA's director had gained time in his attempt to pacify black critics of the EEP. (92)

One month later, however, the Administration was again put on the defensive. An indignant Robert Weaver wrote to Clark Foreman complaining of an Office of Education ruling providing for the extension of the school year to the length of the normal term in states with separate schools for black and white students. This ruling, according to Weaver, had the effect of being prejudicial to Negro schools "since the normal term in the South was an extremely short one." George Peabody, the white director of the Peabody Fund (an organization dedicated to improving the quality of Negro education in the South) also took note of the ruling and protested to Hopkins that the EEP was making "no attempt to correct the glaring inequalities which exist at present in the expenditure of Southern school funds between the races." Peabody failed to receive an answer from the FERA's director, but his concern attracted the attention of Will Alexander, the white director of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation. "I am very much worried," he wrote to Peabody, "about some aspects of federal relief in relation to the Negro in the South." These aspects included less FERA money for black schools and the failure of local authorities to hire a proportionate number of Negro teachers in emergency schools. "I do not believe," he added, "that the federal authorities can escape responsibility for the manner in which these funds are disbursed .... For the federal government to collect monies for this purpose and then to allow them to be spent in the South in a manner that is clearly unjust to Negroes, discredits the claims of the Administration to be interested in the 'forgotten man'." Alexander closed his letter to Peabody by ominously warning that "if remedial actions were not taken soon, there will be political repercussions of a very serious sort." (93)

In response to these concerns, the Administration intensified its black pacification program by issuing a series of three race-related declarations. The first, a relatively insignificant gesture; was a Works Division Office memorandum requesting local FERA officials to employ only Negroes on projects designed to collect testimony from ex-slaves. The second was a bit more substantial and involved the announcement, in late October, 1934, that Robert Weaver had replaced Clark Foreman as race relations advisor to Harold Ickes. The third declaration was by far the most important. It consisted of an order from Hopkins' administrative assistant, Alabama-born liberal, Aubrey Williams, to all State Relief Administrators and to the chiefs of the State Education Departments in all 48 states. The order read as follows:

Attention of the Administration has been directed to certain facts showing that in several areas, State funds for employment relief have not been allocated to the projects such as repairs of school buildings, organization of classes under the Emergency Employment Program and the extension of school terms in such a way as to give employment to Negroes in proportion to their probable needs.

The purpose of the Federal Relief Administration is to give employment to those in need and to rehabilitate the human resources of the Nation. Accordingly, the State Administrators and responsible school officers are expected to distribute employees paid out of relief funds on a basis of need with complete equity among the groups concerned.

Since in proportion to population, unemployment among Negroes is equal to, if not greater among other groups and since educational opportunities for Negroes are notably inadequate, equity demands that educational relief to Negroes be at least at the level of their percentage of the population in each State.

Since a chief purpose of the Emergency Education Program is to give employment to qualified teachers and since unemployment among educated Negroes is especially acute, Negro teachers should always be employed to teach Negro pupils and Negro adults in States maintaining segregated school programs for the two races. (94)

Despite its implied approval of the separate school concept, Williams' order did serve temporarily to calm black fears that the New Deal was conspiring to "permanentize" the Negro's woeful educational status in the South. For the duration of its existence as a part of the FERA, the operations of the Emergency Education Program conformed scrupulously to local custom in states and municipalities providing separate schools for blacks with Negro teachers being restricted to nonwhite emergency classes. In the North, with its ostensibly integrated school organization, Negroes were assigned to teach classes solely on the basis of their professional qualifications -- a procedure which gave rise to no difficulty as class attendance was strictly voluntary and depended mainly upon the individual skill of the teacher. (95)

By the spring of 1935, reports reaching the desks of New Deal administrators seemed to bear out the conclusion that the EEP had not accepted the Depression as "the best of all possible worlds" for the nonwhite American. Such reports indicated that adult education projects alone were giving work and instruction to an estimated 50,000 Negro teachers and students in a wide range of subjects, including home management, typing and stenography, Negro history, painting, and music. The reports also revealed (to the satisfaction of Forrester Washington) that blacks across the nation were applauding the EEP's non-discriminatory operation and supporting, in principle, Lewis Alderman's goal of making the EEP classes "a permanent and integral part of the regular established school program." Black praise for the educational agency and its work was both plentiful and enthusiastic. Among the many comments commending the EEP was that of a Brooklyn Negro who credited the emergency classes with being "my salvation during this time of depression and discouragement." An equally gratifying response to the program was voiced by a California woman in a letter addressed to FDR:

I want to let you know how happy I was to get a position teaching in the Fresno schools under the FERA. This is the first time a colored teacher has been employed in this city and I really feel that you being the President of the U.S. have a great deal to do with it. Thank you Mr. President, I believe a new era has dawned for us. (96)

The first phase of the New Deal's educational activities came to a close in May 1935 when the EEP was formally severed from the administrative jurisdiction of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. During the first two years of its existence, the EEP demonstrated clearly the progressive nature of its educational policy. The agency's agenda was formulated and implemented with the belief in mind that all Americans -- regardless of age, sex, economic status, or race -- could benefit from a federally-subsidized educational program which took into account the needs and aspirations of local communities. In keeping with this philosophy, the EEP responded positively (albeit belatedly) to black demands that the New Deal attempt to remedy the conditions of apathy and ignorance in the urban ghetto. By adopting these progressive goals, the Emergency Education Program displayed a sensitivity to the intellectual trends of the period and to the problem of equal educational opportunity -- a sensitivity that would increase dramatically during the second half of the Depression Decade.

IV. THE WPA AND BLACK EDUCATION, 1935-1939

The Federal Government must make some move to insure equal educational opportunity for the Negro. It should be our objective to make it possible for every child to develop according to the limit of his ability.

—Eleanor Roosevelt (97) (1939)

The creation of the Works Progress Administration on May 6, 1935, marked a turning point in the New Deal's relationship with black educational militants. The latter, fresh from their struggle with New Deal officials over the racial practices of the FERA, viewed the $4,000,000 agenda of the WPA as another test of the Administration's oft−stated concern with the plight of the poor, uneducated, and nonwhite American. No longer could discrepancies in theory and local practice be attributed to inexperience or to an unfamiliarity with black demands. Discriminations against blacks in WPA operations below and above the Mason−Dixon line were expected to be met head on and without hesitation by federal administrators of the new relief program.

The incorporation of the Emergency Education Program into the work relief activities of the WPA demonstrated clearly the Administration's confidence in the program both as a morale−booster and as a positive step towards reducing the ranks of the unemployed professional class. The President himself reaffirmed his faith in the program by appointing Lewis Alderman as director of the WPA's educational operations. Responding to Roosevelt's vote of confidence, Alderman declared that it was his intention to see to it that the EEP helped those individuals generally considered uneducable by regular school authorities. "The manifold resources of the WPA," he asserted, "will now allow the Federal government to renew its attempt to expand the function of the established school system to include those elements in the urban community previously neglected." (98)

While blacks wondered out loud whether or not the WPA would address its educational agenda to their needs, Alderman and his associates went ahead with an intensive drive to convince Americans of all colors that the EEP was sincere in its efforts to educate America's disadvantaged. Their primary goal was to attract large numbers of illiterate or semi-literate people to the emergency classes. Using a variety of public relations techniques, including ads on matchbook covers and spot announcements on radio, EEP officials achieved some remarkable results. In the space of three years (1935 to 1938), more than one million illiterate persons across the nation were taught to read a newspaper and to write an ordinary personal letter. Several million more were able for the first time in their lives to take courses in music, art, handicrafts, dramatics, nature study, popular science and physical education. Public response to these and other adult education offerings was nothing less than amazing long-time teachers claimed they had never seen anything in the public schools that excelled the "industry and spirit" of the adult participants in EEP classes. The public's overwhelmingly favorable reaction helped swell monthly attendance at these classes to 300,000 by the fall of 1937. (99)

The social philosophy which activated this project was also impressive. The instruction received in these classes was designed not only to help the individual but also improve conditions in his community. Culturally-oriented subjects were no longer thought of as existing apart from life; the widespread emphasis in all courses was to treat the environment as the most vital teaching material around which all lessons were to revolve. The goal was not merely to teach people to read and write on a fourth or fifth grade level but to give adults the opportunity to use information to improve their social and economic situation. As one EEP teacher noted, education was being shaped around the environmentalist notion that "human knowledge, if wisely employed by all Americans regardless of age or station, could one day remove the social ills of society." (100)

In keeping with this philosophy, emergency classes were open to everyone and held in schools and community centers near the homes of students. The teachers themselves were drawn almost entirely from the relief rolls and were close economically, and to a large extent culturally, to the people enrolled in the classes. Attendance was voluntary; students attended only when they felt they were getting the kind of education they wanted and needed. The teaching approach was also informal. Textbooks gave way to individually prepared course outlines in which the instructor emphasized that angle or phase of the subject in which each particular class was interested. Significantly, this innovative educational format was shared generously by those Americans who needed it the most; a 1938 study revealed that out of an estimated 1,250,000 persons enrolled in WPA adult education classes, 680,000 came from the lowest economic and educational levels in American society. (101)

Created out of essentially the same ideological mold were the WPA's emergency nursery classes which by 1940 were serving an average of 300,000 pre-school children monthly. Staffed by unemployed professionals in the child care field, these classes attempted to improve the mental and physical well-being of children and to increase parental recognition of the nutritional and social needs of their offspring. The classes offered enrollees (age two to four) a daily regimen of health care, supervised recreation and socialization, a hot noon-day meal, and an afternoon nap on cots furnished by the local sponsor of the project. The parents of children attending the nursery schools were informed by the EEP staff of the whereabouts of child care services offered by various non-governmental community welfare agencies. Nursery school contact was made with the home through a series of informal conferences and home visits by staff members, and demonstration lessons in remodeling clothing, cooking low-budget meals, consumer protection, and guiding the behavior of children were held regularly and were eagerly received in many low-income neighborhoods. (102)

Parent education, long neglected by the public schools, received a great deal of publicity and attention from the WPA. The program was designed to fill two pressing needs: one, the increased need of parents for help in dealing with the many serious family problems which were created or intensified by the Depression, and two, the need to give unemployed teachers, nurses, and social workers jobs in their chosen professions. Courses were offered in childcare and guidance, family relationships, family and

community relationships, and family health -- all with the emphasis on narrowing the distance between the emergency parent education program and the parent education programs offered by social agencies in affluent neighborhoods. Citing the tendency of family members to withdraw from social contact and narrow their external associations during times of economic hardship, EEP official Jesse Lummis declared that it was the intention of the WPA to bring parents with similar problems together in the emergency classes as a means of "keeping open the lines of communication between the family and its social environment." (103)

The New Deal's workers education projects also grew in stature under the administrative influence of the WPA. Under the WPA, the raison d'être of the program became one of "enabling American workers to understand the larger issues of the day and to give them the ability to think clearly about these issues." Greater attention was also given to what was termed the "need to stimulate among the students, an active and continued interest in the economic problems of our times and to develop a sense of responsibility for their solution." Hilda Smith, a trade unionist with a background in union educational activity, was appointed by Hopkins as the WPA's Workers Education specialist and given the job of interpreting the purposes of the program to local school officials. Under Smith's direction, local advisory committees on workers education were created in many cities. Composed of members from the labor movement, settlement groups, and the Y's, these committees worked hard in sponsoring educational activities for union and non-union workers, securing meeting places for emergency classes, and developing a workers education curriculum based on the particular needs of individual neighborhoods. (104)

In contrast to these generally successful activities were the WPA's vocational education projects which generated as much disillusionment as they did optimism. Aimed at helping the out-of-work American to one day "carry his own load," these projects offered free training courses in occupations in which there seemed to be possibilities for employment. The most popular courses included training in office and commercial work, household employment, restaurant service, sewing and tailoring, millinery, agricultural techniques, mechanical and building trades, and native arts and crafts. Vocational guidance and occupational adjustment services were also provided with no charge to the client. As usual in the case of WEP projects, classes were developed locally and supervised by public school authorities -- the belief being that community involvement might result in making the project a permanent institution in the neighborhood. The community sponsor was required to contribute rental fees, equipment, and, if necessary, food and training materials. By December, 1938, WPA-sponsored vocational education projects were in full operation in 44 states with a regular monthly enrollment of over 250,000.

While some gains were realized in terms of workers maintaining and improving skills, or in acquiring new skills and knowledge, it was generally agreed even by the New Deal's most avid supporters that the day when a sizeable number of enrollees could begin "to carry their own load" was not yet in sight. (105)

Although quite willing to concede the progressive impulse behind the WPA's educational activities, black leaders wanted visible proof of the Administration's guarantee that "all of the benefits of the Emergency Education Program shall be shared equitably by all elements of the population." The Roosevelt-Hopkins-Alderman contention that the EEP drew no color line and that classes were organized solely on the basis

of local need was suspect, as were Alderman's personal assurances that "there would be no lessening of the effort to spread the benefits of the adult education program to the Negro of the South where the need is particularly great." Negro critics of the WPA countered these assertions by pointing to the glaring wage differentials for white and black WPA teachers in Southern localities, and to the infrequent use of unemployed black professionals, in clerical and supervisory posts in cities across the nation. Blacks also lashed out at Roosevelt's hands-off policy towards anti-black labor unions, a policy which they claimed rendered useless the WPA's vocational education and training courses in nonwhite neighborhoods. Unless racial barriers to well-paying jobs were broken down, John P. Davis declared, the New Deal could offer "nothing new for the Negro except maintenance of his inferior status by government fiat." Supporting Davis' view was T. Arnold Hill of the National Urban League, while Ralph Bunche, taking a more radical tack, called the WPA programs "merely our domestic phase of the almost universal attempt in capitalistic countries to establish a new equilibrium in the social structure." (106)

In the face of these harsh judgments and in recognition of the black vote in an upcoming election year, the Administration displayed an increasing receptivity to the idea of appointing Negroes as administrative aides in a number of WPA agencies. With the return of Forrester Washington to Atlanta University, Alfred Edgar Smith, an Arkansas Negro who had served as Washington's assistant, was appointed by Harry Hopkins as staff advisor on Negro Affairs in the Employment Division of the WPA. One month later, in December, 1935, black poet Sterling Brown was named as editor of Negro Affairs in the Federal Writers Project, while another black, Eugene Holmes, joined Brown as Assistant Editor. Rounding out Hopkins' "mini-Black Cabinet" were Dutton Ferguson, Special Assistant to the WPA's Information Service, and John Whitten, Junior Race Relations Officer in the WPA's Employment Division. (107)

The appointment of Negro affairs advisors in the closing months of 1935 was just one prong of a four-pronged offensive initiated by the Roosevelt Administration to convince skeptics that the New Deal was sympathetic to Negro aspirations. Speaking before a meeting of the Joint Committee on National Recovery in November, 1935, Aubrey Williams previewed the second part of that offensive -- that of oral reassurance. Williams declared unequivocally that the black American was "participating freely in the Emergency Education Program," and reminded his largely black audience of "the fact that the New Deal has carried on an unceasing fight against racial discrimination and has used its best efforts to detect, prevent and correct it." "Administrative orders," he continued, "have been issued to all Federal and State relief officials definitely setting forth rules for the proportionate employment of Negroes in the Education Program. Regional representatives, field men, and State Administrators have been admonished to weed out all discriminatory practices." "All in all," Williams concluded, "the Negro has been and is being enabled to hold up his head in the self respect that emanates from earning daily bread by doing a useful task." (108)

Although Harry Hopkins' decision in March, 1936, to ban job discrimination on all federal projects seemed to put teeth in Williams' assurances, black leaders continued to view these statements at best as verbal fence sitting and at worst as politically motivated double talk. Those who doubted the sincerity of

Hopkins' vow "not to tolerate discrimination in WPA operations on any basis," received support from an unexpected source. Early in the summer of 1936, a group of blacks recently appointed as aides in WPA departments dispatched a letter to WPA Deputy Administrator Colonel F. C. Harrington which contained the following complaint:

We feel that the present policies and practices do not provide the fullest measure of service to Negro WPA workers. There is a disproportionate number of professional and white collar projects on which Negroes are working. There is too little opportunity for skilled employment on construction projects and for men and supervisors on such projects for. If we are to have more State-controlled projects and more community participation, it will be necessary to see that Negroes are given the opportunity to participate. This will not be done merely by announcing intentions to adhere to a democratic process. There will have to be machinery to implement and maintain participation. The vigilance of both the State Administration and the local Negro community will have to be augmented by procedures that will insure the cooperation of these two important forces. (109)

Recovering from its initial embarrassment over the source and nature of these charges, the Administration responded in a dramatic way. After consulting with Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt personally commissioned Alfred Edgar Smith and Smith's assistant Edward Lawson to write a movie script that would document the benefits that WPA projects were bringing to the Negro in the urban centers of the North. Armed with an unlimited expense account, Smith and Lawson set up operational headquarters in a top floor suite at the 135th Street YMCA in Harlem, and began discussions with representatives of the PATHE news service.

After a series of meetings, plans were formulated to begin filming black participants in a wide range of federally-subsidized programs. The resulting film, earmarked for the nation's movie theaters well in advance of the November election, was a hodgepodge of scenes of blacks testifying to the New Deal's role in allowing them "a new chance for a normal place in the life of our community." Flashing across the silver screen were views of black typists, artists, and cooks; of tenements being torn down, of blacks performing Macbeth; of blacks and whites working together on sewing projects, and of a black-supervised nurses' training center in Harlem. Interspersed with this pictorial study of the New Deal at work in the ghetto were statistics declaring that the WPA was ministering nationwide to the needs of 10,000 black children of nursery school age and 'teaching over 300,000 formerly illiterate black adults how to read and write. With their work completed, Smith and Lawson left for Washington where they were given President Roosevelt's personal congratulations for a job well done. (110)

Turning his attention to the charge that the Administration had neglected the vocational needs of the black American, Roosevelt arranged to have $234,000 allocated to the Office of Education in January, 1936, to pay for a nationwide survey of vocational education and guidance opportunities for the unemployed or underemployed Negro. Dr. Ambrose Caliver was named by FDR to head the survey which employed 450 unemployed white collar Negroes in 150 communities in 34 states. Caliver's efforts were

expected to tie in neatly with similar investigations by the offices of Robert Weaver, Advisor on the Economic Status of the Negro, and Lawrence A. Oxley, the Negro supervisor of the Division of Negro Labor in the Department of Labor. The understanding was that the results of each of these surveys would be on the President's desk no later than the fall of 1936. (111)

Ironically, the Caliver investigations uncovered information which could hardly be used as political ammunition against the Republicans. The theme of the survey's final report was that present New Deal policy had provided few vocational possibilities for blacks who had previous training in some specialized field and who were prepared for work in that field when the opportunity presented itself. Information reaching Caliver's Washington office from school districts across the nation proved uniformly dismal when it came to an evaluation of the New Deal's impact on the vocational future of black youth. An official of the Pittsburgh Urban League reported her surprise at the "great indifference of many black high school students to the survey's vocational questionnaire." Many dismissed the survey as a joke. "One lad," the official recalled, "said he hoped to secure the position of janitor at his own funeral. His case was humorously pathetic. So many of them don't read. I think this comes in many cases from a lack of interest in studies which have been forced on them."

The manager of the Illinois State Employment Service was equally pessimistic in disclosing that in his state "technical training for the Negro was being neglected." "In some schools," he continued, "machinery is stored away in basements, rusting and deteriorating. We are anticipating that the national survey will reveal the concentration of Negroes in non-productive pursuits, which, of course, is partially due to discrimination, but is partially due to a lack of preparation in industrial skills. We feel a re-evaluation of the school curricula is necessary." (112)

An even clearer picture of the federal government's inability to alter existing vocational education practices was contained in the report of E. Harold Mason, a survey employee in Oakland, California. Mason observed that while courses in Negro history were being offered for the first time in this city through the WPA's Adult Education project, the Oakland public school system's flagrant policy of discriminating in the assignment of students for training courses remained untouched. Teachers and guidance counselors were found to be woefully ignorant of employment possibilities for blacks and, in some cases, appeared content to set low limits on the ambitions of their Negro students. Trade unions and business concerns, Mason claimed, actively conspired to make these limits a reality while the WPA stood by unwilling to intervene.

One Southern California airplane construction company in desperate need of skilled workers agreed to hire blacks on an apprenticeship basis, but school officials, assuming that such opportunities were highly unlikely, had no Negro trainees to supply. In another instance, a black youth anxious to sign up for a WPA mechanical arts course was discouraged from doing so by his principal who asked, "What do you want to take that for, you'll never be able to use it around here." (113)

Such reports, in obvious contradiction to Alfred Edgar Smith's claim that blacks were "literally forcing themselves into private jobs by means of WPA-provided vocational training" did not come as a total

surprise to Administration officials. The sad state of vocational opportunity for black youth had been documented well in advance of the Caliver study by an earlier Administration attempt to convince needy Americans of the New Deal's concern for their general welfare. The creation of the National Youth Administration by Executive Order on June 26, 1935, as a semi-autonomous unit within the WPA was viewed by Harry Hopkins as "proof positive" of the New Deal's sincere desire to rescue the nation's unemployed youth "from the aimless drifting forced upon them by the Depression."

Under the provisions outlined by the President, the NYA was designed to channel the mental and physical energies of America's youth into four areas! (1) job training (2) apprenticeship programs (3) work relief and (4) job placement.

Aubrey Williams was appointed director of the new agency with the understanding that only in instances involving heavy material costs or highly technical planning was the Washington office of the NYA to intervene in the administration of local student work or training projects. Plans for all such projects were to emanate from the local community and were to be formulated on the basis of community needs and interests. Although each plan had to be submitted for approval to the State Youth Administrator, Williams made it clear that authority in the NYA's decentralized operation was "handed down to the very last person in the outfit." (114)

As a means of promoting regional, economic, and racial cooperation for the activities of the NYA, a National Advisory Board was created composed of representatives of industry, labor, education, and youth. One of the Board's first actions was to hire Southern Negro educator Mary McLeod Bethune as a consultant on racial matters and as a liaison between the Board and the black educational community. An advocate of the philosophy that "self-reliance is the salvation of the Negro race," Miss Bethune was hardly a stranger to the New Deal, having served with George Zook on a Planning Committee formed in December, 1933, by the Office of Education, and as an active participant in the Calliver-sponsored Washington Conference on the Education of the Negro in the spring of 1934. Known in the black community as a vigorous and candid spokeswoman for Negro rights, Bethune wasted no time in rejecting a passive approach to her new role as racial advisor to the National Youth Administration. Shortly after her appointment in August of 1935, the black educator made it clear to the President that the time for swift and positive action in the matter of securing a better life for the black youth of America was now at hand. "We have," she told Roosevelt, "been taking the crumbs for a long time. We have been eating the feet and head of the chicken long enough. The time has come when we want some white meat." (115)

Two months after her conversation with the President, Bethune met with a group of black activists at a Washington conference called to examine black participation in the incipient programs of the NYA. Among those attending the meeting were Urban League officials Ira DeA. Reid and Eugene Kinkle Jones, economic consultant Robert Weaver, William Hastie, Ambassador to the Virgin Islands, NAACP president Walter White, James Atkins, a black educator from Denver and assistant to Ambrose Caliver, and NYA Administrator Aubrey Williams. Taking up the question of the NYA's decentralized format, the conferees

agreed that it was necessary for blacks in local communities to demand that progressive-minded men and women of both races be well-represented in the local apparatus of the youth agency.

Bethune stressed the importance of having Negroes in supervisory positions on projects with large black enrollments, an idea which was seconded by Eugene Kinckle Jones who argued that "Negro youth cannot be treated as white youths are on the matter of vocational guidance." To the applause of the assembled delegates, Jones further declared that in order to be effective the guidance programs of the NYA "must first reject the old theory of training nonwhites only for existing opportunity and replace it with the theory that blacks should be trained for well-paying, secure jobs which may be open to them in the future." After hearing Aubrey Williams promise to do all in his power to help implement these policy suggestions, the delegates closed the proceedings by unanimously adopting a resolution calling for black community leaders in every region of the nation to reach out and seize for their constituents the opportunities which the NYA offered to the disadvantaged American. (116)

Tangible results of the conference were slow in appearing. Despite Bethune's efforts to underline the urgency of the situation, NYA officials restricted their initial race-related activities to documenting the scope and depth of the Negro's poor social, economic and educational status in American society. The NYA's "discovery" of the fact that few industrial opportunities were open to blacks, that only 10 per cent of black youths managed to graduate from high school while nearly 75 per cent dropped out of school after the fifth grade, or that the black community suffered from serious health and juvenile delinquency problems made for interesting reading but failed to answer Bethune's call for immediate and forceful action. Alerted to the fact that blacks were being denied leadership roles on NYA projects, Bethune took matters into her own hands and dispatched her young Negro assistant, Juanita Saddler, to upstate New York to examine closely how Northern communities were handling this problem. Travelling to Ithaca, New York in January, 1936, Miss Saddler soon discovered that paternalism had replaced overt racism as the number one enemy of Negroes in the North. Saddler was particularly disturbed over the attitude taken by the white-dominated local advisory board toward the intellectual and social needs of Ithaca's small, but vocal black community.

"The only justifiable reason that a Negro group has for isolating itself and setting up its own community centers," she wrote to Bethune, "is that they may have a chance for initiative and self-expression and the development of latent ability within the group itself. When a member of the white group, even with the best of intentions, takes the responsibility for programming and policy-making into his own hands, he thereby defeats the purpose of which such a separate organization was set up and succeeds, without any such intention, in bringing about further exploitation." Similar efforts of whites to predetermine what kinds of Federally-subsidized projects were needed in black neighborhoods were discovered by Saddler in Albany and Poughkeepsie. In both of these cities, blacks were being denied "even a small chance for self-expression and self-accomplishment." (117)

Saddler's grim report from New York State convinced Bethune that the time was ripe for blacks in the administrative apparatus of the NYA to regroup their forces for an all-out, election-year drive to insure the full participation of the Negro in the social and educational activities of the youth agency. On June 2, 1936, a group of black administrative assistants gathered in Bethune's Washington office to discuss alleged discriminations by local authorities and to formulate plans for future action. Rumors that militant blacks within the NYA were attempting to establish an all-black enforcement unit which would see to it that NYA funds were being equitably distributed, resulted in the surprise appearance of Aubrey Williams. Williams warned the conferees that any attempt by blacks to isolate themselves from the mainstream of NYA activity would be counter-productive. "Your problem and aim," he declared, "should be to see that Negroes are given their proper portion of the program of the NYA and not to set up a Negro organization to take care of Negroes. That is fundamentally unsound. Your main job is to help the State NYA Administrator. You must be careful not to become a shock absorber and defeat your own purpose." (118)

Williams' statement touched off a lengthy debate on the feasibility and wisdom of having separate NYA projects in communities largely populated by nonwhites. Arthur Williams, the progressive white Director of Recreation for the NYA, asserted that "the first consideration of a project is does it give a legitimate job to the youth employed and is it useful to the community." Under these criteria, Williams continued, "it made sense to adopt a definite policy wherever possible, that preference should be given to projects employing Negro youth which contribute to the Negro community. If Negro boys are going to be used, it should be in a Negro community where Negro youth and the community will be benefited." Integrationist- oriented blacks at the meeting demurred, cautioning that while separate projects for Negroes offered the possibility of more employment and more supervisory positions, they also brought along the possibility that "the project will receive less financial aid from the Administration and will not reflect the kind of integration that we desire." Despite continued debate, the issue remained unresolved with the majority of those in attendance in agreement that the best projects for Negro youth were those that would remain permanently in the community after the NYA's demise, and those that developed leadership potential within the race. (119)

The NYA conference of black administrative assistants convinced Hopkins that something should be done to insure equal black participation in the program. On July 1, 1936, the WPA's director announced the establishment of the Division of Negro Affairs as a semi-autonomous unit within the NYA. Named to head the new Division was Mary McLeod Bethune who promptly promised to fight unceasingly against any federally-funded project which refused to accept the credo that "black youth must not be allowed to stagnate emotionally, lose their ambition, and be forced into the position of willing wards of their communities." Bethune spent the first six months in her new post travelling across America, trying to drum up support for the NYA in black ghettoes. Her travels convinced her that the educational activities of the NYA and the EEP had sufficient black participation, but she returned disappointed with the fact that not enough blacks were being hired as supervisors on all-Negro projects. Tempering her words so as not to alarm black integrationists, the director noted that since the Negro was trying to exist in a biracial society, "we must therefore have a chance at the very source to administer the program for our own group … The Negro worker must be responsible for every phase of the program as it affects his people … Adequate provision similar to that made for the white group must also be made for the Negro." (120)

Bethune's appointment as director of the NYA's Division of Negro Affairs, and her subsequent cross-country "good will" trip on behalf of the youth agency, coincided with the closing months of the 1936 Presidential campaign. Despite criticism from prominent blacks over the New Deal's racial policies, the black voter on election day seemed more than willing to forgive the Administration for its past mistakes. Judged on a purely statistical basis, the ghetto voting pattern indicated that the urban Negro had chosen to become an integral part of the Roosevelt voting coalition. In Cincinnati's largely black 16th Ward, for example, the Democratic vote rose from 28.8 per cent in 1932 to 65.1 per cent in 1936. In black neighborhoods of Chicago and Detroit, the percentage of votes cast in the Democratic column went from 23 and 37 per cent respectively in 1932 to 49 and 64 per cent respectively four years later. Opinions varied as to which of the New Deal measures was most instrumental in bringing about this significant shift in black voter sentiment. Observers noted, however, that Northern blacks who benefited most from the WPA's work and educational projects voted in overwhelming numbers (upwards of 99 per cent) for a continuation of the New Deal. (121)

With the votes in and counted, official pressure to dramatize and glorify the accomplishments of the WPA lessened considerably. Nevertheless, the Administration continued to demonstrate its interest in publicizing the educational work of the agency in the nation's black communities. Intent upon documenting once and for all the accomplishments of the EEP in the field of Negro education, Lewis Alderman made inquiries within the Office of Education in hopes of locating someone (preferably black) who would be willing to undertake the necessary research. Alderman's search ended in January 1937, when James Atkins, a black educator from Denver who had worked as Calliver's assistant since September, 1934, agreed to a voluntary transfer from the Office of Education to the EEP to begin work on the study. The Denver educator, who had impressed Hopkins and Alderman with his staunch defense of the New Deal's educational programs in the face of mounting black criticism, found his new position as educational consultant to the WPA on Negro Affairs to be a decided step upward on the bureaucratic pecking order. Atkins was put on a special list to receive all WPA departmental memoranda and press releases and given a large office in the Walker-Johnson building, the operational headquarters of the WPA. "The place where he used to work," wrote Alderman, "was very unsatisfactory from the point of view of light, ventilation and necessary privacy for doing some writing which he now has to do." (122)

The writing Alderman referred to turned out to be a fifty-page circular on the Adult Education and Preschool activities for Negroes in the Emergency Education Program which Atkins completed in the space of three weeks of continuous research. The report listed the following accomplishments of the EEP; (1) 300,000 Negroes 15 years and over have been taught to read and write from January, 1934 to January, 1937 (2) 200,000 in the same age bracket have been advanced to the point where they may use the tools of learning to meet their practical needs (3) approximately 75,000 Negro adults are now enrolled in literacy classes (4) 20,000 Negro parents have been given instruction in principles of child care and improved family relationships (5) more than 10,000 Negro children between the ages of two and four from the homes of WPA employees, relief clients and other underprivileged persons receive care, hot meals, and instruction in 150 nursery school units (6) 40,000 Negro adults; mainly WPA employees, have been trained in the skills which will prepare them for re-entrance into private industry (7) 10,000 Negro men and women have been provided instruction in workers education and (8) 5,000

Negro teachers are employed annually on education projects. These impressive statistics, Atkins declared, reflected the fact that "the Administration had made a special effort to encourage the enrollment of Negro adults in emergency education classes," an effort, he added, that would result in "a trend towards the development of projects in the fields of health education, nursing service, community center construction, and school repair which would provide permanent and long-term benefits to the entire Negro community. (123)

The optimism generated by the Atkins report proved to be short-lived. Faced with the continuous prospect of Congressional cuts in WPA appropriations, the EEP lacked the financial stability to support long-range and permanent educational projects. Writing to Hopkins in February, 1937, Alderman requested that the WPA's administrator take a long hard look at the importance of the government's educational programs and what their disappearance would mean to the lives of many disadvantaged Americans. "By concentrating upon services," he noted, "which are not yet adequately provided by state and local educational agencies, the WPA program may make new and significant contributions to the public education system of the nation in the form of services which will be taken over and continued by the established agencies of public education." Seconding Alderman's concern for the financial health of the EEP was James Atkins who stepped up his publicity campaign for the program by calling the EEP's story "one of the brightest pages in the history of free public education in America." Writing to Alderman in March, Atkins outlined once again "the generous participation of the Negro in the EEP," and stressed the role of the New Deal in reaching those black Americans too young or too old to benefit from the offerings of the established school system.

If spared the Congressional axe, he continued, the EEP would have a salutary effect in the ghetto "by improving family relationships and bringing disparate elements of the black community into close harmony once again." (124)

The sharp reduction in WPA outlays during 1937 hindered but did not destroy the EEP's intention to improve the quality of life in the nation's poverty-stricken neighborhoods. Atkins' promise of federally-subsidized community-building projects suddenly became a reality with the emergency of literally hundreds of WPA-staffed Negro boys' clubs in the major urban centers of the North. The clubs, which were given a great deal of publicity by both the WPA's Division of Information and the black press, accepted boys from 10 to 25 as members and offered them a chance to participate in recreational and educational activities. In cities like Boston, Indianapolis, and Gary, the clubs were the only places where black youth were taught anything of Negro history and folklore. Usually situated in small, store-front buildings or in makeshift centers provided by local civic associations, the clubs were enthusiastically received in the black communities in which they functioned. Their warm reception was attributed both to the black jobs in recreation which they created, and because the clubs provided an alternative to what were termed the "unwholesome" recreational activities common in the ghetto's streets and alley ways. One indication of community support for the project was seen in the increasing number of neighborhood blacks who volunteered to serve on local advisory committees where they helped WPA workers in the planning and publicizing of boys' clubs activities. Another hopeful sign was the fact that of the 30,000 urban blacks hired to work in the WPA's recreation program, nearly 5,000 were given stable employment by their communities after their work relief eligibility had been exhausted. (125)

WPA officials delighted in reporting that wherever emergency education classes were established in the ghetto they operated as genuine community projects. In Indianapolis, for example, black WPA teachers organized a mothers' club composed of the mothers of children enrolled in the emergency nursery school located in the black-owned and operated Hill Community Center. Members of the club supplied funds to pay the center's gas and electricity bills, while food, equipment and the salaries of the teachers were covered by the WPA. Many mothers were induced to join the club through the medium of a children's clinic conducted every Thursday, at which time mothers were encouraged to discuss with the nursery school staff the individual problems of their children. Nationwide, similar projects served more than 8,000 needy Negro children and employed more than 1,000 black workers as teachers, nurses, dieticians, cooks and janitors. (126)

Despite successes in these areas, the operation of the EEP in Northern cities (where 20 per cent of the nation's blacks lived) was continually plagued with the problems of apathy and neglect. In a confidential memorandum to Alderman, Atkins expressed his frustration over the failure of the Negro urban industrial worker to advance beyond the primary level in school, a fact which "precludes him from such vocational and industrial guidance and training as is provided by the WPA." Other worries included the 4,500 Negro teachers who, after three years of EEP employment, were still looking for regular public school positions. Growing signs of nepotism in black-operated education projects also presented a problem. Atkins' major worry; however, involved the question of attracting a larger number of ghetto blacks to the emergency education classes. One explanation for the relatively low EEP attendance rate in black neighborhoods was provided by the director of Evening Activities for Cincinnati's public schools:

Looking through the records, I find that the Negroes of this city have been offered the same educational opportunities as the white race. No discrimination has been made. The opportunity to learn has always been present but unfortunately the Negro has not, and even now, does not avail himself of it to a very great extent. This has been due to several reasons: a lethargy and ambition, long hours in daily labor making it impossible to attend school because of lack of time or physical tardiness, lack of cooperation on the part of a few Negro leaders who do not get back of the movement, and a defeatist attitude of the overeducation when there is but little opportunity to use it; especially in a vocation." (127)

Another explanation for black hesitancy in attending EEP classes was noted by Bernhard Stern, a surveyor on the staff of the Carnegie-Myrdal study of the Negro in America. Stern placed much of the blame on the fact that there existed "no special efforts to appeal to the adult Negro in evening school programs that would make the curricula have sufficient content and meaning to overcome the otherwise very great difficulties deterring attendance." "The Negro's vision," he concluded, "is aborted and warped not by factors intrinsic in the Negro psyche but in the social situation arising from a lack of vision among those whites who preserve social, political, and economic discriminations that cloud and limit vision." (128)

Despite Stern's reservations, it was generally agreed by the majority of the black press that the Negro was sharing equitably in the services of the WPA's Emergency Education Program. This conclusion was arrived at by comparing the percentage of blacks in the total population (roughly 10 per cent) with the percentage of EEP employees who were non-white (nearly 16 per cent). The black press was also pleased at the efforts taken by the Administration to furnish Negro news services with "every possible cooperation in securing information regarding the New Deal's educational programs." Reflecting this spirit of cooperation was the fact that by June 1938, papers like the Chicago Defender, the New York Age, and the Philadelphia Tribune were featuring regular weekly columns on the WPA's race-related activities. Feature stories extolling the WPA as a "prop to education in many black communities which have had to economize during recent years," were not uncommon. Black papers in Southern cities were especially laudatory; the Tampa Bulletin for example, vigorously praised the work of that city's EEP teachers "who are now preparing a series of readers for use in Negro Adult Education classes; which differ radically from the instructional material commonly used in the regular schools." Similarly well-received was James Atkins' pledge in October, 1938 to substantially increase the "now over 400,000 Negroes who have been taught how to read by the EEP." (129)

1938 also saw the EEP take steps to reemphasize to state and local WPA administrators the existence of federal racial guidelines. In order to handle an estimated 7,000 letters of complaint and inquiry which arrived annually at the desk of Alfred Edgar Smith, the Arkansas Negro was given a larger office and a larger staff to go with his new quarters. Smith, who had logged over 15,000 miles in 1937 tracking down reports of racial discrimination while making 30 major public addresses in 15 states; was quickly alerted to the fact that in some cases Negro teachers were not being hired on education projects to the extent that their percentage of the local population would warrant. When he reported his findings to Atkins. Atkins "categorically denied these charges but promised that the Negro would continue to share generously in the benefits of the EEP." Smith then took his case directly to Harry Hopkins, where his persistence was rewarded by a May 1938 revision in the WPA's operating procedures on racial matters. The new procedures declared that "educational service shall be made available to Negroes through the Education Program at least in proportion to the Negro's population in each state. Furthermore, employment on this program shall be given to eligible and qualified Negro teachers, if available, at least in proportion to the Negro population of each state." To augment the implementation of this directive T. Arnold Hill was appointed by Aubrey Williams to serve as the WPA's chief consultant on Negro Affairs, with special concentration on the satisfactory employment of blacks on EEP projects. (130)

This heightened concern over the full participation of the Negro in the EEP allowed the program to compile an impressive record by the time it was to undergo its third major reorganization in the summer of 1939. Writing to Dr. Paul T. David, Secretary of the President's Advisory Committee on Education, on the fourth anniversary of the WPA's establishment, Lewis Alderman referred to reports reaching his office showing that "the educational services of the WPA are more equitably distributed among Negroes now than was the case in 1935." From a statistical standpoint, Alderman was not far from the truth. Black monthly attendance at EEP classes had mushroomed from 50,000 in November of 1935 to over 500,000 four years later. The New Deal was also credited with the reduction in Negro illiteracy at a rate six times that of the decade prior to the Depression. Understandably, many blacks were impressed with

these accomplishments. The National Urban League called the program "one of the noblest ventures upon which this government has ever embarked." In a November. 1939, editorial in Opportunity, the League explained why the WPA deserved such high marks from black people.

The WPA gave the Negro white-collar worker his first real chance. Jobs as clerks, stenographers, supervisors—occupations for which chance to enter became available. He thereby was able to retain the skill that he had acquired in school or college, and to build on it by actual work. Through the WPA, social work was expanded in Negro communities where it had been inadequate and introduced into Negro communities where it had never existed before. (131)

Similar sentiments were voiced by Mary McLeod Bethune who, by virtue of her many cross-country trips on behalf of the NYA, had become the idol of lower-class black youth. Visiting over 70 cities in 21 states, Bethune proved an outstanding spokeswoman for the youth agency, to the point where many blacks were inclined to believe that NYA stood for Negro Youth Administration and identified Miss Bethune as "that lady who is the head of a government agency that helps poor Negro children go to school." The Negro director spared few adjectives in describing the educational work carried on by the New Deal's alphabet agencies. "No greater blessing," she wrote to a friend, "has come to the Negro race since the days of Abraham Lincoln than his integration into and his participation in the humane national education program of the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt." (132)

Bethune's optimism was based on both statistics and personal observation. The director noted that black youths comprised roughly 12 per cent of all NYA personnel, a figure which compared favorably with their percentage of the total youth population. The number of blacks receiving aid from the NYA had risen from 5,000 a month in 1935 to 28,500 in 1937, while nearly 180,000 black students could thank the youth agency for allowing them the opportunity to continue high school. Bethune was especially pleased with the NYA's urban projects. In her travels, she observed Negro NYA employees operating community centers and offering neighborhood youths instruction in a variety of academic and vocational fields. Black NYA workers in the ghetto also organized sewing and home economics classes, worked in libraries, and collected information concerning the physical and human resources of their communities. (133)

These accomplishments did not obscure the youth agency's apparent inability to put a dent in private industry's hiring patterns. While Negroes filled 12 per cent of all NYA positions, qualitatively they received less valuable training than white youth. The lack of full black participation in such lucrative programs as apprenticeship training was not, however, predicated on any attitude of the NYA but rather on the refusal of industry and labor to permit Negroes to put in the required number of hours of practical work which the program demanded.

Bethune, citing this discrepancy between the NYA's philosophy and performance, wrote a confidential letter in the summer of 1938 to Aubrey Williams in which she argued that there was no point in training Negroes for skilled occupations because industry will not hire them. Admitting that "there is no really

outstanding NYA project for Negroes in the country," Bethune warned that unless the youth agency could "promote a few definite, well-organized, outstanding projects for Negroes in key cities of the nation," the NYA's legacy for the black American would remain in doubt. "This agency," she concluded, "has before it an opportunity to help Negro youth smash through the vicious restrictions that bind him. It now remains for the NYA to accept the challenge." (134)

By the summer of 1939, it was clear that the New Deal had accepted not one but two closely related challenges. Confronted with a sharp increase in both professional unemployment and unsupervised leisure time, New Dealers created a multi-faceted educational program; a program influenced greatly by the progressive credo that the evils of apathy, poverty, and ignorance could be removed through the actions of a concerned and well-informed citizenry. The program utilized the neighborhood school as an outlet for free courses in adult, worker, vocational, nursery, and parent education, and gave local communities the major share of responsibility for project initiation, planning, and administration. The result was the creation of an "educational renaissance" in Depression-stricken America from which an estimated 2.5 million Americans derived an incalculable amount of benefits.

The second challenge accepted by the Roosevelt Administration was that of making the black American an integral part of this "educational renaissance." The increase in black educational militancy during the 1930's made this challenge an almost impossible one to avoid -- especially for a President intent upon making sizeable inroads in the black vote in the urban North. Roosevelt's political expediency, however, was tempered by the genuine concerns of Hopkins, Alderman and Williams for the plight of Negro education, and by the constant vigilance of men and women like Alfred Edgar Smith, James Atkins, and Mary McLeod Bethune. The combination of political motivation and progressive idealism produced an educational program which was both sensitive to black educational aspirations and noticeably free of any major forms of discrimination. Although far from perfect, the New Deal's educational activities from a national standpoint were a distinct improvement over what had formerly been the federal government's attitude towards urban black education.

The real test, however, of the New Deal's commitment to the principle of equal educational opportunity took place on the local level. Here, the emergency education projects came face to face with community mores, political pressures, and prejudices. As a result of these encounters, federal guidelines were frequently reshaped and readjusted to fit local social and educational conditions. The extent to which the New Deal's educational offerings affected, and were affected by, existing conditions in the black ghettoes of New York City, Chicago, and Philadelphia will be the subject of the following chapters.

PART 3

THE WPA'S RESPONSE TO THE EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS OF THREE NORTHERN GHETTOS

V. HARLEM IN THE 1930's: THE SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL MILIEU

There is a marvelous opportunity in Harlem for the city to undertake a great experiment in social reconstruction; nothing but the lack of funds could be any excuse for failure to do so.

-E. Franklin Frazier (135) (1936)

Don't give our kids a half-assed education.

-slogan of the Permanent Committee for Better Schools- in Harlem (1936)

New York's Harlem, home in the 1930's for 182,000 of the city's 225,000 black residents, was a community of contrasts. For the entertainment-seeking tourist interested in a night on the town, Harlem was the bright lights of 125th Street with its world famous night clubs and gaudily-dressed show business personalities. For the average resident of the nation's largest Negro ghetto, bright lights and fancy clothes took second place to daily encounters with rats "as big as cats," numbers runners, religious fanatics, crumbling tenements, decaying schools, and the thin, grey lines which formed each morning in front of the neighborhood's many relief stations. (136)

Described in tourist guidebooks of the period as "Little Africa," even though colonies of Russians, Irish, West Indians and Puerto Ricans lived within its geographic boundaries, Harlem offered the casual visitor a dose of "black exotica" in the heart of Manhattan. Residents of the area were often referred to as "docile," "colorful," "happy," and "very friendly to visitors" -- all as a means of bringing tourist dollars to the "black capital of the world." Strolling along the section's colorful streets, a visitor was certain to see "voluptuous young women lolling and laughing on brownstone steps," or catch a glimpse of blacks with expensive dogs in tow, "sauntering up and down the avenues in lazy rhythm." If he chose to arrive in the early evening, a tourist could witness Harlem coming alive with hundreds of cabs cruising its streets carrying white passengers to jazz-filled night spots. At that hour; the streets would be filled with the "local troubadours who wander to and fro strumming banjo, guitar or playing a violin -- not for money but just for the fun of it." If something more subdued was desired, a visit to Harlem on a Sunday offered the sight of the wide-tree-lined boulevard of 7th Avenue between 135th and 145th Streets "thronged with groups of men in double-breasted waistcoats and pleated trousers and women in brilliant fabrics." When asked how during such hard times people could afford such luxury, a prominent Harlem doctor replied, "In America you're supposed to keep clean and look neat no matter how empty your stomach might be." (137)

The "Great Black Way" of "policy players, hotha and religion" was but a small slice of Harlem's life style. Behind the facade of neon signs and the clink of champagne glasses were the unlighted side streets jammed with fetid tenements and swarming with children playing in alleyways or "leaning perilously from windows to gasp all there was of fresh air."

The men parading in their Sunday best concealed the fact that by 1930 nearly two-thirds of the area's male working force was unemployed, and the closing hour of the famous night clubs along 125th Street was the same hour that found scores of black women leaving their homes "to vanish slipshod into the subway's maw, Bronx-bound in the 'black trains' that take colored help to white-collar flats." (138)

For those inclined to look beyond the glare and glitter, it was obvious that the Depression had made the Chicago Defender's description of Harlem as "the one place on earth where the right hand has absolutely no knowledge of what the left hand is doing and doesn't give a damn" inconsistent with reality. The worsening economic picture had forced the closing of a number of well-known night clubs and white tourists were noticing more and more hostile glances thrown in their direction. Observers sadly noted that the Harlem of the 1920's, epitomized by Cab Calloway's carefree "hi-dee-ho," was slowly coming to an end and a new Harlem, one that featured bread lines and store-front politicians singing the songs of revolution, was being born. (139)

The popular image of the neighborhood as a "garish pleasureground" was rudely smashed on March 19, 1935 when Harlem erupted into a full-scale ghetto riot which claimed seven lives and caused an estimated $2,000,000 in damage. Those in Harlem with their fingers on the pulse of the community agreed that the so-called "disturbance" was not unexpected. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. in a series of post-mortem articles in the New York Post, argued that the roots of the problem lay imbedded in the social and economic conditions of the area. "What happened on March 19," claimed Powell, "was not a riot but an open, unorganized protest against empty stomachs, overcrowded tenements, filthy sanitation, and rotten foodstuffs. People have no reason or self-discipline when their bellies are rubbing their backbones." (140)

In the succeeding months, debate over the causes of the Harlem Riot revealed the extent of the problems facing the neighborhood. Measured by citywide standards of health care, family stability, and quality of schools, conditions in Harlem were found to be decidedly below average. In terms of the health of its residents, the district had the dubious distinction of having the highest infant, maternal, and tuberculosis mortality rates of any community in New York City (the TB rate for blacks, for example, was three times as high as the white rate). Samplings taken of Harlem's children disclosed that nearly 95 per cent had incipient cases of rickets, while an Urban League study concluded that on the typical Harlem block 20 per cent of the inhabitants suffered from at least one serious illness. Reasons for these near-epidemic conditions varied, but many saw the scarcity of health agencies in the area as contributing significantly to the problem. (141)

The conditions of low income, poor housing, and inadequate medical facilities combined to play havoc with the structure of the black family in Harlem. Bearing the brunt of the difficulties was the black adolescent, for whom a dimly-lit room in a rooming house was often "home" in the 1930's. Over 40 per cent of the ghetto's youth population lived in a household with no family bond, compared to 12 per cent of the city's white youth. The predictable result was an upsurge in black juvenile delinquency during the

early years of the Depression, a problem which the New York Age attributed to worsening economic conditions and to "the failure of parents in their duty to properly rear their offspring." Equally concerned was the New York Urban League which reacted to the situation by calling upon blacks in Harlem to leave the city and move back to Southern farms. (142)

The rise in black juvenile delinquency underscored the Harlem community's chronic lack of a unified social welfare program. The absence of such a program was bemoaned by the Committee on Negro Child Study, a concerned citizen's group which conducted a seven-month-long investigation in 1927 of delinquent and neglected Negro children. In a report submitted to municipal authorities, the group recommended that Harlem obtain more playground facilities, after-school and summer activities in school buildings, social centers for adults as a means of keeping family units together, and more visiting teachers in the schools. Enactment of such a far-reaching and progressive program, the Committee declared, could stem the tide of broken homes and disgruntled youth which characterized the Harlem area. (143)

Efforts along these lines were initiated by the New York branch of the National Urban League during the 1920's with a modicum of success. By 1930, the League had in operation in Harlem a vocational guidance service, a placement office for foster children, an employment agency, a tenant's complaint department, and a number of block survey projects both in Harlem and in the black neighborhoods of Brooklyn. A year after the stock market crash, the League inaugurated a visiting teacher service that was designed to give black parents the benefit of professional advice as to the causes of child retardation. The most popular of the League's community-oriented activities, however, were the day nurseries and kindergartens which it operated independently of the established public school system. The first of these nurseries, known as the Utopia Neighborhood House, was developed in 1927 by a group of prominent Negro club women after a survey conducted by the League's Department of Research indicated that such a service was greatly needed. After enlisting the financial support of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. for the purchase of a suitable facility on West 134th Street, the Negro women made arrangements with the Board of Education to supply hot lunches for the black enrollees. By 1931, an estimated 71,000 neighborhood youngsters had benefited from the free dental, medical, and dietary services at Utopia House. (144)

Despite the League's efforts to fill the institutional gap in the ghetto, pre-New Deal Harlem could boast of only one child center, one maternity home for unwed mothers and an incipient adult education program financed by a joint grant of $15,000 from the Carnegie Foundation and the Rosenwald Fund. Various solutions to the ghetto's institutional crisis were offered. Pointing to the failure of existing institutions to improve conditions, E. Franklin Frazier suggested to an audience at the 135th Street YMCA that "all Negro churches, schools and welfare agencies are instruments of the capitalistic system and should be wiped out." A more popular view, voiced editorially by the New York Age, argued that "Negro social workers, not outside white groups, must work out the destiny of the community." (145)

There was, however, common agreement within the black community that Harlem's lack of political independence had contributed significantly to the general neglect of the area's black residents. Signs that the New York Negro had recognized this fact and had begun "to play the game of politics in a realistic fashion" became evident during the Depression. These signs included a drive to elect a Negro to Congress in 1930 from Harlem's 21st District (gerrymandered by Tammany Hall to keep blacks in the voting minority), and the establishment in June of 1936 of the All People's Party of Harlem. Founded by a delegation of blacks representing every major social, religious, and civic organization in the neighborhood, the new group adopted as its slogan "A United Harlem means a better Harlem for all of us," and its membership pledged "to rid Harlem of the corrupt political control of the two major parties." Ignatius Lawlor, secretary of the All People's Party, argued forcefully that "blacks can never expect proper attention to our needs from any city administration ... unless Harlem is represented by candidates of an independent Harlem-controlled, political party with an all-Harlem program." (146)

Lawlor's call for a political platform responsive to the economic, social, and medical needs of black people was echoed by black activists in Harlem's religious and civic circles. During the 1930's, a number of black ministers in the community responded positively to the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell's demand that they "do their utmost to meet the unemployment emergency or shut up." Institutionalizing their secular function, many churches actively sought jobs for their parishioners while others restricted their activities to the distribution of food and clothing to families in dire need. More affluent institutions (such as Powell's Abyssinian Baptist Church and Reverend William Lloyd Imes' St. James Presbyterian Church) went one step further by introducing adult education courses in parliamentary law, literacy training, and music, and offering a wide range of weekly lectures on such topics as the Depression and the Negro, and the role of black man in American history. Also responding to Powell's militant call were Harlem's "Y's" which became more conscious of their responsibility to bring the black child off the streets and under the protective wing of supervised and morally beneficial instruction. Sensitive to the charges of a lack of concern for the problems of poverty and discrimination, the "8's" expanded their recreational activities during the early years of the Depression in an effort to woo lower-class blacks in the neighborhood. (147)

The growing awareness that the problems of the ghetto could not be solved either by wishful thinking or by waiting for the white man to have pangs of conscience manifested itself in the wide appeal of Father Divine and his Kingdom of Peace. Divine, a former employment agency manager from Sayville, Long Island, operated a full-scale social welfare program throughout Harlem from his "Turkish bath headquarters on 126th Street". His appeal was simple ("Follow me and you will find Peace") and his hold over his many admirers great. (He forbid members of his Kingdom from voting in the 1936 elections and many did not.) The Negro leader established cut-rate food stores in the community and founded 15 Kingdom schools which offered a wide range of academic and vocational courses to all Harlemites desiring to better themselves. While many argued the reasons for his popularity (one psychologist claiming that Divine "gave meaning to the environment by changing complexity, hopelessness, and purposelessness into simple understanding, peace, and happiness"), there was general agreement that at least a part of Divine's great popularity reflected the absence of indigenous social welfare agencies. Seen in this light, his Kingdom of Peace was simply filling the space vacated by others. (148)

The impulse which activated Divine's attempt to fill Harlem's institutional void also triggered attempts to revamp the ghetto's educational system. Dissatisfied with what they termed the status quo policies of school officialdom, educational militants sought to turn the schools of Harlem into community-centered institutions capable of counteracting the pathological influences in the black child's environment. (149)

While demands for educational change in Harlem did not originate during the Depression, the 1930's did provide opponents of the Board of Education with a number of important opportunities to substantiate their charges of deficiencies in ghetto education. One such opportunity arose in the aftermath of the Harlem Riot of March, 1935 when Mayor LaGuardia appointed an interracial commission of influential New Yorkers to investigate the root causes of the disturbance. The commission (known as the Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem) quickly divided itself into sub-committees on health, education, housing, employment, and police affairs, and began the tedious collection of post-riot data. Using the vehicle of public hearings as a means of sounding out the feelings of average Harlemites on the issues, the sub-committee on education soon discovered that educational problems were of great concern to the Harlem community. During the sub-committee's first public hearing in April, 1935, Irving Bevans, chairman of the Central Committee of Harlem Parents' Associations, unequivocally declared that the riot was born out of "the exceedingly poor economic conditions in the neighborhood which are reflected in the school system." Bevan's opinion was seconded by the fiery Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., who sarcastically remarked that "the initials P.S. as far as Harlem schools were concerned, stood for Public Sewers." "These schools," argued Powell, "have outside toilets, are structural tinder boxes, and have lunchrooms which are as clean as the worst out-house." Other speakers vented their wrath on alleged "racist" teachers and supervisors, and on George Ryan, president of the Board of Education, who many witnesses called a "fascist sympathizer." Less emotional statements centered around the general belief that Harlem schools, with their 40,000 Negro students, did not get a sufficient proportion of the school budget and that school conditions were directly responsible for low scholastic achievement in the ghetto. (150)

Listening attentively to this testimony was Oswald Garrison Villard, editor of The Nation and chairman of the sub-committee on education. Throughout the hearings, Villard displayed considerable sympathy for the demands for educational reform and was visibly moved as speaker after speaker outlined in detail existing conditions in Harlem schools. In response to this testimony, the committee chairman submitted an interim report to the Mayor in which he called for the city to stop neglecting the ghetto's educational needs. Villard also demanded immediate action on the following ten-point blueprint for reform:

1. the construction of a new junior high school for boys

2. the construction of two new elementary schools

3. improved vocational guidance for black students

4. the establishment of child guidance clinics

5. an increase in the number of visiting teachers

6. give Negroes an opportunity for employment in pre-school programs

7. increase agencies and teachers for adult education

8. increase agencies and teachers for workers education

9. create more parents organizations for public schools

10. build Housewives Leagues to encourage sound Negro enterprises and protect their interests as consumers (151)

While the Mayor was considering these recommendations, the parade of witnesses before Villard's committee continued to grow. Teacher union groups, the Urban League, the NAACP, Parent-Teacher Associations, the Communist Party, St. James Presbyterian Church, the Harlem Branch of the YWCA, and the Tammany-controlled Beaver Ramapo Democratic Club were just a few of the concerned organizations which sent representatives to the hearings. Collectively, their message was clear: that a close relationship existed between conditions in Harlem's schools, the socio-economic structure of the ghetto, and the existence of civil strife in the streets. (152)

Further arguments in support of the charge that Harlem was a neglected section of the city were heard by the Villard Committee at a closed door meeting called at the request of a small, biracial group of Harlem teachers. The leader of the teacher delegation was Miss Alice Citron, a diminutive but powerful speaker, who expressed the opinion that the situation would continue to get worse unless blacks were given a seat on the Board of Education, and unless parents were given a larger share of the responsibility in the running of Harlem's schools. Miss Citron also suggested, to the applause of her followers, that Negro men be given jobs as a means of permitting Negro women to remain at home with their children. When asked by Villard why so few teachers had come forth with similar statements, Miss Citron quickly replied that many more in her profession were anxious to testify but were in great fear of "reprisals by the Board of Education." (153)

Undaunted by attacks against the established public school system, supervisory personnel in the Harlem district appeared before the Villard Committee and were greeted in each case with a large chorus of boos. The first to appear was Miss Louise Tucker, principal of Harlem's P.S. 90, who categorically denied previous allegations of a personal misuse of power, and put the blame for poor school performance squarely on the shoulders of "the outrageous conditions under which my pupils lived." Charles Pickett, principal of the New York Industrial High School, denied charges that he was responsible for deliberately misguiding black students on vocational possibilities, and labeled as "outrageous" the charge that his school was the "dumping ground of the educational system." Receiving the worst reception of all was Julius Gluck, principal of P.S.89, a Harlem landmark on 135th Street and Lenox Avenue. Taking the witness stand, Gluck was questioned closely by committee members about his optimistic annual report for 1933 in which he had claimed that "our school's facilities are adequate, and our educational

objectives are being attained in a satisfactory manner through splendid cooperation of the community, parents, teachers, and children. Teachers, supervisors and parents are harmoniously working together for the child." Despite intensive cross-examination and the cat calls of those in the audience, Gluck stuck to his original claim and added that through his efforts, "many former problem pupils, now well-fed and clothed, have become happy, normal school citizens." (154)

Gluck's public testimony contrasted sharply with the opinions he expressed in a confidential memo to committee member Dewitt Carson Baker. The principal admitted that because his students' median I.Q. was 83 "it was necessary for our teachers to follow a modified course of study."

"P.S. 89," he continued, "regrettably lacks the necessary equipment for a school of dull-normals." Instituting a strict academic curriculum in the school would, in Gluck's words, "act to repeatedly hold back our Negro pupils because of their failure in mastering the very academic, intellectual training we are forcing upon them." The problem in Harlem schools, he concluded, "is not to bring up the pupil standard to the curriculum level, but to minimize the course of study to fit the pupil. An extension of manual training work is the only answer if we are to fit the children of this neighborhood for a good, profitable life after their education is completed." (155)

The discrepancies in Gluck's public and private testimony bore witness to the fact that the committee hearings were a poor vehicle for the airing of the issues at hand. Even militant blacks, sympathetic with the goals of the Villard committee, found the hearings to be "a disgusting scene." James Hubert, Executive Secretary of the National Urban League, saw the proceedings "as a sort of Roman holiday for the soapbox orators who regard it as their outstanding opportunity to heckle and vilify publicly anyone and every organization that is attempting to deal with the problems at hand." Nevertheless, after two months of investigation, the sub-committee on education made its final report to the Mayor. Stressing the point that "unhappy school conditions in Harlem are one of the potent factors in creating unrest and unhappiness," and that a solution to this problem "is not a question of race but simply a question of humanity," committee members strongly recommended that blacks be given representation on the Board of Education, that Negro history courses be given in Harlem schools, and that vocational training for nonwhite students be upgraded. The report concluded on an environmentalist note:

The school system is at all times a vital part of the life of any community. In Harlem it has become peculiarly important and almost decisive in its influence upon the lives of children, because the Depression and the consequent alarming unemployment have robbed many of them of the attributes and conditions of a normal life. When thousands of children are turned out into the streets at three or four o'clock with their home closed to them until evening because parents are working, then the responsibility of the school for training and character-molding, even as a sheltering institution, becomes greater than ever. (156)

The Villard Committee's findings placed Mayor LaGuardia in a political quandary. Concerned that the report would be misinterpreted by blacks as a reflection on his own administration, or used as political ammunition by Tammany Hall, LaGuardia managed to hush up its findings for over a year. Quietly, behind the scenes, the Mayor prodded people connected with the Board of Education to remedy some of the more blatant deficiencies outlined by Villard and his associates. Board of Education Vice President, James Marshall, responded to the Mayor's prodding by vigorously defending the operation of the public school system in Harlem. "This reply," he wrote LaGuardia, "is not in defense of inadequate school provisions for Harlem or any other section of the city ... it is directed to the charge of discrimination against Harlem as a deliberate policy of the department of education." (157)

Marshall went on to blame the bulk of Harlem's educational difficulties on "a decreasing capital outlay budget and a complete cessation of building funds during the last four years." The Board's Vice President asserted that "it was only sound policy for the school authorities to choose to increase school accommodations in rapidly growing districts in the Bronx and Queens, rather than in sections of declining population such as Harlem." As for charges that the schools in the black community contributed to the pathology of the ghetto, Marshall noted that within a radius of two blocks of P.S. 89 there were "18 beer gardens, 6 liquor saloons, 4 movie houses, and two whore houses; a fact which did not reflect on the schools so much as the neighborhood which tolerated their existence." Marshall also dealt summarily with the charge that the district's schools were overcrowded, reminding the Mayor that "schools all over the city are in need of repairs and are overcrowded (44 per cent of all classes had over 40 children) and Harlem was no exception." Defending the Board's staffing policies in black neighborhoods, Marshall denied that assignment to the Harlem district was usually for "punitive reasons," and praised the welfare work of a number of Harlem principals "who keep a pile of old shoes strung across the floor and a pile of old clothes stacked in one corner of their offices to give out to needy children." Finally, reacting to the allegation that Harlem's vocational schools were "wastelands," the Board official admitted that facilities in these schools were below par (as they were in many parts of the city), but denied vigorously the implication that any officially-condoned attempt was being made to "direct Negro pupils into the manual and skilled trades." (158)

Marshall's assurances failed to impress experienced observers of the Harlem scene. The latter (who included the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.) remained suspicious of attempts to cover up what was termed the "true conditions of Harlem's schools," and of denials that the Board of Education had deliberately neglected the black community's educational needs.

The suspicions of these black skeptics were borne out by reports during the latter half of the decade which indicated that city officials were doing little to ameliorate educational conditions in the ghetto. As outlined by the WPA's Federal Writer's Project, the New York State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, and by the Carnegie-Myrdal study, the quality of education parceled out to black residents of Harlem hardly warranted any official expressions of optimism. Physically, the schools were pictured in these reports to be dark and stuffy, with uncomfortable seats, unheated and unkept halls and stairways, poor acoustics, paint and plaster falling from the ceilings and

walls, foul- smelling lunchrooms, and with rare exceptions, no indoor gymnasiums or libraries. Although most of the facilities were classified by Board of Education officials as "partially fireproof," one such school (P.S. 89) had six fires over the span of five years before it finally burned to the ground. These poor conditions were aggravated by inadequate recreational facilities, particularly during the winter months when the dilapidated yards surrounding the schools were unfit for use. (159)

Not surprisingly, researchers found that teaching positions in these schools were among the least desired in the city. Appointment to a Harlem school was generally regarded as the "kiss of death," or, at best, as a stepping stone on the way up to a position in the white neighborhoods of the Bronx and Queens. The principals were themselves usually given Harlem assignments after a poor performance record in other parts of the city. The teaching methods utilized in these schools were uninspired and antiquated. In the elementary schools of the district the slogan was not to teach but only to keep the children quiet. A favorite teaching device was the flash card method, designed to "cover" the teacher if a supervisor happened to drop in for an unexpected ten minute visit. Rather than encourage the use of modern learning techniques, Harlem supervisors often reprimanded teachers for secretly introducing these techniques in the classroom. Any attempt to move beyond the confines of the established curriculum such as the teaching of Negro history was severely frowned upon by the authorities. (160)

The situation with regard to secondary school education in Harlem was also discouraging. The bulk of the problem grew out of the Board's policy of allowing the Dean of Boys in each junior high school in Harlem to decide whether or not a student's choice of a high school was a wise one. The Dean also reserved the right to send a written statement to this effect along with the student's high school application. As a result of this policy, black graduates from junior high schools in Manhattan were invariably sent to Wadleigh, Textile, and Haaren High Schools -- all inferior with regard to facilities and equipment. In addition to their inadequate lunchrooms, gymnasiums, and laboratories, these schools were staffed by racially insensitive administrators. At Wadleigh, for example, Negro girls were told by the principal not to register for commercial courses on the grounds that "they would not have opportunity after graduation to use such knowledge." (161)

The standards of the vocational education that was parceled out to Negro pupils in the Harlem area were inferior to such a degree that even dyed-in-the-wool apologists for the Board of Education felt that "something had to be done." These standards were not generic to the Depression as early as 1926, typewriters for a commercial course in a Harlem junior high school were removed by the principal on the grounds that "the course was not practicable in a colored neighborhood." Examining the situation on the eve of the New Deal, F. J. Keller, director of the National Occupational Conference, concluded that “ignorance, prejudice, tradition and misunderstanding” were interfering with the “officially expressed intentions of vocational education authorities in Harlem.” Other observers were not as charitable as Keller. Not infrequently, they claimed, such misguidance by counsellors was selfishly motivated. Pointing to the vocational schools continuous need to justify their existence through high placement records, critics charged that counsellors in ghetto schools had instituted a policy of discouraging Negro students from taking courses in which placement officials would have difficulty finding them jobs. (162)

Interviewed in connection with the Carnegie-Myrdal Study in 1940, Miss Fanny Sagalyn, a vocational counsellor in a Harlem junior high, gave a candid assessment of the problem. Acknowledging that her colleagues often criticized her for alerting black students to a wide range of vocational courses ("Let's not mince words, Fanny. Let's be practical about this matter. The Negro is not employed in certain trades, so why permit him to waste his time taking such courses."), Miss Sagalyn declared that a major deterrent keeping the black adolescent from the pursuit of skilled vocational studies "is the discouraging extent of the failure of Negro boys to get into the trades for which they have been trained." Citing figures which showed that only one out of six Negroes who graduated from an auto mechanics course eventually entered the trade, Miss Sagalyn emphasized that the extent of this discouragement would remain high as long as the unemployment rate for blacks was practically the same with or without training. (163)

Poor employment prospects and the jibes of colleagues were not the only obstacles faced by progressive-minded counsellors in Harlem. Perhaps just as frustrating was the determination of recent arrivals from Southern school systems to take the college preparatory courses in New York City high schools, "irrespective of their fitness for academic studies." When black parents were alerted to the dangers of such action (e.g. a 90 per cent drop out rate for blacks), they turned on the counsellor with accusations of racial discrimination. Also frustrating was the rejection by black students of assignment to New York Vocational High School at 138th Street and Fifth Avenue, which unlike most Harlem schools, was well-equipped and underpopulated. The reason given by the students was that they preferred to "go downtown" in order to "get out of Harlem." The result of this preference was a larger than usual drop out rate of those students who went to "downtown" schools, primarily because the extra carfare placed a burden on their parents' already small income. (164)

Reaction to these educational "facts of life" split the Harlem community into two warring camps. Emerging as a defender of the Board's academic and vocational policies was Gertrude Ayer, a tall, grey-haired, scholarly-looking woman who, in 1930, became the first Negro woman assistant principal in the city's public school system. Fond of referring to her pupils as "little rascals who look so good but each one of them can think up enough trouble to keep us busy all term," the socially prominent Mrs. Ayer became a vocal and formidable opponent of militant teacher unionism in Harlem and a proponent of the Board's efforts to "weed out" so-called "undesirables" and "trouble-makers" from the teaching staffs of the district's schools. Mrs. Ayer used her own personal history as a means of discounting charges that the Board of Examiners discriminated against the advancement of Negro teachers, and assured visitors to her dilapidated school that "an attempt is continuously being made to provide equal facilities .... old buildings are being renovated, modernized or enlarged and all auxiliary facilities are being expanded." Her optimism with regard to the Board's intentions paid off in handsome dividends in January, 1936 when she was appointed principal of P.S. 24 on East 128th Street -- the first Negro woman in the city's history to hold such a post. (165)

Gertrude Ayer's anti-union, pro-Board of Education stance did not go unchallenged in the Harlem community. The seeds of discontent with existing Board policy had been already planted in the wake of the Harlem Riot by a local group known as the Negro Needs Society. The society, headquartered in a small storefront on St. Nicholas Avenue, spent most of its time putting together a publication entitled Education -- A Journal of Reputation. Appearing on Harlem newsstands in April, 1935, and selling for a nickel a copy, Education proclaimed its intent "to advertise the virtues rather than the vices of our people." As defined by editor H. S. McFarland, education was "any general knowledge systematically acquired and intelligently expended." An example of "knowledge intelligently expended" involved black people "waking up to their possibilities under the capitalistic system of government -- and then doing something about it collectively." Rejecting "soap box oratory," McFarland favored "intelligent cooperation on the part of Harlem's residents with all who are working for the betterment of the community." (166)

Although Education disappeared from Harlem's newsstands in the summer of 1936 (McFarland blamed rising publishing costs), its message did not disappear. From various sources in the black community came demands that school authorities give Harlem "the finest education New York can afford instead of one that leaves us exactly where we are." Describing the schools in the area as "badly run prisons," the United Parents Association of P.S. 89 called for the Board of Education to employ "heroic efforts" to change the "similarity between the condition of our school and the conditions surrounding the families which it serves." A West Harlem Community Study Group, headed by black educator James E. Allen and Urban League Secretary James Hubert, added fuel to the fire when it disclosed the existence of a great deficiency in recreational resources in the neighborhood. According to the survey, this deficiency was especially acute with regard to school property, where "there are 13 schools with interior yards seldom visited by the sun, without so much as an acre of playing space." The group suggested the immediate construction of new outdoor recreational facilities by the city. A clamor was also raised against the "unofficial" policy of advocating vocational training for Negro students on the ground that "a girl is better off as a seamstress making a living than as a stenographer not making one." To counter this line of reasoning, parent groups and Harlem civic associations met in conference in the fall of 1936 with school counsellors to alert the latter to the burgeoning campaign in the community for the employment of Negro help in Harlem's white and black-owned business and industrial enterprises. (167)

The loudest, most articulate, and most persistent source of demands for educational reform and change in the ghetto was the Permanent Committee for Better Schools in Harlem, an organization which rallied parents and civic groups around the slogan "Don't give our children a half-assed education." Organized on January 18, 1936, the PCBSH was led by the Reverend John W. Robinson of Christ Community Church and drew its support from 85 of the Harlem community's civic, fraternal, social and religious groups, ranging from the Colonel Young post of the American Legion to the Harlem branch of the Communist Party. In addition to its initial demand for action on the recommendations of the Mayor's Commission report, the PCBSH also joined the fight for new schools in Harlem, smaller classes, and more visiting teachers to link the school more closely with the black community. A month after its founding, the Committee circulated a petition on Harlem's streets demanding "Negro principals be appointed to the schools of this district," and calling for the hiring of more black teachers "to replace unsympathetic white

personnel." When the petition was criticized for its separatist bent Reverend Robinson dismissed these criticisms as "divisive" and continued to cry for action within the black community by those most affected by the Board of Education's "deliberate policies of discrimination." (168)

During its first year of operation, Robinson's committee claimed a long list of successes, including the removal of a principal accused of beating a child (the PCBSH had threatened a parents' strike at the school in question), the promise of Mayor LaGuardia that four new schools would be built in the area, and most important, grudging recognition from the Board of Education that the Committee was a force to be reckoned with in the Harlem community. Flushed with these victories, the PCBSH refused to fall into the trap of complacency. Beginning in early 1937, the Committee launched a program to instruct parents on the techniques of school surveying; techniques which included noting the number of outdoor toilets, the conditions of the lunchroom and the number of children in each class without being detected by school authorities. Pressure was also directed towards the appointment of more experienced and dedicated teachers in the Harlem area, and for the introduction of black history courses on the elementary and junior high school level. Culminating a long and bitter fight by black organizations, the PCBSH was finally successful in October, 1937, in forcing the Board to include a portion of Negro Harlem in the zoning territory of the formerly "lily-white" George Washington High School. (169)

By far the most dramatic of the Committee's activities were the mock public trials it conducted in an effort to spotlight superintendents, principals, and teachers who the Committee felt were "unsympathetic to the needs and aspirations of Harlem's residents." Reverend Robinson, white-haired, and with an air of elegance and a booming voice to match, presided as "judge" at these "trials," while the "jury" consisted of Teacher Union representatives; presidents of Harlem Parents Associations; and an occasional politician looking for some free publicity. The first "trial" was held on January 27, 1937, at the Abyssinian Baptist Church before an overflow crowd of more than 1,000 spectators. Charges were presented against Miss Mabel Thresher who had been the replacement for the controversial Miss Louise Tucker at P. S. 90, and who now stood accused (in absentia) for calling Harlem an "Amos and Andy community. The Board was also accused of refusing to tear down the antiquated Wadleigh High School and of delaying plans to replace Harlem’s fire-trap schools with modern, up-to-date structures. After listening to the often emotional testimony, the panel of jurors, headed by NAACP attorney Charles S. Houston, predictably found the Board of Education guilty. Irritated by charges that the "trials" were little more than publicity gimmicks for his Committee; Robinson noted that by concentrating all of these grievances under one roof, the proceedings created the impression that Harlem was speaking with one voice when it came to educational reform in the ghetto - a necessary step if “our district is ever to receive fair and undiscriminatory treatment from school authorities.” (170)

Following close behind the PCBHSH as a voice for educational reform in the ghetto during the 1930’s was the Harlem Committee of the New York City Teachers Union (Local 5 of the American Federation of Teachers). Formed in the fall of 1935 under the leadership of Miss Lucille Spence, a member of Phi Beta Kappa and teacher of biology at Wadleigh High School, the biracial teacher’s group concerned itself with nearly every aspect of ghetto education. The formation of the Harlem Committee as an offshoot of the

militant Teachers Union was intended not to duplicate what were considered the progressive and pro-black efforts of the parent group, but instead to underline the fact that "Harlem's schools are the causative agent of the mental, physical, and moral degeneracy in the Negro community." (171)

LaGuardia's stubborn refusal to make the Mayor's Commission report public or to act decisively on its recommendations forced Miss Spence to call a meeting of community leaders at Wadleigh in December, 1935. At the meeting it was decided to link the struggle of the Harlem Committee for lower class registers; new school buildings, adequate recreational facilities, and special classes for the overaged, with similar struggles by other groups in the area. Speaking as a representative of Harlem's religious associations, the Reverend John Robinson pledged that "the powerful organized church bodies of Harlem will be the first to support the Teachers Union in this fight." (172)

A month after the Wadleigh conference, the Teachers Union issued invitations to all of Harlem's civic and welfare associations to come together with the union and parents groups at St. Martin's Chapel in order to plan "our upcoming right to bring the Mayor's report to life." The result of the St. Martin's meeting was the formation of the aforementioned Permanent Committee for Better Schools in Harlem, with Miss Spence being named as the secretary of the new organization. In the ensuing months, the PCBSH and the Harlem Committee of the Teachers Union worked closely in an attempt to encourage parents to overcome their feelings of helplessness and their timidity in approaching school officials, and in resisting the efforts of principals to control Parent-Teachers Associations. Using monies supplied by the Teachers Union, the Harlem Committee reprinted and distributed "leaked" versions of the Mayor's report which allowed "the people of our community to find out what was going on in the schools." The Harlem Committee also led innumerable delegations to principals' and superintendents' offices, and finally to City Hall, to demand new schools and a Negro on the Board of Education. "It is this kind of working cooperation," wrote Harlem Committee member Alice Citron, "that is showing the parents in the community where we teach that we have common bonds -- that our mutual efforts can and will bring tangible results." (173)

An incident on October 21, 1936, gave the Teachers Union, and especially its Harlem branch, an opportunity to demonstrate the union's concern with the children of the ghetto. On that day, a young Negro boy arrived at P. S. 5 in Harlem to take his younger sister home. The boy emerged from the school an hour later with bruises on his head, his shirt stained with blood, and with the claim that Mr. Gustav Schoenchen, the one-armed principal of P. S. 5, had beaten him in the privacy of his office. The story made eight-column headlines in the Amsterdam News and the New York Age and cries rang out in Harlem for the removal of Schoenchen who was described as "a notorious Negro-hater and child beater." Adding its voice to the fray, the Teachers Union quickly printed a throw-away entitled "Statement of the Facts in the Case of the Brutal Beating of Robert Shelton by Principal Schoenchen," under which was a picture of the boy stripped to the waist and patched up with large bandages and adhesive tape. The caption under the picture read: "Savage Child Beater Must Go!" In the following weeks, the union led the fight for Schoenchen's removal, considering the case "another glaring instance in the school system that reminds them of the cruelty meted out to their children by the Harlem police."

The Board's reluctant decision to transfer the principal out of the Harlem district (he was ultimately cleared of assault by a unanimous verdict of the New York Court of Special Sessions) was hailed by the union, which predictably took most of the credit for the Board's action. (174)

For the remainder of the decade, the Teachers Union and its Harlem chapter eschewed the dramatic incident and stuck close to the central issue of better schools for Harlem. The union made a special effort to "direct the resentment of outraged parents away from the teachers to those forces (the City government and the Board of Education) which are responsible for conditions in Harlem." As a sign of its concern, the union sought to make significant changes in the content of the curriculum used in the area's schools, a curriculum which many blacks felt contributed to the "mental crucifixion of the Negro child." The union arranged courses for Harlem teachers on how to introduce materials on the Negro in the classroom, organized in-service courses on Negro history, and sponsored educational conferences on Negro education featuring speakers of the caliber of Otto Kleinberg, Alain Locke, and Thurgood Marshall. Underlying all of these new additions to the ghetto's educational scene was the union's firm assumption that the school in the black community had an almost decisive influence on the lives of black children and that the teacher was in a crucial position to make that influence a positive one. (175)

The fourth and least influential force for educational change in the community was the Harlem branch of the Communist Party. Anxious to take advantage of anti-Board of Education sentiment, the Party printed a monthly magazine called Harlem Lesson Plan within which Harlem teachers who were ostensibly members of the Party outlined plans to achieve what they called "an educational New Deal for the children and teachers of Harlem." While a number of Party members were also members of the Teachers Union, the goals of the latter were considered purely economic; in contrast to the Party's program which sought to weld teachers, parents and community agencies into a single, all-powerful political force.

The construction of P. S. 68 in October, 1938 (one of the four schools LaGuardia promised for the area), with its "cream-colored walls, blocked linoleum floors and beautifully painted toilets," was interpreted by the Party as an example of what could be done if the black community stood together as one. The Communists, however, were not above giving credit where credit was due, often applauding the Permanent Committee for Better Schools in Harlem and the Teachers Union for their "militant defense of the principle that the black people of this community demand a good education for their children." (176)

In summary, the decade of the 1930's found Harlemites suffering under the weight of civil disturbance, social dislocation, and an inferior educational system. There were, however, some signs to indicate that blacks had taken steps to counter the pernicious and community-destroying influences in their environment. Activists within the Harlem community offered a variety of programs designed to aid black people in controlling the vicissitudes of ghetto life. The emergence of the more affluent black churches as educational and social centers; the effort on the part of the "Y's" to broaden their appeal to include lower-class blacks, and the rise of the socially conscious organizations of Father Divine and his rivals were

all indications that Harlem in the 1930's had entered a new and important phase of community-oriented activism.

Nowhere was this spirit of community activism more strongly felt than in the area of ghetto education. Awakening from decades of powerlessness, the Harlem community in the 1930's flexed its collective muscles and demanded educational reform. Convinced of the fact that an improvement in the quality of education in the ghetto school would have a beneficial effect on the quality of life in the ghetto as a whole, educational militants of both races rallied Harlemites around the charge that the public school system had seriously neglected both the education of black children and the school's important role as an integral part of the black community's social fabric. Subsequently, demands were heard for the construction of new schools and playgrounds, for substantive changes in the curriculum used in schools with large black enrollments, for a nonracist approach to the vocational education of blacks, and for the removal of racist administrative and teaching personnel from Harlem schools. By the end of the decade, it was clear that Harlem would no longer settle for half a loaf as far as educational standards were concerned. Just as important, the ghetto's residents appeared unwilling to tolerate much longer a public school system in which the ghetto school played little or no part in the formation of community thinking, in the setting of community standards, in the sharpening of community goals, or in the development of community leadership. (177)

VI. THE NEW DEAL'S EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS IN HARLEM

We offer education that meets community needs. (178)

-Gustav Stumpf, WPA official in New York (1937)

This project of yours (in Harlem) is sponsored by the Board of Education and there are people with degrees two feet long fighting to get on it. (179) (1939)

The demands heard in Harlem for educational and social reform were clouded by the ghetto's dependence on outside sources for financial and related support. Observers noted that little could realistically be accomplished if local, state, and federal agencies refused to cooperate with community efforts to replace chaos with order. Although outside aid was desperately needed, black leaders saw definite dangers in relying upon agencies such as the federal government for assistance. Recalling the government's poor performance record in the ghetto during preceding decades, black skeptics questioned whether the Roosevelt reform programs could be administered with the best interests of the Harlem community in mind.

Despite its much-heralded creation in the spring of 1933, the Emergency Education Program failed to make its impact felt in Harlem until many months later. Part of the reason for the delay was the standard operating procedures set for the EEP by Harry Hopkins on November 25, 1933. On that date, Hopkins announced that $10,000,000 in federal funds would soon be made available to the states and municipalities for the development of educational projects. According to Hopkins, this "educational new deal" carried with it a certain number of obligations for the participating localities (1) that local authorities make a strenuous effort to hire unemployed teachers and other out-of-work professionals on these projects (2) that the local sponsor retain "the major share" of responsibility for the selection of project sites and in the selection of project personnel (3) that no regular school course or teacher be replaced with an EEP course or an EEP teacher and (4) that whether the sponsor of a project was a small settlement house or the New York City Board of Education, it was required to supply at least 25 per cent of the project's total cost. (180)

The underlying theme of these conditions was that the success or failure of the Emergency Education Program rested to a large extent on the local sponsor's willingness to suggest projects, to back them financially, and to follow through administratively to make them going concerns. Illustrating this point was the case of a group of Harlemites who, in the winter of 1934, sought to secure a much-needed Emergency Nursery School for their area. When apprised of the group's efforts, Mayor LaGuardia responded by asking School Superintendent Harold Campbell to determine whether or not such a project could be undertaken in Harlem. After six months of study (or as his critics charged, of delay), Campbell reported that his department had "no budgetary provision for emergency nursery schools." "There is no doubt in my mind," he told the Mayor, "that such nursery schools could be established with

great benefit in Harlem ... if it were possible to obtain quarters for them and to staff them when they are set up." The suggestion by the petitioning group that public school buildings be used to house the nursery classes was "impossible because our schools in the Harlem area are badly overcrowded now." Campbell concluded his report to the Mayor on a pessimistic note: "It is impossible to obtain adequate staffing for projects already authorized and it would certainly not be wise to undertake additional projects or to attempt additional projects when the prospects of maintaining them are so slight." (181)

Superintendent Campbell's failure to take the initiative in securing funds for the proposed nursery school project was not well received in Harlem. The Reverend William Lloyd Imes, pastor of St. James Presbyterian Church and president of the New York Alumni Club of Union Theological Seminary, reacted angrily against what he called the "lethargic local set-up of the EEP in New York City." Writing to James Atkins shortly after the EEP's incorporation into the agenda of the WPA, Imes condemned the "dilatory tactics being pursued here in the construction of nursery schools in Harlem," and asked the black education specialist to "put pressure on our local authorities to see that our Negro community is not trifled with." Reminding Atkins that "a Harlem committee has been working on the problem of nursery schools in the area for over three years to no avail," Imes demanded that the Roosevelt Administration "display its true intentions and end the gross discrimination against this neighborhood." (182)

A month after registering his complaint, Imes received a long, apologetic letter from Grace Langdon, the national director of the Emergency Nursery School Program. Langdon expressed her "profound sorrow that you feel that there has been some discrimination in the matter of a nursery school in Harlem," and assured the preacher "of the very genuine interest we have in such a school in your area." "Perhaps," she added, "the reason that it has not been located there may be the building regulations over which we have no control." Before Imes could reply, Langdon received a letter from Mrs. Margaret Allen, a Negro member of the EEP's administrative staff in New York City. According to Allen, Imes was remiss in his "bitter and unreliable" accusations against the program. "Harlem has certainly added a great deal to my education," declared Mrs. Allen, "and I want to assure you that everybody, not only in my office, but in the whole Works Division, is interested in doing everything possible for Harlem." (183)

While these charges and counter-charges were being made, James Atkins was quietly taking a personal hand in the investigation of why, after two years of futile effort, Harlem was still without a single EEP nursery school. Writing Imes in the summer of 1935, Atkins disclosed at least one possible source of the difficulty:

I was informed that a place had been found for a nursery school in Harlem which will pass inspection under the rules and regulations of the Board of Education. That place is the building in which your church is housed. I was also informed that your congregation may consider it an imposition to request

that they furnish heat and light in addition to housing facilities. Perhaps the responsibility is a little heavy, but a number of churches, both white and colored, in all parts of the Nation are assuming it. Then, too, one of the requirements of the original authorization for nursery schools was that housing and other facilities such as heat and light be furnished by the community. Therefore, a solution to the problem in Harlem might more easily found if the community were willing to cooperate in this matter. (184)

Imes' continued refusal to comply with EEP project requirements shifted the search for a suitable Emergency Nursery School site to the massive Abyssinian Baptist Church, pastored by Dr. Adam Clayton Powell. As early as January, 1935, Dr. Powell had offered the use of his church for such a school on the condition that the federal government pay the cost of any additional construction or repairs needed to make room for the school. Contrary to usual procedure, the Works Division of the FERA agreed to contribute $500 for the wiring and enclosing of the church's roof on the grounds that "the needs of the children in Harlem are very great and it has been impossible to find space in other facilities." However, as soon as all the arrangements were complete, Dr. Powell withdrew his offer "with no explanation to federal authorities." A keen disappointment, Powell's(1) change of mind soured many local EEP officials on the idea of housing the nursery school in a church (all churches in Harlem, their reasoning went, were said to have their special critics and if a school were located in any of them it might inherit all the criticisms which were directed against the church housing the unit). Others in the EEP displayed no such reservations. "We are ready," declared Margaret Allen, "to place a unit in Harlem the moment a building is offered by the locality and is accepted by the Board of Education. We have had a staff ready and waiting since October, 1934." (185)

Efforts to find a suitable location for Harlem's first Emergency Nursery School finally came to an end in October, 1935, when the New York Methodist Society, owner of a three-story house on 129th Street and Fifth Avenue, agreed to allow the EEP to use the property for educational purposes. In addition, the Society promised to pay any rent, heat, and light expenses connected with the project, as well as any expenses involved in upgrading the facility to meet the necessary fire and safety regulations. The site itself was selected for reasons other than simply the willingness of its sponsor to contribute heavily towards the project's support. As EEP officials pointed out, the building was located in a section of Harlem with the highest juvenile delinquency rate, where the children were the hungriest, and where the greatest proportion of relief money received by Negro families was paid out in the form e: rent (nearly 60 percent). While site selection in other sections of the city was usually followed by an intensive drive to acquaint nearby residents with the purposes of the emergency school, in the case of the Harlem school, its deliberate location in the heart of an area so badly in need of its services made the job of alerting the community to the school's existence easy. Word of the nursery's opening spread like wildfire throughout the neighborhood with the result that the "children came in faster than they could be taken care of." (186)

Developing quickly into a facility handling an average of 300 pre-school children per month, the nursery school offered the child an opportunity for healthy growth. In sharp contrast to the atmosphere in many

of their homes, the children spent the duration of the day in the hands of a calm, trained adult, in peaceful, well-ventilated and clean surroundings. Each child was given a mid-day nap and some received clean clothes donated by local charities. The average monthly diet of an enrollee consisted of 622 quarts of milk (in many homes milk money was a rare commodity) and 21 pints of cod liver oil administered at regular intervals as a preventative to rickets and other diseases related to malnutrition. (187)

In keeping with the general goals of the EEP, the professional staff of the nursery (a biracial group of from twenty to twenty-five unemployed child care specialists) made a determined effort to involve as many Harlemites as possible in the operation of the project. During an average month, the staff made 219 contacts with other private and public agencies on behalf of the enrollees and their parents. A typical case involved a family of seven who had been found by a Home Relief investigator to be living in a dark and gloomy four-room railroad flat on Park Avenue and 130th Street. The five children, ranging in age from five months to eight years, all had the unmistakable look of hunger in their faces. Through the efforts of the investigator, the five-month old child was quickly placed in the Emergency Nursery School, and after six months of intensive daily care, her body weight more than doubled. Her attendance at the school also enabled her mother to find work during the daytime hours. In similar cases, parents expressed their gratitude to the EEP by allowing their homes to serve as weekly meeting places between the staff of the school and other Harlem parents experiencing difficulties in the rearing of their pre-school children. (188)

Harlem's first Emergency Nursery School was regarded almost without exception as a definite step forward in the servicing of one of the ghetto's most neglected social needs. Its success encouraged EEP officials to tackle another of the community's problems: the rapid rise in black juvenile delinquency. The means chosen to curtail this problem involved the creation of a Child Guidance Program sponsored by the Board of Education and funded through the WPA. The program began operation in the summer of 1935 when 20 youth counsellors, 11 social workers, 1 physician, 1 psychiatrist, and 1 nurse (all of whom were Negro) were assigned to Harlem to investigate case studies of hard-core school truants. This staff of formerly unemployed professionals filtered through the schools of the ghetto, assisting regularly appointed teachers by coaching "problem cases" in reading and by accompanying difficult children on class trips. More importantly, the WTA group established neighborhood contacts and visited the homes of black truants on a regular basis. (189)

Simultaneously with this effort, WPA officials in New York City sponsored a survey of 50,053 residences in East Harlem designed to document the relationship between the environment and the asocial behavior of children. The survey collected data on the condition of heating and water facilities, toilet and bath locations, rentals per month, and the number of persons living in each room. The discouraging statistics uncovered by the surveyors (all of whom were residents of the immediate neighborhood) resulted in the creation of the WPA's Youth Division in September, 1936, with an agenda tailored to meet the needs of the 390,000 unemployed New York City youths between 16 and 25 years of age. To meet what were considered the particularly urgent needs of black youth, a Harlem office of the new Division was established at St. Phillips Parish House on 133rd Street with facilities for guidance and recreation

provided by an all-black staff of WPA employees. Similar centers in the Harlem area were later established in church basements, empty stores, schools and cellar clubs. In each center, medical, psychological, and psychiatric examinations were administered free of charge to participating adolescents, and group therapy was employed with the cooperation of the neighborhood's educational, welfare, and protective agencies. (190)

The Harlem Division of the WPA's clinic program for problem cases was significant in that, with only one exception, its employees were all Negroes. This situation did not arise by accident. Local administrators approved of the segregated staffing policy for two reasons (1) the schools in the area were nearly all black and (2) the work of the program involved gaining the confidence and affection of children who had previously demonstrated great hostility to the predominantly white teaching staffs in Harlem schools. Once under way, the project maintained a psychiatric clinic to which an average of 35 cases per month were referred by school authorities. When evidence existed that home conditions were the cause of a child's asocial behavior, the clinic asked for and received the cooperation of the New York City Home Relief Bureau in obtaining an increased rent allowance to improve the home situation. In cases where malnutrition was diagnosed as the culprit, the clinic secured extra supplements of cod liver oil for the child. (191)

In response to the popularity of the Harlem clinic, another facility was opened in February, 1937, across the street from P. S. 89. The new clinic was again purposely located in a section of Harlem where its services could do the most good. The area around the facility was infamous for its high rates of congestion, poverty and crime and included what was generally considered to be the worst block in the entire city (142nd Street between Lenox and 7th Avenues) in terms of the incidence of tuberculosis, delinquency, and malnutrition. The clinic, manned by WPA employees and sponsored by the Board of Education, afforded medical, diagnostic, advisory, and therapeutic services to P. S. 89 and other schools within District 12. The staff (again all black) consisted of a psychiatrist, a general practitioner, an orthopedist, a psychologist, two social case workers, two medical social workers, one trained psychiatric social worker, and two clerical workers. Agencies cooperating with the clinic included the Emergency Relief Board, the Children's Aid Society, the YMCA, and the New York Urban League. Children found in need of tonsillectomies were referred to nearby Harlem Hospital while those in need of dental work or tuberculosis examinations were sent to the Harlem Health Center on 123rd Street. (192)

Handling over 5000 cases during its first year of operation, the clinic scored a number of dramatic successes in its fight to control truancy and delinquency in the Harlem community. In one case, an eleven-year-old boy (a recent arrival from the South) was referred to the clinic by his principal on the grounds that he was "antisocial, lacking in self-control, three years retarded, and a menace to the rest of his class." Once in the clinic, the boy spent endless hours drawing pictures of the cabin in which he had lived in the South and of the dimly lit room he now shared with his brother in a Harlem flat. An EEP home visiting teacher watching the boy sensed the child's feeling of alienation from his new surroundings. A WPA doctor examining the child found him to be in a rachitic condition and he was placed on a diet of cod liver oil, milk, fresh fruit and vegetables. An increased Home Relief budget was

obtained to insure proper food and better home conditions, and an application was made for a pension for the child's mother. In the meantime, dental treatment for the boy was arranged, and he was placed on the free lunch list in school. WPA workers also gathered badly needed clothing for the boy and for the rest of the family. Before the clinic finally closed its doors in 1942, many thousands of Harlem adolescents had received similar service from the neighborhood clinic's hard-working and dedicated personnel. (193)

The WPA's concern for the mental and physical needs of the Harlem community was reflected in the agency's attempt to deal directly with the ghetto's after-school recreational needs. Anxious to reverse the trend towards the poolroom and the movie house as popular avenues of recreation, the WPA created 10 recreation centers in the Harlem area staffed by a total of 750 men and women, most of whom were recruited from the ghetto itself. The new centers offered black youth a combined recreational and study program which ran from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. and from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Mondays through Fridays, a decided improvement over pre-New Deal programs which were open only one or two evenings a week. Coupled with the usual sports activities were classes in dancing, stage-scenery building, library work, and puppeteering. The WPA also organized Community Boys' Clubs in Harlem and staffed them with unemployed black social workers whose job it was to act as liaisons between black parents and school authorities.

The clubs made a special appeal to hard-core gang members and by the end of the decade were successful in ridding the Harlem area of many of its fighting gangs. WPA recreation workers also proved invaluable in the struggle to keep the financially-plagued Utopia Children's House (with a monthly enrollment of 800 children from age 3 to 16) operating at full capacity. (194)

One of the most popular recreation centers was housed in the basement of the New York Urban League's offices on West 136th Street. The center, which had gained national publicity for its work in combatting black juvenile delinquency, was visited by a reporter from the Chicago Defender in the summer of 1937. "I was impressed," the reporter recalled, "with what had been done to convert the cellar into a club room with furniture, books, and recreational facilities for nearly one hundred members." According to the young Negro WPA supervisor in charge, club activities included an in-depth analysis of the Mayor's Commission report on the causes of the Harlem riot, and the "composition of songs to be sung in Harlem to incite the Negro to react against the conditions which keep him down." When asked if perhaps a "song of hope wouldn't be better," the supervisor quickly replied, "God helps those who help themselves." (195)

The WPA's successful and innovative work with pre-school children and adolescents was complemented by the agency's efforts to provide free adult education courses to the thousands of urban residents unable or unwilling to return to the formal classroom. To publicize these efforts, EEP officials in the fall of 1933, distributed 200,000 leaflets across the nation urging adults to "enroll in one or more of the five hundred free courses available at centers within easy reach of your home." The response in many urban

centers of the North was overwhelming. “It is extremely sad,” commented an adult education specialist as he watched enrollees arriving for class, “to think that the craving for education for further development along artistic and industrial lines or for general self-improvement should have its impetus in the sordid results of a financial and economic debacle.” (196)

Unfortunately for the section of New York City hit hardest by the Depression, the announcement of the start of adult education classes had little immediate impact. Reasons for this delay in implementing the program in Harlem centered around the Board of Education's reluctance to sponsor projects in the ghetto until such time as the full cooperation of Harlem's community agencies was achieved. Apparently tired of the Board's “wait and see” policy, the Executive Board of the New York Urban League passed a resolution on May 21, 1935, demanding that an Emergency Adult Education Center be established in Harlem. Executive Director of the League, James Hubert, promptly sent the resolution off to Harry Hopkins along with the following comment:

For the past five years, the League, with the aid of the State Education Department, has been sponsoring adult education work not only in our own building but in other sections of Harlem, setting up classes wherever it was possible to obtain space and equipment. We are compelled to refuse admission to students who would avail themselves of the training offered, and feel that none is more vital to the well-being of the community than the projects now before us, embracing as it does occupational training and fitting workers for jobs. Could we have someone look into this situation to determine the possibility of constructing, purchasing or leasing a building in Harlem that might be designated as a center for adult education. (197)

Although Hopkins couched his reply in generalities, it soon became obvious that Hubert had made his point and made it well. Within two months of the exchange of letters, the Board of Education and local EEP officials announced the opening of Harlem's first Emergency Relief Act of 1935. In the following weeks, the EEP made a concerted effort to alert Harlemites to the existence of the literacy class, efforts which took the form of posters on subway walls, on the El, and on trolley and bus lines. The addition of Emergency classes in housekeeping, beauty parlor work, and catering further stimulated the ghetto's interest in the program, and by December, 1935, nearly 1,000 Harlemites were registered in adult education classes. (198)

These attendance figures did not, however, obscure the fact that the Adult Education projects were hampered in their initial stages by a number of serious difficulties. Due to the lack of adult education facilities in the community, WPA classes were at first forced to convene in poorly equipped basement rooms or in crowded lofts with poor lighting and ventilation. The procedures and techniques used in the literacy classes were hampered by the lack of materials and inadequate teacher training. To add to the problem, local black businessmen protested against the free training courses offered by the WPA on the grounds that "Harlem is already overcrowded with trained people who cannot find employment." Vowing a "fight to the finish," the Harlem Beauty Culturists League attacked what it termed the "federal

government's outrageous policy of training more beauty parlor operators in Harlem when those who have paid to learn the work are now starving for lack of work." (199)

Despite these early roadblocks, adult education in the black community moved forward in 1936 at a brisk pace. As the program became more of a fixture in the neighborhood, churches, settlement houses, women's clubs, and fraternal organizations began competing with each other to obtain adult education classes in their quarters. The result of this competition was a drastic expansion of WPA courses offered in the Harlem area. By the end of the year, classes in literacy training and vocational training for adults were joined by classes in nearly fifty subjects, including arithmetic, creative writing, urban society, community adjustment, crime prevention, science, health education, languages, typing and stenography. Almost without exception, the supervisors and workers on the project (50 per cent of whom were black) were given high praise by those attending the classes. (200)

Contributing to the generally positive public response to the WPA's adult education program was the active support given the program by the churches of Harlem. Led by the Abyssinian Baptist Church and the St. James Presbyterian Church, churches in the area developed extensive educational departments (including classes in literacy, music, art, dramatics, dress-making and parliamentary law) which were staffed by EEP teachers whose salaries were paid for through WPA funds. At St. Phillips' Episcopal Church, one of the wealthiest in the ghetto, a kindergarten, primary, junior, and senior after-school program was established which employed 96 EEP teachers and gave instruction to over 1,300 black students. At the less affluent Salem Methodist Episcopal Church, Reverend J. C. Hill boasted of the WPA-staffed program enjoyed by the members of his congregation which included classes in high school and college subjects, interior decorating, shorthand, and typing. The church also operated a child day care center where a trained EEP staff watched over the children of working mothers. (201)

James Hubert's skepticism over the willingness of local WPA and school officials to come to the financial aid of Harlem's social agencies was dispelled on June 26, 1936, when an adult guidance center, sponsored by the Board of Education and financed through the WPA's Adult Education Program, opened at the League's New York office. The new center provided its clients with information on employment prospects, and functioned as a referral agency, sending applicants to jobs in schools, libraries, museums, and recreation centers. The WPA supplied the center with filing cabinets and lumber for partitions, giving the office an atmosphere of semi-privacy. Clients found in need of dental work were sent to WPA-staffed dental clinics in the neighborhood for diagnosis and treatment, while those inquiring as to the whereabouts of WPA classes were directed to the appropriate school, church, or community center. The buzz of activity at the new center led the formerly-critical James Hubert to enthusiastically praise the work of the WPA for allowing blacks, as he put it, "to work together in a group as real and as intimate as if they were members of the same family." (202)

Bringing blacks together emotionally as well as physically was also an integral part of the WPA's Workers Education project in Harlem. Except for a course in Negro history offered by the International Garment

Workers Union at its Harlem organizational headquarters, the ghetto was devoid of programs aimed at educating the black worker to the problems inherent in an industrial society. Hope for a change in the situation was kindled by George Zook's announcement at the 1934 Washington Conference on Workers Education of the start of a major drive by the federal government to "make the public schools useful to the American worker." Seconding Zook's concern for an educated labor force was Lewis Alderman who declared that "few people would agree on the causes of the Depression, but practically all people would agree that the way out is through education." (203)

Despite the sense of urgency voiced by Zook and Alderman, a full-scale workers' education program did not reach the streets of Harlem until the summer of 1935. The decision to introduce workers' education classes in the ghetto was in direct response to a massive tide of protest letters sent by Harlemite to the Washington desk of Hilda Smith, the WPA's Workers Education specialist. Anxious to avoid unfavorable publicity, Smith hurriedly met with A. Drummond Jones, New York State Supervisor for Workers Education, to discuss the possibility of "starting some work in the Harlem area." As a result of this conference and of follow-up conferences with Ambrose Caliver and James Atkins, Smith's office was authorized in July 1935, to organize 25 nation-wide centers to train Negro teachers in the principles of workers' education. By the spring of 1936, workers' education classes were being offered at two Harlem sites (the Harlem Labor Center on 125th Street and in the store-front office of Harlem's Own Cooperative on 7th Avenue). The all-black teaching staffs at these centers made a conscious effort to relate every lesson to the real world of the worker and his community. Topics frequently discussed included Negro history, Negro problems in New York City, and the Job future for Negro youth. After surveying the first six months of the program, Lester Granger, director of the Harlem Advisory Committee on Workers Education, noted that "definite good has already come to the Harlem community through the establishment of these classes and infinitely more beneficial result can come to the community by the continuance of this educational program." (204)

In addition to promoting academic activities, the WPA was also instrumental in upgrading the cultural life of the ghetto at a time when thoughts of economic survival threatened to drown out the creative impulse. To be sure, the New Deal did not create out of thin air an interest in preserving Harlem's artistic, musical, and dramatic resources.

The impetus for such a program had its roots in the 1920's when local institutions such as the Adult Education Committee of the 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library, the Harlem Art Workshop, and the Harlem Artists Guild offered young black artists an opportunity to display their creative talents. By the early 1930's, these black groups were calling on the city to provide funds for a community art center for Harlem with facilities for art classes, studios, and lecture halls. The response from municipal authorities was less than enthusiastic. (205)

On January 15, 1934, the first federally-subsidized art class made its appearance in Harlem. Parents were initially skeptical of the class; reasoning that their economic plight would hardly be softened by sending

their children to art school. Through the combined efforts of the Harlem Artists Guild and FEP administrators this skepitcism was soon replaced with enthusiasm. By the middle of 1936, 1,400 Harlemites per month were participating in the WPA's free art classes in neighborhood schools, community centers, churches, and "Y's." The response was so encouraging that when the Federal Art Project was created in 1937, a unit was immediately formed in Harlem. The Harlem unit was expressly designed to help unemployed artists and to expand the opportunity for art education to the masses in the ghetto. Under the guidance of the art teaching division of the project, nearly 100 free classes were set up in schools, libraries, settlement houses, and social clubs. (206)

The availability of federal funds and the increased sensitivity of the LaGuardia Administration to the needs of Harlem revived the idea of a community art center. The idea of such a center attracted many in the community who rejected flatly the concept of art as the sole privilege of the wealthy, and who, instead, supported the notion that in a well-rounded community an art center was just as indispensable as the public library. Shelved earlier because of the lack of funds and municipal interest, the center became a reality on November 26, 1937, when Eleanor Roosevelt dedicated an 8,000-square-foot loft on 110th Street and Lenox Avenue as the Harlem Community Center. The President's wife was introduced at the opening ceremonies by Audrey McMahon, New York director of the Federal Arts Project, who commented that "this facility was undertaken only after it became certain that the Negro community wants and needs it." As outlined by Mrs. Roosevelt, the Center's creation marked a new kind of federal-community partnership wherein the Federal Art Project supplied the teaching staff and the community (represented by a Citizen's Sponsoring Committee, headed by A. Phillip Randolph and Bill (Bojangles) Robinson), assumed responsibility for rent and general upkeep. Moreover, it was agreed that the WPA would retain temporary authority over management and the technical operation of the staff, with the Sponsoring Committee serving as a liaison between the black community and the Center. Once community support for the facility had been broadened and secured, the entire support and control of the Center would revert completely to the Harlem community. (207)

The operation of Harlem's new headquarters for cultural activities was a model of grass roots democracy in action. Membership on the Sponsoring Committee was open to all regardless of race or religion and could be had for as little as one dollar. At the Center itself, day and evening classes were offered in painting, costume design, lithography, block printing, and photography. The Center also operated a visiting lecture service for any organization in the community unable to attend the formal classes. Periodically, exhibits were held which highlighted the work of local black artists on such innovative subjects as "Art and Psychopathology." The Center's staff cooperated closely with school authorities and often visited the schools in the area with lectures and presentations on famous Negro artists and the role of the artist in the black community. (208)

Funds for the operation of the facility were gathered in a number of ways, the most dramatic of which was a January, 1938, benefit dance at the Savoy Ballroom on 140th Street and Lenox Avenue. In attendance were such notables as W. C. Handy, Louis Armstrong, Cab Calloway, Eddie Cantor, Benny Goodman, and Joe Louis. Speaking to an overflow audience, A. Phillip Randolph boasted that the Harlem

Community Center "was the best-equipped art project in the entire city." "The unqualified success of the Center," Randolph added, "is due in large part to the magnificent cooperation of Harlem's schools, churches, settlement houses, and orphanages." Poet Langston Hughes closed out the evening's festivities with a speech crediting the WPA for the appearance "of a new art consciousness and a new pride in art in our great colored community of Harlem." (209)

The Harlem Community Center was one of a series of WPA-administered programs designed to revitalize the drab, grey streets of the New York ghetto. Adding to this spirit were the projects sponsored by the WPA's National Youth Administration. The NYA made its first appearance in Harlem in December, 1935, when a branch office was opened at the Harlem YWCA on 137th Street. The Executive Secretary of the "Y," Mrs. Cecilia Saunders, was hired by the youth agency to serve as chairlady of an all-black Community Advisory Committee. Armed with the task of drumming up black support for the NYA, Saunders' committee undertook a vigorous campaign of public education aimed at "making young Negroes know what opportunities were open to them." After numerous talks before black organizations, conferences with community leaders, and ads in the black press, the committee was able to attract over 3,000 black youths to the program, and to secure the cooperation of 45 agencies in the district, including churches, community houses, schools, and health centers. (210)

Once in operation, the NYA projects in Harlem proved extremely useful, both to the youthful participants and to the community. A Job Preparation Institute was created in cooperation with the New York Urban League to give young blacks an accurate picture of the job market in the city. Jobs were found for NYA enrollees as typists, stenographers, and receptionists -- jobs which were difficult to come by for nonwhites prior to the New Deal. The youth agency worked closely with the schools in the area, sending speakers to PTA meetings to deliver talks on such topics as "The Relationship of the NYA to the Education of Negro Youth." In addition, the NYA established youth centers which offered athletics, classes in handicrafts, a kindergarten, health talks to expectant mothers, and a free employment referral service.

Administered in the ghetto by black employees of the NYA, these projects remained untainted with discrimination. Blacks employed at these centers received the same pay as whites employed by the NYA in other sections of the city. Further proof of the agency's nonprejudicial administration was supplied by the NYA's Division of Negro Affairs which noted that the percentage of blacks on NYA projects in New York City exceeded the proportion of Negroes in the city's youth relief population. (211)

By December, 1937, the New Deal's community-oriented projects had made inroads in the social and educational fabric of the Harlem ghetto. Harlem's EEP operation had grown dramatically since its inception in the fall of 1934, from a total of four centers and a staff of three, to 34 fully equipped centers employing 127 teachers. The total number of subjects taught in these centers had mushroomed from two to 45, while the average weekly enrollment rose from an estimated 1,000 in 1935 to 6,000 two years later. The goals of the program had also grown. No longer exclusively concerned with relieving the plight of the unemployed teacher, the EEP, in the words of New York's WPA Adult Education Director, Gustav

Stumpf, "now aims to place knowledge within the reach of all in Harlem who desire it." In keeping with this commitment, local EEP officials launched studies on the elimination of racial antagonisms through education, conducted an inventory of manuscripts at the Schomburg Collection, and developed a new curriculum on African history and culture for the public school system. Black youths also shared in WPA-staffed activities at the Urban League and at the Harlem branches of the YM and YWCA, while many others studied Negro history in WPA-run Youth Clubs, or received health and psychological aid at WPA clinics. In the area of culture, well-attended art music, and drama classes, as well as all-black stage productions, testified to the WPA's sensitivity to the principle that all Harlemites, regardless of age or socio-economic status, should share in the intellectual and cultural life of their community. (212)

As indicated by the fight to install the area's first emergency nursery school, these accomplishments were not achieved without considerable bickering and controversy. Explaining much of the controversy was the fact that Washington authorities left a great deal of decision-making in the hands of local educational authorities and local WPA administrators in New York. The net effect of this operating procedure was to create doubts in the black community as to the sincerity of local white officials, who all too often in the past had consciously or subconsciously neglected the educational needs of the ghetto. (213)

Despite assurances by the usually skeptical W. E. B. DuBois that "the New Deal in New York City has envisaged the Negro in practically all of its adopted plans," blacks in Harlem expressed doubts that such an optimistic evaluation was in order. These doubts were first concretized during the fall of 1935 at a mass meeting called by the Harlem-based Joint Conference Against Discriminatory Practices. Addressing their complaints to Victor Ridder, the newly-appointed WPA administrator for New York City, the conferees attacked what they called "rampant discrimination in the WPA, arbitrary dismissals of 1,500 workers on home relief, and the resulting hardships to Harlem families." Listening quietly to these charges was Denver Young, Ridder's choice for the newly-created post of Special Assistant on Negro Problems, who later assured the Joint Conference of "the good intentions of Mr. Ridder and his capable staff." As one reporter covering the event noted, "his assurances were greeted by polite applause from an audience more interested in action rather than City Hall promises." (214)

In the following months, the WPA's operations in New York City continued to elicit negative black opinion. Reacting to charges that Negroes were being given "short shrift" on government jobs, Ridder took the WPA's case directly to the Harlem community. Speaking before an overflow crowd at Mother Zion Baptist Church, he recalled the special appointments his office had made to guard against discriminatory practices, and warned his listeners "to beware of false prophets who will continually raise questions that no one can solve." Ridder followed these words of caution with two announcements one, that Urban League official Lemuel Foster had joined his staff as a consultant on Negro affairs, and two, that plans had been finalized for the opening of Harlem's first WPA Dental Clinic (there were seven such clinics in the city as a whole) which would be staffed with 13 dentists, a dental hygienist, and three dental assistants. When asked later who these "false prophets" were, Ridder pointed to what he called

"the communistic leadership of certain WPA union groups." "These communists," he snapped, "don't believe in God, in the American family or government." (215)

Predictably, Ridder's reply raised more questions than it answered. Critics, angered by the implication that they were less than patriotic, demanded Ridder's immediate removal on the grounds of "incompetence." The demands were so loud that Harry Hopkins himself saw fit to publicly bail the WPA Administrator out with a terse: "He has done a good job for us." The WPA chief quickly followed up these anemic words of support with a message to all state WPA administrators warning that "discrimination on any basis, personal, political, or otherwise should not be tolerated." Anxious to find the source of all the controversy in the New York region, Eleanor Roosevelt spent a day in the city talking to Ridder and inspecting the WPA educational and recreational projects at the 137th Street YWCA. The result of the meeting was an announcement by the hard-pressed administrator that two more blacks would be appointed to the WPA's medical staff in New York. "You men," Ridder later told the new appointees, "cannot afford to fail in your new jobs because many local WPA officials are opposed to the advancement of the colored worker and would seize upon any failure to bolster the illusion that Negroes are inefficient and unreliable."

Admitting that job discrimination had increased in the city, Ridder once more blamed the situation on "the population increase in Harlem and the exploitation of that section by both white and colored publicity seekers who are presently trying to organize white and black WPA teachers into unions." (216)

The most telling reply to the WPA's black critics consisted of a gala Harlem WPA Festival which was held at the St. Mark's Episcopal Church during the week of June 8-15, 1936. Designed to show the extent of community involvement in the WPA program, the festival featured exhibits in the fields of art, music, education, and recreation, with entertainment supplied by the Negro Melody Singers and the Lenox Trio units of the Federal Music Project in Harlem. A special exhibit of products made in the ghetto's factories was prominently displayed under a banner reading "Manufactured in Harlem for Harlem Patronage." Among the list of speakers was Gertrude Ayer, who praised the WPA for its "invaluable service to our children." Ridder, for his part, used the occasion to look back at the record of the WPA in the nation's largest black ghetto. "As far as we're concerned," he told a crowd of 1,000, "discrimination is dead. On the first of July, I am going to close 8½ months of activity in the WPA and the proudest page in the whole history is going to be the work we've done to give the colored groups in this city the opportunity we know they deserve." (217)

The acknowledged success of the Harlem Festival failed to convince black leaders of the racial sincerity and administrative competence of Victor Ridder. Viewing the erstwhile WPA official as "political dynamite" in an election year, Hopkins sought and "reluctantly" accepted Ridder’s decision to retire quietly from office during the July 4th weekend of 1936. His replacement was Arkansas-born Colonel Brehon Somervillle, a men with a reputation for talking straight and to the point. When asked by a reporter from the Pittsburgh Courier why he thought Ridder decided to step down, Somerville quickly replied that "Ridder was let go because people have been telling a lot of lies about him." (218)

Somerville's frankness was surpassed only by his tireless efforts to defend the quantity and quality of WPA projects in New York City. On September 1, 1936, he conferred with Lewis Alderman in Washington and received a promise that no educational project in the city would be curtailed before election day. Somerville also appealed to Reverend John W. Johnson, a recent black appointee to the Emergency Relief Bureau, to make a statement supporting the WPA's activities in Harlem. Johnson readily agreed and released a statement to the black press noting that "Harlem had the lowest illiteracy rate for any section in New York City," and lauding the WPA's educational program in the ghetto as "the greatest adventure in adult and pre-school education the Negro community has ever seen... which has brought a remarkable and natural response from the people of Harlem." Oswald Garrison Villard also lent his voice to the pro-WPA offensive by asserting that "Negroes are given WPA jobs on terms of absolute equality with the white workers, with occasional exceptions, and these are quickly being corrected." (219)

As election day neared, official praise of the WPA escalated. In October, Somerville released a "WPA balance sheet" showing 46,000 WPA workers employed in the city at a cost of $29,000,000. Reverend Johnson, as head of the ERB's advisory committee on Negro problems, disclosed that since "Colonel Somerville has taken office, the number of blacks in executive WPA posts has risen from 9 to 63." On October 13, the Colonel announced the start of a remedial reading project "which will be of great service to the backward children of this city," and in a last minute pre-election gesture Harold Campbell ruled that "all children in New York City are now eligible for free lunch regardless of the relief status of their parents." (220)

With the election over, the WPA's office in New York City was faced with an even more serious difficulty than that of convincing blacks to vote Democratic. The new problem grew out of the White House's decision in 1937 to reduce sharply expenditures for New Deal programs, including those related to education. Distress at the proposed cutback was particularly intense in New York. In a brief sent to Alderman and signed by nearly the entire supervisory force of the city's EEP operation, a protest was raised against the rumored 5 per cent across the board reduction in supervisory personnel. Warning that what had been accomplished in the past could now be destroyed in a few days' time, the signers noted that the "WPA has made a contribution by initiating many experimental programs. To reduce the supervisory personnel will throw the burden of supervision on the shoulders of local principals who are totally unaware of the techniques and policies of the EEP. Any vestige of progressiveness will be removed." Backing up this written protest, supervisors and other EEP personnel organized city-wide demonstrations against the proposed WPA cutbacks. The demonstration in Harlem involved an estimated 1,500 people (most of them teachers) who marched five abreast along Lenox Avenue shouting "WPA must go on." Leaders of the Harlem march openly threatened reprisals at the polls "against all those politicians who cut federal relief expenditures." Eight hundred storekeepers in the area, aware that WPA layoffs spelled economic disaster for their businesses, demonstrated their sympathy with the marchers by closing their doors to customers for fifteen minutes during the parade. (221)

Somerville reacted to this "hornet's nest of discord" by making public the text of a 1937 report sent by his office to Washington officials documenting the accomplishments of the WPA educational projects in Harlem. Among the items listed in the report were the "educational improvements in schools with WPA workers," and "the great job that has been done by the WPA in placing cultural facilities at the disposition of the Negro population." The report took special note of the $100,000 WPA grant for the creation of "an inviting atmosphere for cultural programs in all five Harlem branches of the New York Public Library, so that dramas and lectures could flourish." In a follow-up statement to the press, the Colonel expressed the hope that "these improvements in the educational sphere will create an atmosphere which will help to keep children off the crowded streets of Harlem." (222)

Mindful of the charges which led to the removal of his predecessor, Somerville used his access to the media to emphasize the nonprejudicial work of his office. Through radio talks, press releases, and hastily called news conferences, the WPA Administrator hit back at his critics by playing the strongest card in his hand: the Emergency Education Program. Citing the EEP's highly successful "Campaign for Literacy," and the estimated 15,000 black enrollees in Adult Education classes, Somerville argued that the black community was hardly being slighted in the program's operation. The Colonel also singled out for praise the Harlem-centered "Campaign Against Tuberculosis," a campaign which involved a house-by-house canvass in an effort to have every person in the district take X-rays at nearby WPA clinics.

As for charges of discrimination on WPA educational projects, Somerville presented the testimony of Maxwell Hurwitz, chairman of the New York City Workers Education Councils:

"We on Workers Education projects have always rejected the establishment of quota systems for Negroes as we have always maintained that true racial equality consists of judging individuals on their merits, regardless of the colour of their skins. We can see no point in discussing mathematics or percentages as a means of proving Negro discrimination, so long as whatever rating systems used were applied to white and Negro workers alike." (223)

Clearly, whether the reason was political or moral or a combination of both, discriminatory practices on WPA educational projects in New York City were neither condoned nor tolerated by local officials. The latter's sensitivity to black demands that the projects be bias-free was demonstrated on numerous occasions. A case in point involved the controversy concerning a section of the huge WPA mural in the rotunda of the New York County Courthouse. The mural, designed to portray the emancipation of the slaves, pictured a group of liberated Negroes looking solemnly upward toward the figure of Abraham Lincoln, who was seated on a large white chair with his legs crossed. At the edge of the group was one Negro who was shown with a partially-eaten watermelon in his hand and a wide smile on his face. A delegation of black leaders led by the Reverend William Lloyd Imes, protested vehemently to Somerville and the figure was quickly removed and replaced with a likeness of Frederick Douglass.

In another instance, a black teacher dismissed from his WPA position complained bitterly to Alfred Edgar Smith. "After I have gotten the patient well," wrote the complainant, "I have been beaten with the patient's crutches." According to Smith, charges of discrimination in the New York region were far and

few between, leaving the WPA official with the impression that "such instances were the exception and not the rule." (224)

Financial uncertainty, rather than racial difficulties, posed the real threat to the efficient operation of educational projects in the city. "The financial shadow looms large," commented a Board of Education official in discussing the future of the WPA. "That's the trouble with us," he added, "we think up a lot of good ideas but we haven't got the money to put all of them across." One source of the problem was the measures initiated by Colonel Somerville in an effort to lower costs and increase productivity on WPA projects. The Colonel's tight-fisted monetary policies led LaGuardia to remark half-jokingly to Harry Hopkins that "the WPA in New York is getting along famously with your Arkansas Shylock squeezing every penny he can get out of the poor city." Board of Education Vice President, James Marshall, was particularly incensed over Somerville's threat of massive layoffs of project personnel. Such layoffs, Marshall argued, would "seriously weaken the successful cellar club work in the ghetto," and "could close down entirely our community and recreation centers except for such groups as are able to pay for the use of a building." (225)

Ironically, in spite of Congressional and municipal belt-tightening, the closing years of the decade found the WPA's educational program in Harlem moving ahead at full stride. In response to demands by blacks living on prestigious "Sugar Hill" in upper Harlem, a WPA Community Education Center was established in April, 1938, at the corner of 7th Avenue and 151st Street at a cost of $200,000. In August of the same year, Somerville's office began distribution of thousands of sets of WPA-made clothing to needy elementary and secondary school children in the city. Adult Education classes, rapidly becoming Harlem's most popular leisure-time activity, doubled their 1937 attendance figures during the fall and spring semesters of 1938-1939. Taking note of the EEP's popularity, the New York Age editorially vouched for the existence of "hundreds of recorded cases showing that WPA students are obtaining better positions, going into business for themselves, and improving their general outlook on life." Dr. Lorenzo King, director of EEP classes at St. Martin's Church, was equally as enthusiastic. Noting that "the effort to be somebody in the community has become a mass movement," King proudly announced the birth of "Educator," a four-page monthly edited and published entirely by EEP teachers and students at St. Martin's. According to King, the decision to publish "Educator" was motivated by "a desire on the part of the students to serve as a mouthpiece for the inarticulate thousands in Harlem who have no present means of expressing themselves. (226)

By the summer of 1939, the WPA's educational activities had created some noticeable changes in the physical appearance of the ghetto. Signs of this change seemed to be everywhere: in the sight of a WPA visiting teacher talking to a parent on the steps of a Harlem brownstone, in the figure of Father Time in the show window of Blumstein's Department Store advertising free adult education classes, and in the faces of pre-school children being led by their mothers in the morning to an emergency nursery school. Harlem's once dark and forbidding side streets had also changed, courtesy of the Cellar Clubs and Community Centers operated by WPA (EEP and NYA) personnel. Utilizing similar personnel, churches and

social welfare institutions in the area found themselves able to meet the previously neglected educational and recreational needs of their members. (227)

By far the most noticeable change was in the area of ghetto education. Thanks to the WPA, the school day in Harlem had been extended into the evening to provide time for emergency classes in over 100 subjects — a far cry from pre-New Deal days when the three o'clock bell signaled an end to the educational process in the neighborhood. The lights which burned in Harlem classrooms as late as 10:00 p.m. symbolized the WPA's commitment to the progressive notion that education, especially in disadvantaged localities, could not be confined to the hours between 9 and 3. The agency's brand of creative and student-centered education also helped to change the image of the ghetto school as a hostile and undemocratic institution. The ghetto school which offered WPA courses became regarded as a place where ideas to improve conditions in the area could be freely discussed and even acted upon, a place where community spirit could be kept alive and personal betterment achieved.

On the eve of the WPA's mid-1939 reorganization, the agency's concern with revitalizing Harlem's social and educational condition had become widely recognized in the black community. Testimony to the WPA's effectiveness in improving the quality of life in the ghetto came from a variety of sources, including the Harlem Committee of the New York Teachers Union and the PCBH. The militant WPA Teachers Union joined in the chorus of praise by calling for a "continuation of the valuable work of the WPA on a permanent basis." Summarizing the views of many Harlemites was a black EEP instructor who left no doubt as to the ultimate worth of the agency's efforts:

We may not be able to put two cars into every garage, but we can try to put as much live, healthy, and wise human being into one skin as that skin can hold. And then let them go ahead and make their own world.

If the WPA has done nothing but to start this one thing, it will have been worthwhile. (228)

VII. CHICAGO'S BLACK BELT FACES THE DEPRESSION

You can talk about

Across the tracks --

But to me it's here --

On this side of the tracks ....

You can say

Jazz on the South Side --

But to me it's hell on the South Sides

To Calumet Avenue's

Dingy house

With no heat in it.

Who're you white folks?

Ask me who am I. -Langston Hughes (229) (1940)

I wanted to be an aviator once. But they wouldn't let me go to the school where I was suppose' to learn it. They built a big school and then drew a line around it and said that nobody could go to it but those who lived within the line. That kept all the colored boys out.

-Bigger Thomas in Richard Wright's Native Son (1940) (230)

Unlike New York's Harlem, the black districts on Chicago's South Side were never able to hide their face of poverty behind a glittering facade of bright lights and fancy wardrobes. Described by novelist Richard Wright as "a place where there were many empty buildings ... buildings like skeletons standing with snow on their bones in the winter winds," the world's second largest Negro ghetto offered little to the tourist in the 1930's -- and even less to the thousands of blacks lured northward by the Chicago Defender's claim that "to die from the bite of the frost is far better than that of the mob." As many ghetto dwellers soon discovered, the cold winds blowing in off Lake Michigan were a minor inconvenience when compared to the unheated, overcrowded, and disease-ridden quarters, the long bread lines, and the inadequate schools that awaited the black migrant at the end of the rainbow. (231)

The home of 95 per cent of the city's 1930 black population of 233,000, the South Side entered the Depression Decade in a state of physical, social, and economic decay. Fully 96 per cent of the homes in the area were old-law tenements built before 1902; of these 68 per cent were declared by the Chicago Housing Authority to be without complete standard facilities. The Authority also noted that 83 per cent

of the stone and brick structures in the Black Belt were "dark, filthy, badly planned, infested with vermin and rodents, or in need of repairs." The gridiron plan of the city, calling for the bisecting of each block lengthwise by a narrow service street, created unplanned backyard toilets which were used by countless families when plumbing in their homes became nonexistent. When a University of Chicago researcher attempted to obtain data on conditions in these rear streets, she frequently had to make her way through alleyways that were "almost impassable with mud and filth." "In some cases," she reported, "the odor from decaying garbage and dead rats was almost insufferable, and yet the alleyways swarmed with children unable to find suitable recreational facilities in the neighborhood." (232)

Poor economic conditions also contributed heavily to the ghetto's malaise. The sight of blacks lining up at relief feeding stations for a pan of beef stew, four slices of bread, and a cup of coffee or milk was a common one in Chicago. By 1935, the city's black relief population totaled 115,000, a figure which represented 50 per cent of the black population as a whole and 40 per cent of Chicago's entire relief population. Black Belt households on every economic and educational level were affected, with educational status playing a particularly insignificant role in the determination of who retained employment and who was thrown onto the relief rolls. Normal family groups, with both parents present, made up slightly more than 50 per cent of the 30,000 black families on relief. Those unmarried men unable to take the strain of economic depression often drifted uptown to the shelters for homeless men in the loop where for fifty cents a forged marriage certificate could be obtained, thus allowing the man's abandoned "family" to qualify for home relief. (233)

The combination of bad housing, poor employment opportunities, and dependence on outside sources for family sustenance made the streets of the South Side exude a sense of self-defeat and helplessness against overwhelming odds. On a normal day, the ghetto's sidewalks were filled with the accustomed coterie of window washers and news hawkers. Following in their wake came the fish vendors carrying their long strings of perch over their backs or pushing their "catch" in rude carts converted from discarded baby carriages. The "junk men" had the middle of the street. The latter hitched themselves to carts which were constructed out of wheels found on dump heaps and irregular scraps of board from some building in the process of demolition. Behind the dingy exteriors of Black Belt dwellings were sparsely furnished apartments with the ever-present portable Zenith radio, a large old-fashioned stove, a daybed, three chairs, a trunk with a clean white towel thrown over it, a Victrola and a table. Invariably, the walls and ceilings showed the effects of recent attempts at wallpapering, and plaster was falling from the ceiling in many places. (234)

In sharp contrast to the sparsity of their furnishings, Black Belt apartments teemed with humanity as an ever-shifting circle of people came and went with little predictability. Under the combined pressures of high rents and an undersupply of housing, many of the families on the South Side became the equivalent of mutual aid societies originated and maintained by those fortunate enough to afford the luxury of a permanent residence.

Doubling up with five to eight family members and roomers living in one room was not an uncommon occurrence in the Chicago ghetto. Despite the fact that birth rates in the area declined during the Depression, observers estimated that unhealthy, overcrowded conditions existed in 67 per cent of Negro dwellings as opposed to 35 per cent of the dwellings inhabited by white families in the city. Children, as usual, suffered the most from these conditions; many were sent from one relative to the next, from North to South and back again as the economic and personal situation at home fluctuated. Underlining the breakdown in family ties, nearly one out of five Negro children living on the South Side were left daily in their homes without the care of a mother or of any other unoccupied female adult who could supply the child with vital education and training from the home. (235)

According to a group of University of Chicago sociologists, the socio-economic difficulties faced by Black Belt residents were neither surprising nor unexplainable. Led by Professors Edmund Burgess; Louis Wirth and Robert Park, the so-called "Chicago School of Sociology" examined slum neighborhoods in the city in an effort to measure human responses to patterns of urban development. Viewing the city as the product of the interplay of economic and cultural forces, these men argued that slums were not chance occurrences but the result of certain predictable forces which forced communities to react in an organic fashion to the demoralizing effects of city life. (236)

One of those attracted to the ecological approach to the urban experience was E. Franklin Frazier, the young black director of the Chicago Urban League's Research Department. Frazier, who received his doctorate in Sociology from the University of Chicago in 1931, became particularly interested in Burgess's disclosure that not all sections of the South Side ghetto fared equally as will in the "natural" struggle to survive; that areas with the greatest family stability were the areas least likely to succumb to the pitfalls of urban life. For Frazier, this finding represented a direct refutation of the racist claim that the disorganized life of the Negro in the city was part of the race's pathological nature, or merely a form of social disorder to be restrained through the community's protective agencies. (237)

Frazier's suspicion that social and institutional instability were at the roots of the ghetto's difficulties was echoed by liberals of both races during the 1930's. An Illinois State Commission study of the Black Belt in 1939 concluded that "vicious conditions produce vicious men," while University of Chicago sociologists Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay argued that juvenile delinquency on the South Side was directly related to the accelerated rate of change in the urban complex. Earl Moses, Frazier's replacement at the Chicago Urban League, was also interested in the problem of black juvenile delinquency. Writing in the October, 1933, issue of Opportunity, Moses blamed the rise in the proportion of Negro delinquents in the Windy City from 3.5 per cent of the city's total in 1900 to 31.3 per cent in 1930 on the failure of city officials to encourage the development of stabilizing institutions in the Black Belt. The Urban League official added that federally-funded programs designed to provide the ghetto with parks; organized recreational activities, community centers; and Boys' Clubs were vitally needed and would be most welcomed by the area's black residents.

The natural processes of urban development, he argued, could be altered by the intervention of men who had the power to create institutional buffers between the individual and the disorganizing influences in his community. (238)

Pre-New Deal attempts to transform these theoretical formulations into reality were generally feeble. In 1921, for example, the Elizabeth McCormick Memorial Fund began a nutrition class at the Olivet Baptist Church for expectant Black mothers. During the hard winter of 1926-1927, the increase in petty stealing and begging among Negroes in the men's shelters on the Near South Side led the Urban League to finance the construction of a segregated men's shelter in the heart of the ghetto. Three years later, the newly-constructed Michigan Boulevard Garden Apartment complex included the Black Belt's first nursery school. complete with visiting teachers, at the cost of 25 cents a day for each child. Significantly, these projects appealed to only a limited cross-section of the ghetto; the vast bulk of the South Side's residents neither felt nor were particularly interested in the effects of these social welfare ventures. (239)

The intensification of the Black Belt's social and economic problems during the Depression did, however, stimulate existing black protest groups to undertake projects aimed at restoring at least a semblance of community solidarity and cohesiveness. Led by its intelligent and honest director, A. L. Foster, the Chicago Urban League launched a series of popular job campaigns, complete with petitions and protest marches, to convince employers with businesses in the ghetto to hire qualified black applicants. The League also offered courses for the jobless at its Wabash Avenue headquarters in tailoring; janitorial and laundry work; sewing and practical English. Staffing these enterprises did create problems. In 1932, League employees given the choice of going on the public payroll or remaining on in salaryless positions, invariably chose the former, leaving the League with a full-time professional staff of one - the executive secretary. (240)

Faced with similar manpower difficulties, the local branch of the NAACP tried unsuccessfully to interest a large segment of the ghetto's population in its work. Led by Arthur C. MacNeal, former editor of the Chicago Whip and the originator of the phrase "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work," the local organization, in the opinion of NAACP president Walter White, "became too preoccupied with civil rights cases and ignored those other issues which affected the great masses of Negroes." According to White, the failure of the branch to attract a large and enthusiastic following was directly attributable to "the know-it-all attitude of some of the officers and members of the Chicago Branch." Tempted to intervene to "get matters straight," the NAACP president ultimately adopted a "hands off" policy out of respect of the Association's tradition of allowing its local branches a large measure of autonomy. (241)

In contrast to the NAACP's middle-class approach to the problems of the ghetto was the "down home," grass roots approach of the Black Belt's institutionalized churches. The home of more than 30 religious organizations, the South Side was covered from end to end with small, recently repainted storefronts with placards in their windows announcing church-sponsored dances, boat rides, picnics, or cabaret parties. Always hard-pressed for money to pay for upkeep, and burdened by outrageously high salaries

for church officials (43 per cent of every church dollar was said to go for this purpose), most of the area's churches found it difficult to launch full-scale educational and social welfare programs. Even the more affluent churches; such as the Church of the Good Shepherd, found it necessary to curtail their social agendas during the early years of the Depression. (242)

With the inability of financially hard-pressed churches and social welfare institutions to offer a viable alternative, the best organized force in the Black Belt became the Syndicate. Observers estimated that the South Side contained over two-thirds of Chicago's 14,000 policy stations. Black ministers were often used as go-betweens between black gangsters and politicians, and the office of the Chicago Defender was deluged on a daily basis with letters from irate citizens disclosing gambling and vice operations. "The South Side," moaned Defender editor Robert Abbott, "is completely dominated by the vice element .... The vice elements are the controllers of politics now." Other Chicagoans, like M C. Bousfield, a black official of the Julius Rosenwald Fund, seemed more resigned to the facts as they were: "I can't condone gambling," he declared, "but if we must have it I am all for the gambler who seeks ultimate respectability by performing constructive community services." (243)

The fact that responsible members of Chicago's black community were willing to rely on the underworld to provide needed services was a sad commentary on the institutional state of the Black Belt. Blacks unwilling to put their faith in extra-legal agencies offered a variety of solutions to the problem. These solutions ranged from the Defender's call for "clean living among all classes of our people," to the suggestion by E. Franklin Frazier and Earl Moses that well-planned social and educational programs responsive to local needs, might shift the attention of black people away from the "enemy from within" and towards pride in community accomplishment. Regardless of the solution, it was clear that it would take more than the fictional Mr. Dalton's gift of "a dozen ping-pong tables to the South Side Boys' Club" to make the Black Belt begin to function as an ecologically healthy community. (244)

At the root of the Black Belt's ecologically unhealthy milieu was the formal educational system provided for the area by the Chicago Board of Education. Hampered by poverty and institutional instability, the South Side was additionally burdened by an educational system which many blacks regarded as incapable of countering the less formal "education" taught so well to black youth on the streets of the ghetto.

Described by observers as essentially a "community of sixth graders," the South Side's intellectual level was a constant source of concern for black leaders. Admonishing its readership in a 1935 editorial, the Chicago Defender asserted that "No people who live in numbers running into the thousands in communities and have only some unpaid-for churches to show for their progress can call themselves cultured and educated." The Defender's harsh evaluation of the ghetto's intellectual state was not far removed from the truth. By 1930, less than one out of twenty of Chicago's Negroes had any training beyond high school, while 68 per cent of the males and 84 per cent of the females living in black districts of the city had less than eighth-grade educations. Over 40 per cent of the city's black population had no

contact with the black or white press; 63 per cent read no magazine at all, and nearly 60 per cent could claim that they had never borrowed a book from the South Side's two public libraries. Preoccupied with the business of surviving, many black families found little time to care for intellectual pursuits or to minister to the educational needs of their children. As a result, an estimated 70 per cent of ghetto youth were left to their own devices, not only to get up in time for school and prepare their own breakfasts, but to fend for themselves on the streets of Chicago until midnight. (245)

The conditions of poverty and neglect produced what observers of the Black Belt often referred to as a "highly neurotic group of young people." Teachers on the South Side (three-fourths of whom admitted helping their black pupils through gifts of food, clothing, medicine, and sometimes money), attributed the general restlessness among nonwhite children to bad home environment, cramped quarters, and hunger. According to guidance counselors, children in the upper grades seemed keenly aware of the effects of the Depression. Exposed to talk at home of the lack of jobs in the trades and professions, many black adolescents appeared disinterested and drained of all ambition in the classroom. Social workers and counselors in ghetto schools reported great difficulty in encouraging Negroes to "raise their sights" and to "seek higher horizons" when all around them was "a sea of unemployed adults." "We get a picture," commented a teacher in an all-black school, "of many nervous children upset by changing home conditions and the talk and worry of their elders; and many listless and indifferent older children who cannot see any hope for themselves when there are no jobs for their parents or older brothers and sisters." (246)

Complicating matters even further was the general reluctance of school authorities in Chicago to recognize that the ghetto school could play an important role in helping the black child escape from the adverse effects of his environment. An example of the Chicago Board of Education's policy vis à vis black education was its operation of the Doolittle Elementary School, located just below the northeastern boundary of the Black Belt. The neighborhood surrounding the school (known as the Douglas community) did not present an extreme picture of ghetto life but rather exemplified the social, economic, and educational characteristics of a typical black district on the South Side. Formerly the site of a large estate owned by Stephen Douglas, and once resplendent with elegant Victorian mansions and promenades for Chicago's elite, the community's past grandeur had given way to decaying cottages, bungalows; two and three story flats, and mill-type industrial buildings. Although Douglas abounded with 37 Baptist churches built to accommodate the influx of post-World War I blacks into the neighborhood, it had only 4 small public playgrounds and one swimming pool for its 46,000 residents. In contrast to these sparse recreational facilities, Douglas claimed within its borders one meeting hall, 88 liquor stores, 10 liquor establishments with dance music, and three motion picture theatres. (247)

The Doolittle School itself was a rambling, red-brick edifice built on a three-quarter acre site in 1881. The children assigned to the school were without exception black and nearly all came from homes with remarkably similar circumstances. Within a three block radius of the school, one-third, or roughly 600 dwelling units were without a private bath or toilet. In seven out of ten cases, a child attending Doolittle came from a household on relief, and in only 5 per cent of the cases was the occupation of the parent in

the professional or skilled category. While illiteracy in the district was at a fairly low level (5.6 per cent), the rates of broken homes, illegitimacy, infant mortality, insanity, male delinquency, and families doubled up were all considerably higher than the rates found in the nearby all-white section east of Cottage Grove Avenue. (248)

Given these indices of social disintegration, it seemed logical that school officials in the Douglas community would attempt to devise a way of softening the impact of an unfavorable environment on the black child. Doolittle's principal, a man named Henry Mendlesohn who prided himself on his progressive approach to education, offered what he called "a remedy for this situation." Mendlesohn's "remedy" was the introduction of an elementary school program with the innocuous title of "lower vocational training." The program focused on recent black arrivals from the South (about 15 per cent of Doolittle's enrollment) who were invariably overaged (some as old as 16) and who often were reading at a first-grade level. Rather than keeping them in the lower grades, the principal assigned the children to various non-academic chores in the school. Boys made letter openers and bookends, and girls learned to cook, sew, and make beds. Both girls and boys judged "mentally unfit" were assigned to wash walls in the hallways and in the school's kitchen. When asked if "lower vocational training" was the best way of raising the educational level of the Douglas community, Mendlesohn reiterated his claim that he was doing "a wonderful job of educational rehabilitation." (249)

The Mendlesohn approach to black education was not radically different from the Chicago Board of Education's approach to the problem of rescuing a generation of blacks from the cycle of poverty. An essential part of the Board's approach was educational segregation. "There seems to be an unwritten but rigidly enforced law," observed George McCray president of the Chicago Better Schools Committee, "that no Negro children living in areas set aside for Negroes will be permitted to attend schools located in areas which private individuals have restricted to whites." This unofficial policy was vigorously denied by Board officials who reminded critics that "we have no schools designated for Negro pupils only." The Board's actions, however, belied these protestations of innocence. It was an open secret on the South Side that white families residing within a predominantly Negro school district's boundaries could easily get their children transferred to white districts. (In one embarrassing case, the light-skinned wife of Robert Abbott was told by a principal that she need not keep her child in his all-black school and that he would gladly grant her child a transfer). School construction in Chicago also reflected the Board's penchant for segregated school facilities. Using the excuse that the future ethnic make-up of the South Side was uncertain, and that an expected population shift would leave many of the area's schools idle, the Board responded to black demands for new schools in the ghetto by building additions to the old edifices. When new schools were finally built (e.g., Wendell Phillips High School and DuSable High School) they remained entirely black as white students in the district obtained transfers to secondary schools in neighboring all-white communities. (250)

The pro-segregation sentiments of Chicago's school authorities surfaced in the fall of 1933 when Joseph J. Salat, a Bohemian member of the Board of Education, announced publicly that he would use his influence "to prevent black boys and girls who lived in the same district from attending school with Bohemian boys and girls." The Negroes," warned Salat, "are slowly but surely spreading on the West Side of the city and are becoming a problem to the entire area. Admitting colored children into vacant rooms

in white schools threatens the white children who are without question on an absolutely higher cultural and moral level. Not only would the white children suffer greatly from the point of view of morals and culture but also from the viewpoint of health." The last charge was a reference to the extensive propaganda campaign by white parents groups "exposing" the allegedly high rates of syphilis among black youth. Apparently angered at Salat's bluntness, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, William Johnson, reprimanded the outspoken Board member and assured the black community that regardless of similar statements by officials of the Chicago Real Estate Board and by white parent groups, the Chicago school system would never give in to segregated practices. (251)

Few blacks on the South Side took heart at Superintendent Johnson's assurances. Critics of the Board (and there were many) suggested that its real policy toward black education was best revealed in its handling of the issue of school integration. The Morgan Park High School controversy was cited as a case in point. Located in a so-called "ecologically healthy" neighborhood to the southwest of the Black Belt, Morgan Park was the scene of a bitter struggle by black parents in the 1920's to enroll their children in the lily-white secondary school. Mrs. Walter Heineman, a white resident of the Morgan Park community and a member of the Board of Education, met with black parents to present what she termed "a happy solution to the stalemate." Obviously anxious over the increasing number of blacks desiring to enter academic high schools in the city, Mrs. Heineman proposed that more and more vocational educational courses be introduced in the upper grades of black elementary schools. According to Heineman, the effect of such a program "would be to reduce markedly the number of Negro pupils seeking admission to Morgan Park High School." "We must," she implored, "get the Negro pupils to appreciate more the importance of vocational education."

The Board member curtly dismissed the charge by her critics that the real problem facing black education in Chicago was not the black preference for an academic curriculum, but the city-sanctioned restrictive covenants which prevented black access to newly built and fully equipped schools in white sections of the city. "The Negro's housing difficulties," she countered, "arise because Negroes with money don't invest it in low cost housing projects for members of their own race." (252)

Although firmly ensconced as an unofficial policy of the Chicago Board of Education, school segregation did not constitute the greatest educational problem in the Black Belt. Measured by a number of standards, including age of building and equipment, length of time spent in the classroom, roominess, experience of faculty, extent of academic and vocational curricula, and money spent per pupil, the schools in the ghetto were not only separate, they were manifestly unequal to schools in white districts of Chicago.

Schools in the Black Belt were almost always overcrowded. By 1930, there were 24 all-black schools on the South Side serving 22,291 pupils. During the decade of the 1930's, the black school population in the area rose to 36,683 (an increase of about 40 per cent) and several new facilities were constructed, including additions to two high schools, two middle schools; three elementary schools; and one

vocational school. The effect of this new construction on overcrowded conditions was minimal, primarily because of the restrictive covenants which kept black mobility out of the ghetto at a trickle. By 1935, 13 out of the 14 double-shift schools in Chicago were all black, including Doolittle which had 500 more students than seats and was by no means the worst off in the district. As a result of these double-shift conditions, observers estimated that over 75 per cent of the children in the ghetto spent less time in school than children in other parts of the city. This situation was particularly ironic since many of the schools adjacent to the Black Belt were experiencing an average decline in enrollment of about 5 per cent and had many seats vacant and no black students to fill their empty classrooms. (253)

Financially, the Negro child was also being short-changed. A 1938 study of Board of Education spending policies disclosed that the Board spent $86.07 per pupil in all-white schools and $74.02 per pupil in schools with an all-black enrollment (in "mixed" schools the figure was $82.02). Closer examination revealed that the differences in per capita expenditures were largely due to the salaries paid to teachers in the respective schools. According to George McCray, the number of teachers receiving the lowest salary (i.e. beginning teachers) was roughly twice as high in the Black Belt as it was on Chicago's largely white North Side. (254)

The lack of experienced teachers in the ghetto underscored the racist nature of the Board's staffing practices. In many cases, beginning white teachers were assigned to Black Belt schools only to be given transfers to white schools at the earliest possible opportunity. Not infrequently, white teachers on the South Side stayed only a month or two before obtaining their transfers to "greener pastures." Nine out of ten times, newly accredited black teachers were assigned to schools with all-black enrollments; any black refusing such an assignment was out of a job since principals in other districts could reject any applicant seeking a position in their schools. In one instance, a Negro teacher licensed to teach history and economics was assigned by the Board to teach shop in a mixed high school, on the grounds that "public sentiment would not tolerate a Negro man teaching white girls." Despite these practices, however, ghetto schools remained largely staffed by white personnel who, in the words of black principal Maudeile Bousfield, "often expected their students not to succeed scholastically, or to behave in a respectable manner." (255)

The reaction of the black community to the Board of Education's support of segregation and unequal educational opportunity ranged from written criticism to street demonstrations. Using his influence as editor of the world's largest selling Negro weekly, Robert Abbott led the fight against school segregation in Chicago. In his weekly column in the Chicago Defender, Abbott presented "unquestionable evidence" of local efforts to segregate schools. The editor lashed out at the establishment of a separate catechism class for black children in a Chicago Catholic high school and the existence of separate black social clubs on the campus of the University of Chicago. Although Abbott often expressed the hope that the Board of Education would heed his well-documented complaints, he nonetheless kept up a steady barrage of criticism at school officials for their silent support of the discriminatory school transfer policy and for not permitting black teachers to teach in the schools of their own choosing. (256)

Anti-segregation sentiment turned from the printed word to the streets of the ghetto in the fall of 1933 when an estimated 150 black mothers marched to protest the unhealthy conditions existing at the Betsy Ross Elementary School located at 60th and Wabash Avenue. After the demonstration, an overflow crowd of 800 Black Belt residents met at the Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church to hear speakers denounce school officials for refusing to improve overcrowded conditions at Betsy Ross and for redistricting the area to keep blacks out of the more modern and spacious Sexton School less than half a mile away. Walter Rogers, chairman of the hastily formed Committee on the Ross and Sexton Schools, called the meeting a "symbol of the most intensified unrest among parents of school children in the city's history," and promised "a fight to the finish" until the Committee's demands were adequately dealt with. (257)

Superintendent of Schools William Bogan answered Rogers by suggesting that the root of the problem involved residential patterns on the South Side. In point of fact, the Ross school was located in the Washington Park community, an area which was the scene of a great deal of racial conflict during the Race Riot of 1919. By the mid-1930's, Washington Park had attracted thousands of blacks fleeing from less spacious and run-down dwellings in the northern districts of the Black Belt. The results of this "invasion" were predictable: overcrowded schools and overcharged Negro apartment dwellers with no other place to go. The Sexton school, on the other hand, was nestled in the quiet community of Woodlawn, a nearly all-white enclave south of the Park and to the east of the South Parkway "boundary" dividing the races. As a few blacks began to move across South Parkway, whites began to leave Woodlawn, thus leaving Sexton with 50 per cent of its original enrollment. According to Bogan, until Negroes moved into the Woodlawn community in substantial numbers, the Board would be forced to obey its regulation prohibiting the crossing of school district lines by students wishing to attend less crowded facilities. (258)

Needless to say, Rogers and his followers were not impressed with the Superintendent's argument. Announcing the start of Chicago's first black school boycott, Rogers vowed "to pay fines, to go to jail rather than to submit to the injustice. We value the health of our children greater than we do their education." After a long and bitter struggle, the Ross boycott ended with the Board finally allowing black pupils who lived east of South Parkway to attend Sexton. More importantly, the boycott led to the promise by Mayor Kelly that in the future, his administration "would oppose any movement which denies the youth of Chicago from attending any school in the city." (259)

While the Mayor basked in the ephemeral glow of favorable black publicity (Robert Abbott hailed him as "a true enemy of Jim Crow"), black educational militants waited for some more positive proof of City Hall's intentions. These intentions surfaced five months later in February 1935, when Kelly dedicated the new Wendell Phillips High School. The "new" facility (the school was actually a new addition to the old high school erected in 1904) was termed by the Mayor "the equal of any high school in the world in character of construction, quality of equipment, and general excellence and proficiency of the

educational staff." Kelly also acknowledged that the school might not have been built at all if it were not for the "tireless work of local community leaders in urging its construction." The following June, the facility was opened for three nights as capacity crowds jammed the auditorium to take advantage of the "See Phillips" observance sponsored by the city. (260)

Community pressure was also partly responsible for the improvement of educational standards in the Grand Boulevard section of the Black Belt. One of the most ecologically disorganized areas of the ghetto, Grand Boulevard was a community dotted with highly congested cottages and two-story flats and known for the poor educational background of its residents. Serving the intellectual needs of the area was the recently renovated DuSable High School which occupied a square block at 50th and State Streets. Despite its description as "one of the finest and most modern high school buildings in existence," conditions in the school were far from ideal. This fact was brought to light in 1938 by a group of black alumni who were indignant over the indifference of school authorities to the unhealthy and congested atmosphere at DuSable. Claiming that the school's 3,900 students (DuSable was built to serve 2,400) were at times forced to attend classes in storerooms, lunchrooms, corridors, and even in the ante rooms to the faculty bathrooms, the group launched a community-wide grass roots movement to demand action. In the face of this outcry, the Board announced that its 1939 capital funds budget would include the sum of $750,000 for the construction of a large addition to DuSable. With the Mayor's approval, the Board also began condemnation proceedings to acquire land adjacent to the school with the eventual goal of turning the area into a Grand Boulevard educational center. (261)

While the city's policy of "gilding the ghetto" avoided the issue of school segregation, it did reflect a growing sensitivity on the part of the Mayor and the Board to the plight of the ghetto school and its role in the black community. Their sensitivity increased in direct proportion to the efforts of militant community groups to spotlight the glaring deficiencies of ghetto education. One of the more influential of these groups was the South Side Citizens School Committee. Formed in the fall of 1935 by Mrs. Mabel Simpson, a black housewife, the Committee dedicated itself to "working with leaders in this community in hopes that consistent pressure of public opinion will ultimately remedy the indefensible conditions which now exist in these schools." (262)

The Committee's first effort involved an expose of conditions at Washbourne Trade School located on the South Side. Like trade schools in other sections of the city, Washbourne offered apprenticeship and technical courses but made admission to them particularly difficult for nonwhites. The school's Negro enrollees were invariably guided by the advice of vocational counselors to enter the so-called "lower" vocational track and were refused use of certain school equipment on the grounds that Negroes rarely became members of trade unions which utilized those machines and tools. Unused machinery was often stored away in the school's basement, rusting and deteriorating while black students asked patiently to be given a chance to learn. When confronted by Simpson and her followers with charges of discrimination, Washbourne's guidance staff denied responsibility for the matter and pointed to the statement of a representative of a leading aircraft manufacturing company who visited the school in search of prospective employees. "I see some Negro boys in this class," he reportedly said, "but I know

that they won't be interested in what I have to say because we do not employ Negroes. However, if they want to stay and listen they can." (263)

While the campaign to improve conditions at Washbourne attracted the attention of sympathetic white politicians on the South Side, the situation at the school remained unchanged until the exigencies of war created a demand for trained black workers. Undaunted with this early defeat, the Committee set its sights on an even loftier goal, the appointment of a Negro to the Chicago Board of Education. Blacks in the forefront of this campaign were fully aware of the close link which existed between the vagaries of Chicago politics and the city's public school system. Observers noted that members of the Board were appointed by the Mayor and were often used as pawns in the struggle of City Hall politics to maintain and strengthen their respective political machines. Armed with the knowledge that the Board took its orders from the Mayor, representatives from 40 black and white organizations descended upon the office of Mayor Kelly in May, 1935, with petitions calling for the appointment of a Negro to the Board. Kelly's initial reaction was a statement released through his news secretary that "the time was not yet ripe for such action." (264)

The issue remained in limbo until July, 1935, when word reached Chicago that a black had been appointed to the school board in Philadelphia. The Chicago branch of the NAACP approached Mayor Kelly with a petition bearing the names of 60,000 Black Belt residents demanding that the Windy City follow Philadelphia's example. Kelly was impressed with the size of the petition but put off a final decision on the matter "until a future date." That "future date" turned out to be in March, 1939, when the Mayor, under renewed election year pressure from A. L. Foster and the Urban League, wrote to Dr. Maldon O. Bousfield asking the black chairman of the Citizens Advisory Committee on Schools to "suggest and approve or disapprove all appointments to the Chicago Board of Education while I am in office." Bousfield, who was also the director of Negro Health Services of the Julius Rosenwald Fund and a staunch advocate of the community-oriented school, met with his committee soon afterward and cautioned its members "against submitting the names of unqualified persons." After much haggling, the committee selected Dr. Bousfield himself as a candidate for a Board of Education post. While Bousfield's eventual appointment as a Board member in June, 1939, did not please everyone in the black community, it symbolized the high water mark of black educational militancy during the 1930's. (265)

The achievement of limited reform in the educational structure of the Black Belt underscored the city's unwritten policy of giving Negroes as little as possible until that time when it became politically expedient to do otherwise. Obviously, such a policy was inadequate to deal with the area's severe social and educational problems, problems which included a lack of healthy leisure time activities, a dearth of recreational facilities, and the absence of an educational program to care for those too young or too old to be a part of the established public school system. The ghetto's institutional crisis, as well as its high degree of social disintegration, bore witness to the need for a unified social and educational format for the South Side. Not surprisingly, many in the black community were prepared to look beyond the local scene and towards the federal government for a commitment to improve the quality of life in the Chicago ghetto. (266)

VIII. COMMUNITY-BUILDING IN THE BLACK BELT: THE ROLE OF THE WPA

Please, Mr. President,

Listen to what I've got to say

You can take away all of the alphabet,

But please leave that WPA

Now I went to the polls and voted,

I know I've voted the right way

So I'm asking you, Mr. President

Don't take away that WPA!

-South Side "blues" song (c.1937) (267)

We do not wish to claim that we are doing all for any group of youth which ought to be done ... we are trying to administer a youth program in Chicago on the basis of equality of opportunity, regardless of race. --William Campbell, Illinois NYA Administrator (268) (1938)

The Black Belt's multitude of problems did not suddenly vanish as a result of the federal government's decision to embark on a far-reaching and progressive educational program. In all likelihood, few of Chicago's blacks in the spring of 1933 took notice of the President's educational pronouncements. As time went by, however, there appeared a growing awareness in the black community that the new programs, unlike those of the past, embodied a genuine desire to improve conditions on the Depression-ravaged South Side.

As in other urban communities, the WPA's administrative setup in Chicago relied heavily upon the city's public school structure. WPA district offices were usually located in the largest high school in their area, and WPA administrators were expected to work closely with the principals of schools within the district. Above the WPA district supervisor and local school officials was the city-wide director of the WPA and the Superintendent of the Chicago public school system, both of whom were entrusted with the task of approving or disapproving project plans submitted by district officials. According to Harry Hopkins, the close link between the WPA and the city's school system was not accidental, it was fervently hoped that successful WPA projects would one day be incorporated into the permanent educational structure of all major cities. (269)

From a city-wide standpoint, these administrative guidelines produced some dramatic results. At the height of its efficiency (February, 1939), the Chicago version of the Emergency Education Program employed 5,000 men and women expert in such fields as psychology, statistics, nursing, sociology, stenography, and recreation. Once unemployed, these EEP employees were now busy attacking the city's health, social, and educational problems. Nearly one-fourth of this emergency task force were engaged in work in the city's 500 Adult Education Centers ministering to the needs of an estimated 91,000 illiterates. Another one-third worked as commercial education instructors in 63 centers in the city, offering courses in shorthand, bookkeeping, commercial art, and typing to a monthly enrollment of 4,300 students. Hampered at the outset by a lack of adequate equipment and haphazard housing (the WPA had no money for typewriters and could use the typing classrooms in the public schools only when the regular school was not in session), the program developed to a point where a large number of unemployed students used the classes as a means of keeping in practice while looking for a job. An overwhelming majority -- over 90 per cent -- of the students finally able to find employment agreed that the commercial courses offered by the WPA were of distinct value in their struggle to raise themselves out of the ranks of the unemployed. (270)

A key factor in the EPP's success in white areas of Chicago was its ability to work closely with existing educational, fraternal, and social welfare institutions. The EPP's Workers Education classes, for example, benefited by the close cooperation of the Women's Trade Union League, the Chicago Workers Committee, and the Chicago Labor College. The Black Belt, by contrast, enjoyed little in the way or institutional stability or expertise in the fields covered by the new federally-funded programs. Prior to the Depression, well-organized after-school activities were largely confined to the lily-white Catholic schools within the ghetto, while only a handful of city-wide organizations ever interested themselves in the plight of the decaying South Side. The absence of such institutions, coupled with the ghetto's suspicion of governmental agencies, placed a large burden on the shoulders of local EEP officials, whose job it became to translate high-intentioned verbiage about equal opportunity into workable projects that would attract the attention of the average ghetto resident. (271)

The EEP made its small, but auspicious, appearance in the Black Belt in the fall of 1933 when 20 educational projects, employing 80 Negro teachers, were officially approved for the area by the Illinois Works Progress Administration. The first project was located at the Abraham Lincoln Social Center on Oakwood Boulevard which had been closed because of the Depression. Within three weeks of the center's opening, classes were organized in manual training, recreation, dramatics, domestic science, child study, and parent education. Although Dr. Curtis Reese, the black director of the center, complained that the $100 a month budgeted by the WPA for these activities was too low, it was generally agreed that for starters, the project had great merit. Other unemployed black professionals were soon after assigned to the financially-troubled Wabash Avenue YMCA and to the Chicago Urban League to conduct classes in sewing and household economies. The League responded to the EEP's "gift" of much-needed personnel by organizing a South Side Committee on Adult Education. Under the direction of A. L. Foster, the new committee submitted a series of plans calling for the use of 65 EEP teachers with a monthly payroll of $6,500. By June, 1935, the committee's plan had borne fruit; places had been found in the community to house 35 separate EEP projects with a monthly enrollment of over 3,000 black students (272).

The rapid expansion of the EEP on the South Side during the spring of 1935 did not go unnoticed in the Washington offices of the WPA. Anxious to see the EEP's operations proceed smoothly and without controversy in the ghetto, both Harry Hopkins and Lewis Alderman took steps to alert local officials that discriminatory practices on government-funded projects were not to be tolerated. In response to this pressure, Superintendent of Schools, William Bogan, assumed personal charge of drawing up guidelines for the hiring of EEP personnel, the preparation of educational project plans, and the securing of adequate facilities for EEP classes. This work was done in "strict accordance" with the non-discriminatory regulations imposed by the WPA's Washington headquarters. Bogan's efforts were supplemented by the Illinois Works Progress Administration which sent representatives to black neighborhoods across the state in hopes of stimulating local interest in the program. Speaking before a crowd of 600 blacks at Chicago's Olivet Baptist Church, Dr. Mark C. Penny director of the WPA's educational activities in Illinois, praised the work of the church's seven black EEP teachers in bringing Negro history classes within reach of the masses. At Penny's side was Chicago NAACP director A. C. McNeal, who had recently been appointed supervisor of the 136 black EEP teachers on the South Side. McNeal declared that emergency classes were being taught at Olivet Baptist by people who were *familiar with the subject they were teaching,* and commended local EEP officials *for providing a magnificent cooperative and cultural achievement in which the whole community has derived mutual benefits.* (273)

In succeeding months, efforts were made to insure that the optimism exuded at Olivet Baptist would not be short-lived. As the head of one of Chicago's 23 WPA districts, McNeal chose as his base of operations the Wendell Phillips High School at 50th and Wabash and immediately began the search for available class sites in the surrounding neighborhood. Determined that need alone and not political influence should govern the selection of EEP centers, McNeal took his search to all sections of the Black Belt, including those sections south of 47th Street which had long been neglected by local black leaders. By March 18, 1935, agreement was reached with 12 community agencies (8 churches, one fraternal lodge, one YWCA, one settlement house, and one library) to furnish space and provide for the upkeep of EEP classes. Sixty formerly unemployed teachers were assigned to these new classes which featured courses in literacy, training Negro history, music, shorthand and typing. (274)

Work at the 12 EEP centers proceeded smoothly until May 1935, when federal officials broadly hinted that EEP funds might be cut on a nationwide basis. Cooperating agencies within the Wendell Phillips District were quick to protest. "Let the work continue," wrote E. T. Martin, pastor of Bethesda Baptist Church to J. C. Landwair, an EEP counselor at Wendell Phillips. "Nothing since the Civil War," the pastor added, "that has been done by the Federal Government for the untrained minds among us has gripped the common people .... You should see some of these older pupils when they emerge from their classes . . . A sudden kind of illumination covers them, and much of the hesitating feeling leaves them." Similar expressions of unequivocal support were heard from many black-run institutions on the South Side, including those from representatives of the George Hall Library, the St. John's Baptist Church, and the Berean Baptist Church. (275)

The failure of these program cuts to materialize pleased a majority of the Black Belt's residents. One who was not pleased was Charles Sautter, a black research assistant to MacNeal at Wendell Phillips. In July, 1935, Sautter compiled and sent to the Washington office of James Atkins a report largely critical of the Chicago operation of the EEP. A part-time student at Chicago Teacher's College and a man who made no secret of his desire to advance himself, Sautter began his report by admitting that the EEP was popular among the masses on the South Side and that the agency employed an adequate number of blacks as emergency class instructors. Sautter followed these lines of praise with a denunciation of the EEP's hiring practices vis a vis black supervisory personnel. He noted that the ratio of counselors to teachers was extremely low for Negroes (1 to 159 compared to 1 to 19 for whites) and that the amount spent per counselor also favored the white EEP employees ($5.01 for each white counselor compared to $4.62 for each black in a similar position.) In closing, Sautter left no doubt as to the reasons for these racial discrepancies:

This shortage of black counselors cannot be charged to the lack of qualified Negroes because several Negroes of very high caliber have qualified by examination and interview. It cannot be said that there is no need for supervisors for one teacher has worked as a counselor for more than a year and a white counselor was placed in a district where there were 56 Negro teachers and only 4 white teachers (Wendell Phillips district). The actual reason may be found in the person of Dr. L. N. Vernon of the EEP's Personnel Department who insists that Negroes should not be placed in administrative positions over white people. The large number of black IEP teachers is to compensate for the lack of nonwhite supervisors. (276)

Sauter's report triggered a series of letters between the erstwhile research assistant and the IEP's James Atkins which perhaps more than any other set of correspondence, clearly defined just how the IEP was intended to operate in the urban centers of the North. Atkins dismissed the gist of Sauter's criticisms by wondering "whether it would not be better to have a disproportionately large number of teachers and a disproportionate number of counselors than vice versa." Emphasizing the positive features of the report, the EEP's advisor on racial affairs contended that more black teachers meant that "the financial gain to the race is much greater than it would be if the other hiring practice obtained." "I am not," Atkins added quickly, "trying to give support to the alleged viewpoint of Dr. Vernon of the Personnel Department, but I am trying to see the matter objectively and realistically. Nowhere else, except in Chicago, are Negroes counseling teachers in administrative positions over white persons." Under such conditions, Atkins concluded, "I would strongly suggest that your insistence for more black counselors be tempered with friendly and tolerant sympathy for our national traditions." (277)

Writing back to his superior, Saulter warned that "to accept without question the situation as it is in Chicago would be an infidelity to the cause of justice and fair play." The research assistant also admitted his "complete lack of sympathy with the national tradition which allocates to Negroes a place of inferiority regardless of their accomplishment or merit." Replying to Saulter's call for "absolute frankness about these matters," Atkins commended his respondent for "frankness and courage" but reemphasized the dangers inherent in opting for a "completely satisfactory" solution to the situation at hand:

The principle for which you are fighting is certainly right, but I doubt if principles govern the acts of those in power any oftener than expediency. The need of our group is so great, regardless of its causes, that those in power often feel that sympathy for the masses is more important than the individual fair-play to the exceptional individual of the group. In, whether we are tolerant of traditions and customs or not they are very real factors in our present situation and must be dealt with in a common sense fashion. I am sure that such action on the part of our leaders can never stigmatize them as weak. Rather, it goes show them to be sensible and realistic. (278)

Not to be put off by pleas for caution, Saulter declared he would continue the fight for a black EEP counselor at Wendell Phillipe and casually mentioned that he was both well-qualified and available for the job. In reply, Atkins sympathized with Saulter's personal goals but warned once more that "discretion is still, if not the better part of valor, at least a part of it." This advice, he added was especially timely, given the relief nature of the program and its great reliance on Congressional approval for its continued existence. (279)

While the Atkins-Saulter correspondence exposed the "go-slow" philosophy of the EEP's chief racial advisor, it also underscored the aura of uncertainty which surrounded EEP projects on the South Side. Much of this uncertainty had to do with the agency's hiring policies. In a July, 1935, letter to Ambrose Caliver, Urban League official A. L. Foster tried to ascertain what qualifications were required for employment on the EEP's Parent Education projects. Caliver replied that to his knowledge no firm requirement existed, but suggested that "in this period of general confusion and complexity, a background in social studies might be enough," Flexibility in the face of financial uncertainty also seemed to be the policy with regard to the Workers Education project. A young black University of Chicago student with teaching and social work experience and letters of recommendation from A. J. Muste and A. Philip Randolph was told by Hilda Smith that "we might be able to recommend your name to one of the schools ... provided that federal funds become available." Subsequent efforts by Chicagoans, including University of Chicago professor Paul Douglas, to convince Congressmen to provide permanent emergency education funding on the South Side met with little success in Congress. (280)

Despite these less than ideal operating conditions, the WPA's educational activities continued to thrive in the Black Belt. A visitor to the ghetto during the severe winter of 1936-1937 discovered that “neither cold winds nor 18 below zero weather could interfere with the splendid attendance at emergency night classes in the high schools.” “Even the most optimistic in the field of adult education,” the observer continued, “will find it hard to believe that in spite of the severe hardships encountered reaching the school, all of the rooms were filled to capacity.” Evidence of this “unsatisfied intellectual hunger” was also gathered at community center meetings where those in attendance “after braving ankle-deep mud in the streets” animatedly discussed problems pertaining to the Chicago Negro. This enthusiastic response was due in large part to the efforts of the WPA's Washington office to alert local blacks to the potential benefits of the EEP. Pointing to the nearly 1,800 black illiterates in Chicago (2.2 per cent of the city's total), Lewis Alderman informed Illinois WPA education director Harry Fultz that “the colored leaders on the South Side want to reduce this figure to an absolute minimum.” In response to

Alderman's suggestion, a drive was launched by EEP officials in Chicago to contact Negro illiterates living on the South Side and to inform them of the existence of free adult education and literacy classes. The drive employed WPA recruiters to interview prospective enrollees; and utilized postcards, leaflets, matchbook covers, and ads in the South Side Courier to alert the friends of black illiterates to the availability of WPA-sponsored classes. Once inside the classroom, the new enrollees were exposed to a revitalized curriculum, one which taught the non-reader how to read by using materials depicting the personal histories and accomplishments of famous black leaders. (281)

Community institutions, as well as individual residents of the ghetto; were becoming increasingly aware of the potential benefits available to the black community through the work of the EEP. By 1939, nearly all the settlement houses and social welfare agencies in the black Belt operated educational and recreational programs in conjunction with the federal government. The Chicago Urban League, with three offices on the South Side, was particularly anxious to incorporate federal funds (i.e. the salaries paid to EEP personnel) into its incipient adult education program. "Our project," declared the League's Industrial Secretary, H. L. Gould; "is an intensive effort toward community improvement in a fairly large area. ... We have a well-planned program of group organizations, and persons participating in these groups take part in diversified activities which, in turn, are integrated into the larger plan for community improvement." More specifically, the 25 EEP teachers assigned to the League's offices taught courses in parent education, typing, civil service test training, aeronautics, and provided vocational guidance and placement advice for ghetto youth. Federal funds (again in the form of salaries paid out to EEP teachers) were used to keep the League's unique Mosely School for Unmarried Mothers in continuous operation throughout the Depression. Success in these efforts did, however, create a problem as a "model" sponsor; the League was constantly being asked by publicity-hungry WPA officials in Washington for reports and photographs of the projects for national, and more importantly, Congressional consumption. (282)

Also successful and highly popular were the WPA's neighborhood cultural programs which utilized EEP personnel as instructors in free art, music, and drama classes, leading the fight to bring these cultural education programs to the Black Belt was the South Side Citizens Committee, an organization composed of influential black Chicagoans. The Committee's chief goal was the creation of a centrally-located community art center that would act as the Black Belt's cultural headquarters. In its fight for the center, the Committee won the enthusiastic support of Robert Abbott, a frequent critic of the ghetto's lack of cultural refinement. For Abbott, the proposed federally-aided project represented a means of developing within the Black Belt a sense of community cohesiveness and personal pride.

No agency has ever exercised as urgent and abiding a hold upon the human imagination as the creation of the modern art center. Here in our community the element of racial discord is so a tidal spirit, an undemocratic tendencies make the existence of a community art center a necessity. Not only will such a center enhance the cultural tone of the community — it will create a rightful appreciation of the black artist to American civilization. To realize the operation of such a center should be the dream of all those who are mindful of their obligation to the community. (283)

While local blacks waited for Washington's response to their call for federal monies to construct the center and to pay the salaries of its staff, artists employed by the WPA continued their work of painting, designing, and decorating public schools, parks, libraries, and hospitals on the South Side. Nearly 100 of these men and women (most of whom were black) were able to find suitable space in ghetto schools and churches to offer courses in art and the role of the black artist in American history. Their work attracted the attention of Langston Hughes. Writing to the South Side Citizen's Committee, the poet noted that similar courses were being successfully offered by the WPA's Harlem Art Center and declared that the second largest Negro ghetto in the world deserved a similar institution. (284)

After a year-long series of negotiations with federal authorities, the South Side Art Center became a reality. Situated in a WPA-renovated loft building on Wabash Avenue, the center quickly made an effort to gear its activities towards the average ghetto resident, the assumption being that broad-based community support was vital to the success of the venture. In the following months, the center's 125 WPA employees took their talents into the streets of the ghetto, recruiting enrollees, speaking before fraternal organizations, sponsoring art exhibits at the black "Y's" and at the George Hall Public Library, and arranging art lectures in local churches. The center's staff also compiled a Negro Art Index derived from the Chicago Library's Union Catalogue. At the center itself, courses in art, sculpture, ceramics and related fields were offered. The wide range of courses prompted one black art student to note that "the WPA experiment was the first instance which allowed the Negro to see his significant function, as a man, in the whole process of community creativeness." The success of the center could also be measured by statistics: by October, 1941, it was estimated that 50,000 blacks had been exposed to the work of the ghetto's cultural headquarters. (285)

Turning its attention from the cultural to the academic, the EEP developed classroom materials in Negro history as a means of offsetting the racist textbooks used by Chicago's public schools. Free and inexpensive teaching materials, including biographies of famous American blacks, scrapbooks of current Negro achievements, and an index to the Negro literature holdings of the Chicago Public Library, were prepared and distributed. Another group of writers, under the direction of Negro author Arna Bontemps, prepared a Black Exposition Exhibit which was displayed at the Chicago Diamond Jubilee celebration in the summer of 1940. The black-designed exhibit included a topographical map of the Black Belt and a mural on the participation of blacks in the early history of Chicago. In all, twenty dioramas were built by this group, including one on the structure of the Negro family courtesy of E. Franklin Frazier, Horace Cayton and Howard University librarian Dorothy Porter contributed a collection of books by and about Negroes. The Bontemps group also put together A Cavalcade of the American Negro, a readable pamphlet which contained a broad review of the accomplishments of blacks in science, music, literature, and the theatre, as well as a ringing indictment of the theory that mental, cultural, and moral differences existed between the races. (286)

The WPA coupled its interest in the ghetto's academic and cultural welfare with a series of research projects which were intended to collect information for future government-sponsored housing and social welfare programs. One of these projects, known as the Community Development Project of the South Side Colored District in Chicago, was launched in June, 1938, after a group of black professionals and businessmen raised sufficient funds to house the project in the basement of Reverend Harold Kingsley's Church of the Good Shepherd. Sociologists Lloyd Warner and Horace Cayton were placed in over-all charge of the survey and both men announced their intention "to study the entire culture of the area to see the functional relationship between juvenile delinquency and the entire social structure." Helping Warner and Cayton in this endeavor were 125 unemployed professionals from the Black Belt who were used to gather first-hand information from the residents of the ghetto, and to analyze the social and cultural factors which contributed to youthful crime. The group collected this data on housing conditions, photographed Chicago's Negro newspapers, and built a topographical map of the South Side.

In July, 1939, information gathered by the Warner-Cayton project was turned over to government experts engaged in developing plans for the WPA-financed Ida B. Wells housing project on Vincennes Avenue in the heart of the Black Belt. (287)

Convinced that a well-informed community was an essentially healthy community, the WPA arranged what were known as "Chicago Tours for Chicagoans" for the purpose of acquainting residents of the city with the institutional and social needs of particular neighborhoods. Beginning in the fall of 1936, informational tours of the South Side ghetto were conducted by the WPA in conjunction with the Chicago Teachers College and the Urban League. Serving as an advisor for the project and as a frequent tour lecturer was Horace Cayton. The South Side tour usually included a visit to a school in the ghetto (Wendell Phillips was a likely choice) and a bus trip through the section of the Black Belt with the poorest housing (the blocks bordering the tracks of the Illinois Central). For purposes of contrast, the group (dubbed the WPA Tourist Army) was then taken to visit the black-run Supreme Liberty Life Insurance Company and the South Side's largest health facility, Provident Hospital. The free tours were popular with whites and blacks alike and were considered by observers to be a useful vehicle for awakening white Chicagoans to the plight of the ghetto. (288)

Quite often, the WPA in Chicago was aided in its community-oriented endeavors by workers and supervisors employed by the National Youth Administration. As it did in other states, the NYA in Illinois required as standard operating procedure that all work performed by its employees be of real social value and "defensible on the basis of performing a needed and valuable service to the school or community." In addition, NYA administrators in the state sought to increase intelligent participation in community life through education, a goal that received the full moral and physical support of the Emergency Education Program. Working through school advisory committees on the local level, the youth agency was able to experiment in educational and community-building projects which under ordinary circumstances would have received little consideration by the regular agencies of the local and state governments. (289)

The NYA's original administrative plan for Illinois called for two separate organizations -- one for the city of Chicago and one for the rest of the state -- but this was discarded in favor of having a central administrative body based in the state capital. To facilitate relations with Illinois' sizeable black population, Charles Browning, a black community activist and University of Chicago student, was appointed in December 1935, as Illinois NYA Director of Negro Affairs. As an advisor to Illinois NYA Administrator William Campbell, Browning's main task was to alert local community agencies to the special needs of nonwhite youth and to make sure that local projects did not leave the Negro out of their agenda. Although NYA policy elsewhere in the state put the burden of initiating youth-related programs on local community agencies, Campbell and Browning were agreed that in the case of the Black Belt, the NYA would actively seek the cooperation of social agencies and church groups to sponsor various projects.

The NYA's activist role paid quick dividends. By March 1936, Browning was able to announce that a committee of black Chicagoans had been formed to stimulate the growth of the NYA program in the ghetto. Holding its first organizational meeting at the WPA-renovated C. J. Walker Recreation Center (a former dine and dance restaurant), the committee vowed "to develop more varied activities to serve the area's youthful 43,000 Negro youths and to seek the sponsorship of previously disinterested groups of civic-minded persons." (290)

Described by Mary McLeod Bethune as "a hard and energetic worker," Browning quickly went to work to translate these high hopes into concrete projects. His plan was to link the activities of the NYA with the incipient programs of the Negro settlement houses, the Urban League, and the black "Y's."

By May, 1936, 10 community centers staffed and operated by the NYA had made their appearance in the ghetto. Located in storefront churches, social clubs, and in cleaned-out basements of decaying tenements; the centers conducted well-attended forums in Negro history for the purpose of "helping Negro youth fit themselves into the American scene." In the forefront of South side Agencies taking advantage of the federally-subsidized program was the Urban League which used NYA personnel to expand its own educational and recreational programs for neighborhood youth. Over 90 young blacks were assigned by the NYA to various League projects in the Black Belt. On the League's Community Improvement Project, 35 ghetto youths and their trained black supervisors organized neighborhood clubs along the lines of Harlem's noteworthy Cellar Clubs. Browning's pet project, block beautification, also fared well with no less than 55 black community organizations promoting the campaign. (291)

While community response to the projects was overwhelmingly favorable (4,000 black youth were enrolled as participants by June 1936), problems of a racial nature still remained to be ironed out. At issue was the NYA's hiring policy for supervisors on projects located in heavily Negro neighborhoods. After attending the Washington conference of black NYA administrators called by Miss Bethune Browning

returned to Chicago and promptly asked William Campbell to appoint a Negro to the State Advisory Committee of the NYA "so that Negro youth will not be forgotten." Campbell acquiesced and subsequently issued a statement asserting that "Illinois does not see the wisdom of having separate Negro projects, and where such projects do exist they are in Negro areas and their sponsoring committees are also Negro." In words that found support among integrationists and separatists alike, the State NYA Administrator declared that "it is wise to have Negro supervisors in Negro areas so as to best interpret the needs of the community to the district and state offices." (292)

The quick clarification of the NYA's racial policies opened the way for the further expansion of the youth agency's activities in the ghetto. Local NYA officials, including Charles Browning, were convinced that the black community's response to the NYA was dependent on the visible and physical accomplishments of the New Deal agency. "It is our belief," wrote Browning, "that as soon as the community sees with its own eyes that something is actually being done they will be glad to cooperate, but they want to see something definite first." Together with local leaders, the NYA launched a drive in the fall of 1936 to establish "Basement Clubs" for underprivileged black youth. The first club was established at the South Parkway YWCA and others soon followed in rapid progression. Their pattern of formation reflected the NYA's community-oriented philosophy. Organizations (e.g. churches, fraternal groups, and social welfare agencies) were first contacted by NYA personnel for permission to use a particular facility for a "Basement Club." Following the granting of permission, an effort was made to procure materials and equipment from individuals and organizations in the community. Supervisory personnel for the clubs was provided free of charge by the NYA, and local youths were encouraged to take part in planning club activities. When finally underway, the clubs provided an estimated 3,865 black youths (1939 figures) with their first opportunity to participate in constructive leisure time activities, including courses in handicrafts; Negro history, and dramatics. (293)

The dreary face of the ghetto was another target of the NYA's operation in the Black Belt. Local youths were recruited to aid in the renovation of selected buildings in the ghetto with the tacit understanding that these repaired buildings would be for use by youths participating in the NYA's programs. At the South Side Boys Club on 39th and Michigan, where repairs had not been attempted since 1928, renovation by NYA employees was followed by a decision to use the building as the headquarters of a project to survey all of the available empty lots on the South Side. Of the boys who attended the first organizational meeting at the Club, few had ever held a job or had ever expressed a desire for learning or improving their community. After the survey's completion, work began in clearing those lots located in high crime areas of the ghetto. Once the lots were declared by NYA officials to be suitable for use, and equipment and other essentials furnished by the youth agency, recreational leaders were chosen to operate the new park. Selection of these leaders was made on the basis of personal knowledge of the gangs in the area, with the result that many boys who had been or were on probation as delinquents were often placed in leadership positions. Their success in convincing Black Belt street gangs to take an active part in the Boys Club's activities particularly impressed juvenile delinquent expert Clifford Shaw. "No one can estimate," Shaw asserted, "the great amount of good that has been done for the South Side through the operation of the program." (294)

National Youth Administration officials in Chicago also tried with some success to break down racial barriers in vocational guidance and job placement. The main feature of the NYA's Vocational Guidance Program on the South Side was fact-finding classes for prospective black employees. Fourteen formerly unemployed Negro teachers were hired to conduct these classes which were held periodically at neighborhood youth centers. According to Browning, the program received a "splendid reception," with an average of 300 youths attending the classes. A special research committee was also formed to organize and disseminate occupational facts (unencumbered with prejudicial attitudes) to these students. The two Negro members of the committee worked exclusively on black industrial opportunity and the role of Chicago labor unions in perpetuating discriminatory policies. A unique part of the Chicago NYA setup was a Junior Counseling and Placement Service which provided youths of both races with up-to-date and accurate data on the local job market and then tried to place the applicant in a position of his or her choice. The results of this free service were considered gratifying. At the South Parkway Bureau of the NYA, Junior Placement interviewers (one-third of whom were black) found jobs in the service and commercial sector for one out of four of their black clients – a placement record which compared favorably with that of the Illinois State Employment Service. (295)

The NYA did not, and could not change by itself, the racist nature of employment practices within Chicago, but it did make it possible, as A. L. Foster indicated, for many hard-pressed social agencies in the ghetto to exist and even to expand their pre-New Deal services. George Arthur, president of the black YMCA, estimated that of the 10,050 Negro youth given help by the NYA in Chicago, at least two-thirds were engaged in some productive labor which ultimately benefited the South Side community. Writing to Browning in the waning days of the program, Arthur asked for more money and teachers for his "Y" and sadly remarked that "in a way, just the surface of the possibilities of future achievement has been scratched." (296)

Discriminatory policies, whether written or tacitly understood, hardly entered the picture as far as Chicago's EEP and NYA activities were concerned. There were, however, occasional outcries raised against some of the inevitable racial abuses. In a front-page story in the Chicago Defender, Howard Gould protested what he called "the lack of administrative positions for qualified Negroes on the WPA." While admitting that local WPA officials were for the most part fair-minded, Gould laid the blame for discrimination on "local politicians who are subverting programs of value to Negro communities by keeping blacks from supervisory posts." Editorially, the Defender backed Gould's allegation but noted that blacks were participating in the work of the EEP in larger numbers than their percentage of Chicago's professional relief population would warrant. A sampling of individual complaints received at the Washington office of Alfred Edgar Smith included a black nursing trainee who felt she was being trained for a job that did not exist, and a black teacher who was fired from an EEP project in a white neighborhood because he returned late from lunch (he had been refused service at nearby restaurants). Despite these legitimate objections, the Chicago branch of the NAACP found itself in essential agreement with Harold Ickes' claim that the Emergency Education program was "not merely content to employ Negroes for less important jobs." The Branch investigated a large percentage of these local charges of discrimination and disclosed in April 1939 that "all of these cases were settled to the satisfaction of the NAACP." As for charges that the New Deal agencies were financially shortchanging the ghetto, Robert

Weaver pointed to the fact that of the six school buildings built with Public Works Administration funds in Chicago, the most expensive and best equipped was the New Wendell Phillips High School which alone accounted for 75 per cent of the federal monies spent during the Depression on school construction in the city. (297)

With community welfare budgets cut to the bone and a public school system characterized by racial insensitivity, the Black Belt was in desperate need of a broad educational program which could effectively stimulate the drive towards community improvement and personal betterment. Within a relatively short span of time, governmental programs under the aegis of the WPA were able to win the general confidence of Chicago's black population. The WPA's housing surveys, health clinics, free vocational guidance and placement services, neighborhood rehabilitation campaigns, and classes in adult, commercial, vocational, workers, pre-school, and parent education were major factors in turning initial black doubts into welcome acceptance. Also impressive was the WPA's successful attempt to reduce the delinquency rate in the ghetto, the construction of the area's finest cultural center, and the agency's efforts to present an unbiased view of Negro history. It seemed clear that rather than contributing to the Black Belt's malaise, the WPA helped the black community of Chicago keep its head above the waters of ignorance, apathy, and decay.

IX. THE PHILADELPHIA NEGRO: THE DEPRESSION YEARS

It is impossible to believe that the lowest stratum of our living need be so low as it is today. The elimination of sub-standard conditions in Philadelphia will require the whole-hearted support of all its citizens if merely for their own protection.

—Pennsylvania Works Progress Administration (1935) (298)

We cannot blame the South alone for its undemocratic educational practices. The fault is ours as well. The evil is nationwide.

—Philadelphia Teachers Union (1937) (299)

Unlike its New York or Chicago counterpart, the nation's third largest black urban community possessed few of the geographical attributes of a ghetto. By 1930, the search for better housing, job opportunity, and quality education had resulted in a massive population shift of blacks from the congested central wards of the city into areas to the west and north of their traditional residences. In the place of a well-defined "Black Belt" were five major and twenty-two minor concentrations of Negro residents within Philadelphia proper, as well as a small but growing number of blacks in the suburbs along the Main Line Division of the Pennsylvania Railroad. While some regarded this geographic diffusiveness as a blessing (it allowed blacks the luxury of physical mobility), others were more skeptical, viewing the scattering of the city's nonwhite population as an added obstacle in the drive to create stable community institutions and a sense of community cohesiveness. (300)

Whether a black family was successful or unsuccessful in the search for better living conditions, life for many of Philadelphia's 220,000 blacks was still a matter of adjusting as best one could to a rapidly decaying environment. Regardless of the overall age of the neighborhood in which they lived, blacks invariably found themselves housed in the area's oldest and most dilapidated structures. Crowded into rows of two-and three-family brick houses resembling band-boxes, the Philadelphia Negro lived under conditions which shocked even the most complacent city officials. A 1931 report by a Quaker-led committee of concerned citizens gave this picture of the typical black-inhabited tenements:

The buildings, usually three stories high, had long narrow dim halls and dark stairways which led to 23 apartments—20 of one room each, two of two rooms each and one of three rooms—which are darkened by adjoining buildings. Seven toilets in the public halls, dark and foul-smelling serve the 24 families and as they are not locked, they are used in common by tenants and passers-by on the street. Six apartments have inside sinks, but 18 families use 12 common sinks ...

In many of the one-room apartments, the landlord has provided an old iron bed, with a cheap mattress, two pillows, and an old two-lid cookstove with a table and two chairs. (301)

These abysmal conditions and the reasons for their existence were not ignored by the New Deal. Early in 1934, the Civil Works Authority, in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Emergency Relief Board, undertook an ambitious, multi-volume study of Negro housing in Philadelphia. As project director Adolph Siegrist testified, the survey was made "not merely to supply work but primarily because we must have the facts in order to plan." In 1935, the project was absorbed by the Pennsylvania Works Progress Administration, and a year later, the completed survey was published in four volumes crammed full of statistical material. The survey's final publication caused a local WPA official to boast, "For the first time in the history of Philadelphia, and probably for the first time in the history of any American city, a comprehensive and factual survey of that part of Philadelphia housing occupied by colored people has been completed ... It will prove of great value to agencies planning for the future." (302)

It took only a quick look at the completed document to convince observers that unless social conditions were improved in the black districts of the city, the black man's future in Philadelphia would remain bleak. In most cases, Negroes were found to be living under more adverse conditions than whites in the same financial circumstances. Forty-one per cent of the residences occupied by nonwhite families were in need of minor repairs, 13 per cent were in need of major structural repairs, and 10 per cent were declared "unfit for occupancy." (figures for white homes were 22 per cent, 3 per cent, and two per cent, respectively). Families living under crowded conditions (more than one person per room) accounted for 20 per cent of all black households and 12.4 per cent of all white households. "Doubling up," with more than one family living in an apartment, occurred in one out of eight black residences, but in only one out of thirty-three white homes. While only 13 per cent of the city's whites lived in substandard homes (with such facilities as a bathroom missing from the premises), 56 per cent of all Negroes in Philadelphia lived in homes in the substandard category. After viewing the data, a WPA official warned that "if the highly unsatisfactory condition of colored housing in Philadelphia were not rectified soon, untold social calamity would result." (303)

The effects of poverty could also be measured in terms of the health and stability of the city's black families. By 1935, black relief cases represented nearly 50 per cent of the city's total, while jobs offered nonwhites by the State Employment Service compared unfavorably with WPA employment in terms of rate of pay, working conditions, and job security. Faced with these conditions, one out of five Negro families became the statistical equivalent of a "non-family" with no recognized head of household. Another 20 per cent of Philadelphia's black families functioned with only one parent present. Unable to meet high rental payments, many of these families took in lodgers which, in turn, increased the overcrowding and lack of privacy in the home. The resulting congestion was partly responsible for a Negro infant mortality rate twice that of whites, and a tuberculosis rate 4 times as great. Invariably, the weight of all of these problems fell on the shoulders of the black female. A white gynecologist of national reknown categorically stated that the Negro women who came to him for treatment in Philadelphia were "in worse condition than Negro women in any other city in the country." (304)

Although it was widely understood that these social conditions were major factors in the rise of adult and juvenile crime in the black wards, officials disagreed sharply as to what corrective action should be taken. For the Pennsylvania City Planning Commission, encouraging a lower birth rate was a partial solution to the crime problem. "The lower birth rate in the slums," a Commission report concluded in 1935, "is something for which to be thankful. Except for an improbable and infrequent genius who might be born of slum stock, society has nothing to lose by the lower birth rate." The majority of observers, however, adopted an environmentalist approach to the matter. After conducting its own research on the subject in 1925, the Armstrong Association (the Philadelphia affiliate of the National Urban League), concluded that the disproportionate number of Negro arrests indicated firstly, that the Negro was becoming an "easy prey for the petty official who wants to make a good record," and secondly, that the environment of the slum had made it doubly hard for the Negro to stay out of trouble. The Association cited the lack of public recreational facilities in the black wards, the increasing reduction in parental control over the education of the black child, immoral conditions in overcrowded apartments, and the black man's weak economic position as examples of how the social climate and economic climate in Philadelphia contributed to asocial behavior among blacks. (305)

With the advent of the New Deal, the environmental explanation for crime and criminals received an increased amount of attention. Utilizing the data from the WPA's "colored" housing survey, progressive-minded Philadelphians argued forcefully in the courts of the city that crime was but a symptom of general social maladjustment. Aiding their argument were local FERA officials, who compiled statistics showing that the incidence of crime coincided with crowded household units, unsound dwellings, and low median rentals. "For the first time," one New Dealer exclaimed, "this correlation has been made available to the public by a government agency." (306)

Further proof that slums and crime were the dual results of low socio-economic status was provided by Dr. Louis Rohrbaugh, the supervisor of the WPA's Education and Recreation Program in Philadelphia. Writing an article for the WPA's housing survey, Rohrbaugh refuted claims that crime was related to heredity and advanced instead the notion that a neighborhood's high arrest rate was inextricably linked to the neighborhood's high population density and to the condition of its housing stock. Rohrbaugh's findings were corroborated by a Pennsylvania investigatory commission which declared that high Negro crime rates were "not a biological problem, nor a question of the superiority or inferiority of one race or the other." Like the WPA supervisor, the report concluded that asocial behavior could be curbed by "an increase in the number of urban recreational facilities, playgrounds, boys clubs, and settlement activities." (307)

The recognition of the need for more institutional "shock absorbers" to cushion the dislocating effects of the Depression was fine in and of itself. The larger task; however, still remained, that of mobilizing city, state, and federal officials into doing something positive to remedy the admittedly bad situation in the black wards of Philadelphia. Appeals to the public consciences of white Philadelphians were considered

futile, as was the expectation of editorial support from the city's four major white-owned newspapers. The latter rarely devoted any new spcace to Negro affairs, other than to report a bloody crime or a particularly destructive fire involving black victims. Politically, the Philadelphia Negro had only a fraction of the influence his numbers would seem to warrant. Despite claims by the Philadelphia Independent that the city's black population "represented a tremendous centralized reservoir of political power that could be set in motion," blacks could not realistically count on the support of either party to bring about an amelioration of conditions. Their lack of political "clout"(there was only one Negro ward leader for a black population of well over 200,000.) was attributed to the dispersion of blacks across the face of the city and to the widespread desertion of blacks from the party of Lincoln in the 1936 election. Blacks seeking favors from the city's largely Republican bureaucracy were told point blank, "Let the Democrats help you, you voted for them" (308)

The burden of responsibility for improving the social and economic climate in the black wards thus fell on the shoulders of local black social welfare agencies who, more often than not, were unprepared to carry the load. Confronted with what state officials called "the dangerous restriction of leisure time activities for Negroes which leads many to patronize institutions of commercial vice," local black agencies tried their best to involve blacks in community-oriented projects. In 1930, a "Crusade for Jobs" was launched by the Philadelphia Tribune to convince white storeowners to hire more of their black clientele. A similar, but more vocal, "Buy Where You Can Work" campaign was initiated in 1935 by the militant North Philadelphia Civic Club which resulted in a number of concessions by white merchants. The Civic Club was also active in a "Beautify Your Block" campaign and conducted a class in Negro history at its North Broad Street headquarters. In June 1937, a Negro Tenants League was organized in South Philadelphia with the purpose of "securing shelter for those who were rendered homeless by the demolition of slum houses."

By March, 1938, between 10 and 12 separate Tenants Leagues were in existence in other Negro areas of the city and plans were being made to expand the purpose of the original organization to include the protection of the rights of all tenants in Philadelphia. (309)

Faced with severe financial difficulties of their own, few black agencies were able to participate in the fight to head off social calamity in the black wards. In a typical case, the 70 year old Benezet House Association closed its doors to the public in the winter of 1931, giving as its reason its inability to carry on the social program for which it was established. Only slightly better off were the Wharton Memorial Settlement and the Negro branch of the YMCA which managed to continue their operations but only on a greatly reduced scale. Also reluctant to give up the fight was the Armstrong Association, which despite a 40 per cent decrease in its operating budget and a skeleton staff, kept in operation its free vocational guidance service to black youth. These efforts aside, most blacks were in agreement with Association director Wayne Hopkin's pessimistic appraisal that unless outside sources of revenue were found, the Association would join other community agencies in having to curtail a large portion of its community-building activities. (310)

Concern over the strength and stability of black social institutions led progressive Philadelphians of both races to examine closely the operation of the public school system in the black wards. White critics focused their attention on the school's role in counteracting the dislocating effects of the Depression on the underprivileged child. Black leaders directed their inquiry along more cynical lines, asking quite frankly whether the Philadelphia school system was truly interested in equalizing educational opportunity for Negroes, or simply interested in perpetuating existing inequalities over a century in the making. (311)

Historically, the brand of education meted out to Philadelphia blacks in the first three decades of the 20th century had its roots firmly planted in the decade preceding the Civil War. In May, 1854, an act was passed by the Pennsylvania State Legislature authorizing the establishment of separate schools for Negroes and allowing school officials the right to reject applicants for admission to the public school system on the basis of color. While this act was ultimately repealed in 1881, the trend toward the widening of the educational gap between the races had been set. Blacks themselves seemed resigned to separate schools for their children, and on at least one occasion (in 1909) petitioned the city's Superintendent of Schools not to go ahead with plans to integrate an all-black school and its faculty. The trend toward separate facilities was enhanced by a ruling from the Board in the early 1920's which allowed the principal of any school to reject or accept pupils at will and to provide ready transfers to those students wishing to attend school elsewhere. By 1930, the number of "colored" schools in Philadelphia had risen to 15, and Negro teachers were not being permitted to teach white students. (312)

The Board of Education's decision in 1930 to drop the designation of "colored school" in its annual reports provided little comfort to pro-integrationists in the city. Critics noted that while "Jim Crow" schools were no longer recognized by the Board, 12 such schools remained firmly entrenched in Philadelphia throughout the New Deal period. The very existence of these schools, blacks claimed, represented a form of discrimination. The Board also drew considerable fire for its policies of restricting black teachers and administrators to the city's secondary schools, of denying qualified nonwhite personnel the opportunity to take the junior and senior high school licensing examinations, and of keeping two separate civil service lists, one for each race. (313)

When faced with these charges (and the additional charge that the Board had failed to provide adequate school yard and playground facilities in densely populated black neighborhoods), school officials professed innocence. The widely quoted remark of one Board member that "under no circumstances would I consider a colored teacher to teach white children" was dismissed by Superintendent of Schools Edwin G. Broome as a "regrettable mistake." When questioned further by the black press, Broome adamantly denied that discrimination was a fact of life in Philadelphia's educational system. Responding to these denials, the Philadelphia Tribune declared that "everyone with an ounce of common sense knows what the situation is. The Board must stop its trickery, deceit, and lying." (314)

Even more serious than the charge of segregation was the charge that the schools in the black wards were serving to perpetuate the harmful and ambition-stifling influences of their immediate surroundings. Black leaders claimed that public school officials often overlooked the fact that the high rate of delinquency and truancy among black youth (roughly two and a half times the city average) reflected the behavior of over-aged, underfed, ill-clothed, and ill-housed children. Blacks reasoned that the Board's failure to recognize this cause and effect relationship meant that school officials had turned a deaf ear to the mountain of evidence linking low school grades, low I.Q., retardation, and asocial behavior with the child's physical, social, and cultural surroundings.

In such a situation, argued Donald Wyatt of the Armstrong Association, it was the school's duty to act not only as a purveyor of academic knowledge, but as a "supplier of a tonic to make up for diseased or undernourished social factors." (315)

The concept of the school as an institution capable of healing the wounds left on the child by society was slow in gaining acceptance among Philadelphia school officials. The latter began the New Deal period convinced, more than ever, of the worthiness of their "time-tested" approach to the problem of educating the disadvantaged. Nowhere was this devotion to the status quo more pronounced than in the Board's conception of what constituted a suitable curricula for the nonwhite students. After conducting a 1933 investigation into the matter, school authorities ruled that the assignment of a child to a particular curriculum was the sole responsibility of the school system and in no way should depend on parental consent. The investigators also recommended a differential curricula plan for the city's "lower-class neighborhoods" which called for a reduction in academic content and an increased exposure to vocational subjects. Anticipating an uproar in the wake of the study's publication, Superintendent Broome gave his personal assurances to Ambrose Caliver that in the city's vocational, junior, and senior high schools, "the colored children will be on the same terms as the white children and will have the same opportunity of taking whatever industrial and vocational courses that are offered." (316)

Although the black community of Philadelphia was itself divided over the question of academic versus vocational training, few blacks took Broome's assurances seriously. For many, it was painfully obvious that the city's all-Negro schools were dispensing an inferior brand of education. Such schools, critics noted, were forced by the Board to follow a standardized curriculum a curriculum which in no way reflected the needs and aspirations of black youth. Efforts to widen the framework of the curriculum to include projects and programs dealing with the contributions of Negroes met with the Board's disapproval, while teachers who failed to educate black children along the lines set by bureaucrats at the Board's South Parkway headquarters were often reprimanded severely by their principals. (317)

The situation with regard to black vocational education was even less satisfactory. When 600 black junior high school students were questioned in 1935 by the Armstrong Association as to their future choice of occupation, nearly one out of five indicated a preference for a teaching career. The next most preferred career was medicine, followed closely by the clerical field. The vivid discrepancy between aspirations and

actual opportunities (only 3 per cent of the city's Negro working force in 1930 were employed in vocations for which 75 per cent of the students interviewed were aiming), led the Association to conclude that if guidance counselors did not present their black students with accurate information and encouragement concerning the entire spectrum of vocational choices, severe disillusionment would be the inevitable result. (318)

Responding to suggestions that they acquaint their black clients with a broader perspective of the job market, many sincere guidance counselors claimed their hands were tied by a society which "created little incentive to encourage Negroes to complete more than the eighth grade." The only alternative, they argued, was to encourage Negro youth to enter fields which promised immediate employment. Figures released by the Board in 1942 indicated that these counselors had done their job all too well. Black girls were found disproportionately enrolled in beauty culture and home economics courses in high school, while black boys were guided into auto mechanics courses which prepared them for jobs as car washers or greasers. Nonwhite youths requesting office training were informed by their white counselors of the hostility of white private employers. Similarly, blacks wishing to be trained for jobs in the textile field were told in no uncertain terms that the mills, which had for many years been the main source of livelihood for the Polish, English, and Scotch-Irish living in the Frankford-Kensington area, would resist any attempt by "outsiders" to seek employment. Potential black nurses after learning that Philadelphia's two Negro hospitals lacked the facilities to accommodate all those desiring training turned to domestic or related work; while black graduates from shop courses soon discovered that they were receiving a lower wage than white dropouts from the same courses. To make matters worse, many employers openly expressed a skeptical attitude towards black graduates from the city's vocational schools, indicating the low level of training accorded to nonwhites in the system. (319)

Black separatists reacted positively to the Board's present-oriented guidance policy for black students. Altadena Tyson, the black president of the Unemployed Teachers Association, asserted that the professions offered the black man a poor future. Tyson supported her assertion by pointing to the fact that black doctors in the city were driving taxicabs to keep from "starving to death" and that "any Philadelphia department stores could get a Ph.D. for less than $12 a week." Some black educators, like principal Arthur Huff Faust, were decidedly sour on a liberal arts education, stressing the point that "plain hard work would eventually be the Negro's salvation." "There ought to be a law," wrote Faust, "against permitting Negroes to work for a Ph.D. I would refuse sanction to any Negro desiring to study further than the eighth grade." Of a similar mind was the city's largest selling Negro paper, the Philadelphia Independent. In a November, 1936 editorial, the Independent attacked what it called "the coddling influence of our high schools and colleges" and the tendency of the college-trained Negro to avoid active participation in community affairs. "Unless these educated blacks exercised some social responsibility to their own people," the paper concluded. "our future leaders will continue to be drawn from the waterfronts and from the mines.” (320)

Despite some black support for school segregation, the vast majority of Philadelphia's blacks during the 1930's were opposed to the Board's discriminatory and restrictive approach to Negro education. Leading

the fight against these policies was E. Washington Rhodes, the militant pro-integrationist publisher of the Philadelphia Tribune. Claiming that advocates of the separate school were "only interested in jobs for their daughters," Rhodes described their activities on behalf of segregation as "not only irrelevant ... but well nigh criminal to the interests of our children." "Separate schools," he declared, "are based on the theory that Negroes are inferior, and it is impossible for Negroes ever to receive quality of opportunity in a school system which brands them as inferior." The publisher's opinion of Philadelphia school officials made these comments appear mild by comparison. Reacting to the Board's decision in February, 1931, to prohibit the use of The Crisis as teaching material in the city's schools (the journal was considered "too inflammatory"), Rhodes described this action as "no less than criminal" and called the Board "the most flagrant example of yellow prejudice and racial discrimination ever to come to light in this city." (321)

Black dissatisfaction with the educational system in Philadelphia began to coalesce over a number of related issues in the early 1930's. Many of these issues were not new, but the decision by leaders of the black community to do something forceful about them was. A case in point involved the dispute over a social studies textbook written in 1922 by Dr. Henry Reed Burch, the chairman of the history department at Overbrook High School. The text, widely used in the Philadelphia school system and ironically titled Problems In American History, clearly sympathized with the Ku Klux Klan's efforts to protect the South from "corrupt colored politicians." Burch described Negroes as being "indolent, lazy, criminally inclined, and morally irresponsible." Blacks seeking to publicize the blatantly racist nature of the material first turned to John T. Emlen, a white millionaire who was president of the Armstrong Association's Board of Directors and an influential voice in Philadelphia social circles. Emlen, however, adopted a strictly hands-off policy. "I try to aid the Negro as much as possible but the question of the ability of the race is one that I am not getting into." (322)

The controversy remained in limbo until January, 1932, when author Burch was interviewed by the Tribune on the tenth anniversary of his book's publication. When the interview appeared in print, along with Burch's statement that "Amos and Andy represent admirable traits of the Negro race; simplicity and honesty," many blacks were furious. One of the most angered was black educator Floyd Logan who called upon other black educators to work together with him to remove the book from the school curriculum. Response to Logan's suggestion ranged from a "no comment" by Arthur Huff Fauset to a promise of moral support from Clarence Whyte, the black principal of Durham elementary school. "Of course," Whyte reminded Logan, "you must understand my position. The matter is quite delicate since it involves a criticism of the Board." (323)

Undaunted, Logan proceeded to organize the Educational Equality League. A non-political, pro-integration group of blacks and whites; the League dedicated itself to removing racist texts from the school system and to securing positions for Negro teachers in the city's "mixed" schools. Support for the new group was immediately voiced by the Philadelphia Tribune which had earlier branded Burch's book "an absolute deterrent to Negro progress in Philadelphia" and "a polluter of the minds of black and white children." Denouncing "handshaker-head tact and diplomacy" (an obvious reference to previous

efforts by blacks to convince the Board to change its ways), the League and the paper threatened mass school boycotts in the black wards if Burch's text was not immediately removed. This verbal and written barrage proved too much for school authorities; on February 4, 1932, Edwin Broome ordered that the controversial text be dropped as a required part of the high school curriculum. (324)

Spurred on by this victory, reform-minded blacks next aimed to secure the appointment of a Negro to the Board of Education. Their campaign benefited by the close cooperation of the Philadelphia Teachers Union (local 192 of the American Federation of Teachers), which had earlier led a successful fight for the reinstatement of 58 discharged Negro teachers in the Philadelphia suburb of Chester. Armed with the slogan "Cooperation is Our Best Weapon," the Union, along with the Educational Equality League and the Philadelphia Tribune, sponsored a series of mass meetings in the black wards of the city to rally the community around one well-qualified candidate. In 1934, Floyd Logan made a personal appearance before the Board requesting that it broaden its representation to include nonwhites, and was given a promise that "some action will be taken." A year later, on June 22, 1935, Mayor John Kelly acceded to these pressures (as well as to the pressures of an election year) and appointed Dr. John P. Turner as the first Negro member of the Board of Education. While Turner's appointment was greeted with some suspicion in the black community (it was felt that the former police surgeon would turn out to be a "yes man" for City Hall), the lesson of cooperation and unity to achieve reform in the educational system was not lost on Black leaders. (325)

Two years after the Turner appointment, blacks won another fight against school officialdom. The issue this time involved the separate teacher eligibility lists which had kept most Negro teachers from holding positions in the junior and senior high schools. Pressures for change in this area were aided by the fact that blacks in New York, Chicago, and Cleveland had won similar fights earlier in the decade. The tactics employed in Philadelphia were patterned on those used in other cities: editorials in the black press denouncing "the despicable custom of maintaining separate lists," articles in teacher union publications discounting claims of black mental inferiority, and mass meetings sponsored jointly by the Educational Equality League and local black PTA groups to arouse the sentiments and cooperation of the community. To the welcome surprise of his critics, Dr. Turner cooperated fully with these efforts. Faced with a united front of black opinion, the Board announced on July 9, 1937, that seven Negro teachers had been appointed to schools which had only white teachers in the past, and that two white teachers had been appointed to schools with black principals (a subsequent announcement by the Board officially merged the previously existing separate eligibility lists). The reaction to these steps in the black community was one of unbridled optimism. "The Philadelphia Board of Education," chortled The Crisis, "has wiped out the color line in the city's school system." (326)

The final victory did not obscure a number of losses entailed by black educational militants in their quest for equal educational opportunity and an end to racism in the classroom. One of these losses involved the Board's decision in March of 1937 to relocate Central High School at Broad and Greene (a black neighborhood) to a new site at Olney and Ogontz Avenues (a largely white neighborhood). This decision was denounced roundly by blacks who viewed the proposed move as an attempt to make Central's

superior facilities and faculty inaccessible to a large number of Negro students. Led by attorney Raymond Pace Alexander, himself a graduate of the school, 250 Negroes appeared at the public hearings called by the Board to consider relocation. Waving placards and chanting slogans, the group dubbed the proposed move “a slap in the face to thousands of poor families who now benefit by the many foundations, scholarships and prizes offered at Central High.” Before the protesters knew what happened, the Board adopted a resolution requesting the Public Works Administration to build at the Olney Avenue site. The resolution had been cleverly lumped with many others and all were voted on together. The subterfuge was so successful that most of Alexander’s forces failed to realize until the meeting was almost over that the move had been approved. When Board president Morris Leeds gaveled the hearings closed, a riot nearly ensued. Regaining his composure, Alexander expressed his bitterness at Dr. Turner for voting with the majority ("Turner, you have sold your people down the river"), and vowed to continue the struggle. Plans were later adopted by the black group to petition Harold Ickes asking that the PWA grant be held up until city-wide meetings were conducted by black and white civic leaders. This strategy proved unsuccessful, and the project proceeded as originally planned. (327)

While blacks were meeting failure on this front, a new controversy concerning the building of a new junior high school was brewing in the black wards of North Philadelphia. Negroes in this section of the city had been politicized early in the 1930's by the North Philadelphia United Committee for Better Schools. The NPUCBS held monthly meetings at the Wharton Settlement House to discuss with interested members of the black community such issues as overcrowded schools, bad housing, traffic hazards "and other civic problems which tend to demoralize the community." Adopting as its slogan "A Full Day in School for Every Child," the Committee for Better Schools surveyed conditions in Philadelphia's fifth school district and found an extremely high percentage of black pupils on part-time instruction. Calling this situation "unprecedented in any other section of the city," the Committee launched a lobbying campaign aimed at convincing city officials to build two new junior high schools and one vocational school in the heart of North Philadelphia. (328)

The decision by the Board of Education to erect the Vaux Junior High School at 24th and Master in a section of North Philadelphia heavily populated by blacks was hailed by William Lowry, acting superintendent of district five, "saw the happy conclusion for the colored in their fight for equity in the public school system." Many blacks including Joseph Rainey, president of the Reynolds School PTA, disagreed with Lowry's optimism. "While Negroes in North Philadelphia," wrote Rainey in a letter to the Tribune, "are thankful for the new junior high school, we are far from satisfied with the attitude taken by the Board of Education towards the employment of Negro personnel at the facility." Agreeing with Rainey was the Committee for Better Schools, which in March, 1937, attempted to exact a promise from the Board that a Negro principal be appointed to Vaux and that the school have a mixed faculty. These demands, however, were ignored, and Vaux opened in September, 1937, with an 85 percent black student body, a white principal, and an all-white teaching staff. (329)

Insult was added to injury when it was discovered by the NPUCBS that Vaux's principal, Dr. Margaret McGuire, was "definitely hostile to most of the blacks in the school." The situation attracted the

attention of the Educational Equality League and the Philadelphia Teachers Union. In May, 1938, community indignation at the relationship (or lack of one) between the principal, the students, and the parents reached the boiling point, and the League and the Union began collecting affidavits attesting to McGuire's allegedly racist attitudes. When the Board refused to acknowledge the affidavits, the Union stepped in and secured the signatures of one-third of Vaux's faculty to a statement claiming that "effective teaching had been rendered difficult because of the unprofessional treatment of teachers, pupils, and parents by the Principal." Responding to this move, the Board reversed its previous position and transferred Dr. McGuire to one of the best high schools in the city, appointing in her place another white woman. Pressure from the community intensified and a student strike was called in the fall of 1938. Unable to defuse the issue any longer, the Board relented and a Negro was appointed as principal of Vaux Junior High School in October 1938. (330)

The appointment of a black principal to Vaux, along with the black community's other educational victories, climaxed a decade in which strenuous efforts were made to strengthen the institutional infrastructure of the black wards. Those arguing loudest for change pointed to the lack of well-financed and well-organized social and educational programs in Negro sections of the city, and declared that such programs were vitally necessary to stem the tide of anomie, asocial behavior, and ignorance. Critics of the status quo were also aware that well-financed community-oriented programs would not materialize out of thin air; that funds would have to be secured from outside sources if community stability was to triumph over social chaos. Unless such aid was forthcoming, progressive Philadelphians of both races were agreed that any improvement in the quality of life in the black wards would remain as elusive and illusory as it had in previous decades.

X. THE WPA IN THE BLACK WARDS OF PHILADELPHIA

The greatest amount of good that can be put into the communities by a government is being done by this alphabetical enterprise known as the WPA.

-Philadelphia Independent (1937) (331)

The arrival of the New Deal's apparatus in Philadelphia was greeted with a surprising lack of enthusiasm by the city's black community. Although the new President sounded sincere in his public addresses, the suspicion lingered that nothing except "handouts" could be expected from the federal government. A number of prominent blacks in the city were, in fact, openly hostile to the thought that Washington could somehow "legislate away" the educational and social crisis in the black wards. Publisher E. Washington Rhodes went so far as to characterize the Federal Emergency Relief Administration as "an agency which encourages blacks to get on relief rather than work." "The Negro people," Rhodes declared, "could find enough work without outside intervention if they would really concentrate all of their forces toward that end." (332)

The New Deal's educational program in the city began on an ambitious note in November, 1933 when six evening extension centers were organized and placed under the direction of public school authorities. Each of the six centers, (six more were added in January, 1934), were purposely located in high crime districts so as to "attract the group with undirected leisure that follows its instincts to congregate and which constitutes the corner lounger menace, the training ground for loafers and criminals." While somewhat disappointed that only one center was established in a clearly black neighborhood, blacks were more upset to learn that the free classes in English and electrical engineering at the Barratt Evening Extension Center were to be conducted solely by white personnel. Letters complaining of this situation were sent to Ambrose Caliver who, in turn, wrote Commissioner of Education George Zook, and Pennsylvania State Superintendent of Public Instruction James Rule for a clarification of the Philadelphia Board of Education's hiring practices. While these exchanges were being made, Clarence Whyte, the black principal of the Durham school, took the side of the beleaguered Board by asserting that "there is employment for thoroughly trained teachers but there seems to be a scarcity of thoroughly trained Negroes for the job." The issue was finally resolved when Lewis Alderman took personal charge of the investigation, and ruled that the black teachers recommended for the Center by the Educational Equality League were "more than qualified and should be employed at Barratt immediately." (333)

The successful resolution of the Barratt controversy in March, 1934, convinced a majority of the city's black leadership class (including the vociferous Floyd Logan) to give the New Deal's educational program at least a fair chance to prove itself. Regardless of their differences as to strategy, blacks of every ideological shading were agreed that the community itself would have to devise some plans for the intelligent and rational use of leisure time as a hedge against the resurgence of idleness and crime. The specifics of each plan varied, but the least common denominator shared by all of those suggestions called for the bringing together of the community's entire stock of private and publicly sponsored

educational programs in one major undertaking for social progress. Internal bickering aside, the theme throughout the 1930's in the black wards of Philadelphia was community self-help and cooperation. (334)

In basic harmony with this theme was the EPP's goal of making its educational activities "a permanent and locally supported extension of community life." However, as local officials of the agency soon found out; communicating this goal to Philadelphia's nonwhite population was not as simple as it seemed. Faced with the suspicions and doubts of ghetto dwellers, EPP planners employed folk festivals, pageants, exhibits, and athletic contests to win the confidence and attract the attention of the black wards. At every opportunity, the agency bent over backwards to draw the disadvantaged into the program. When, for example, it was found that illiterates or parents of poor children could not attend evening adult education classes, EPP instructors secured their addresses from public welfare agencies and went to see them in their homes. If it proved more convenient to hold emergency classes in private homes, provision for such a setup was made until members of the classes overcame their fears of the traditionally cold and forbidding ghetto school. (335)

Another problem faced by the EEP involved giving the black community the impression that it had an important say in the planning and operation of local emergency education projects. In an effort to solve this problem, the EEP relied on the community council concept for the planning of ghetto education and recreation programs. The council itself was in reality an umbrella-like institution under the over-all guidance of local WPA people who were experienced in community work. Sharing part of the responsibility for planning the projects were representatives from the community's established social agencies, such as the Children's Aid Society, the YMCA, and the Urban League. The council was composed at its lowest level of a plethora of locally-staffed sub-committees concerned with projects in the area of health, parent education, nursery school care, recreation, music, art, and library work. Surrounding this administrative framework was the hope that the WPA would train local residents to become specialists in the above fields so that by the time the WPA was dissolved, there would be an experienced class of local leaders ready to take over complete operation of these community projects. In addition, the councils were charged with the following duties:

to act as a clearinghouse for all events of general importance to the community; to set up unified objectives thus avoiding duplication of effort; to coordinate the existing programs of established social agencies; to act as an information-gathering agency; to utilize the findings of WPA-sponsored and financed surveys; and last but not least, to devise the most effective methods of reaching the Negro masses in the city. (336)

A third problem faced by the agency was that of convincing blacks of the nondiscriminatory nature of WPA projects. Anxious to avoid embarrassing charges of racism, local officials of the WPA instituted a series of administrative safeguards. The first of these was a reaffirmation of the equal hiring policy established earlier with regard to the staffing of EEP projects. Alderman's office kept close tabs on the

number of Negro and white teachers employed on these projects making sure that black representation on the EEP's payroll was at least equal to, if not more than, the nonwhite percentage of relief recipients in the state. As a result of this policy, black teachers on average comprised 30 per cent of all EEP teachers hired by the Philadelphia Board of Education -- a figure nearly five times the percentage of black teachers in the city's regular school system. Steps were also taken by WPA officials to secure the appointments of state and local Negro supervisors and consultants on education and recreation projects. One of the first blacks appointed to such a position was Philadelphia social worker Crystal Bird Fauset who quickly turned her job as supervisor of Negro WPA activities in the city into a rallying point for those opposing the separation of blacks and whites on WPA-funded enterprises. Mrs. Fauset fought hard and tirelessly for "more than equitable representation for Negroes on all projects" and challenged her critics to demonstrate why competent blacks were unfit to supervise whites in mixed neighborhoods of Philadelphia. (337)

Given these guidelines and James Atkins' suggestion to black leaders that they exercise judgment and restraint in voicing their demands ("It is highly important to have and retain the good will of both the Administration which is to cooperate in the setting up of your organization and the group which is to be served by it."), the Philadelphia version of the EEP set about the business of building community stability through community cooperation. The first institutions to feel the impact of this commitment were the social agencies in the black wards. Aid in the form of EEP teachers was more than welcome by these agencies, many of whom had curtailed their community-oriented work in the face of economic difficulties. One such organization, the Christian Street YMCA, was particularly grateful for services rendered by the federal government. "The WPA," commented the Y's executive secretary, J. Emerson Jones, "supplied us with the personnel which made the difference between our regular staff and the greatly reduced staff which barely kept the institution open after the Depression retrenchments were made." With the government's help, the Y was able to "reach the parents of the community through courses in arts and crafts, sewing, knitting, and Negro history." Praise for the work of the New Deal agency also came from Horace Davis, the black supervisor of the McCoach Recreation Center in South Philadelphia. According to Davis, the creation of much-needed playground space on Lombard Street (in the area of the infamous "Hell's Acre") would "have been impossible without the cooperation of WPA people." (338)

By the fall of 1936, black leaders in the city were convinced that the WPA's educational and recreational programs would have to be expanded in order to surmount the massive difficulties facing the Negro community. While Atkins voiced similar sentiments during a visit to the city, the EEP's racial advisor warned local groups of blacks that "fiscal retrenchment seems to be the order of the day" and that they should try to squeeze as much as they could from the admittedly inadequately funded program. In spite of these explanations, blacks continued to expose cases of overworked EEP personnel and overused facilities. One such disclosure involved the case of a Negro Parent Education instructor in North Philadelphia who met with not less than 8 or 9 groups several times weekly in a crowded second-story loft showroom. Complaints were also heard of a scarcity of qualified black supervisors in black neighborhoods (on some projects in South Philadelphia local black groups were called in to advise and actually coach white supervisors of black project personnel). More often than not, however, criticism of

the EEP was tempered with praise for its work. J. G. Smith, a black WPA supervisor at the Wharton Memorial Settlement, applauded the EEP for contributing to "the morals of our entire community" by giving blacks who had previously avoided the black Y's and settlement houses "the opportunity to learn home crafts and current history." Smith added that while he and many other blacks were "highly appreciative of the EEP," it would take more than a doubling of present space and facilities to meet the demands of the 40,000 blacks who lived in a 64 block area surrounding the Wharton settlement. (339)

An organization with few reservations as to the operations of the WPA in the black wards was the Armstrong Association. According to Executive Secretary Wayne Hopkins, there was good reason for blacks to believe in the validity of the WPA projects. Blacks, he noted, were participating in the Adult Education and Recreation programs in fair proportion to their percentage of the total population of the city. In the matter of wages, nonwhites earned the same wages on government projects as whites doing similar work. More important, for Hopkins, the range of activities made available by the New Deal to the black community was far-reaching as well as innovative. For the first time in Philadelphia's history, blacks in large numbers (nearly 12,500) were enrolled in courses such as literacy training, parent education; child care; and Negro History. Hopkins was particularly pleased with the philosophy which activated these educational experiments, a philosophy which made room for those formerly considered uneducable by the established school system. (340)

Armed with this philosophy, the WPA in Philadelphia expanded its educational activities to include a wide range of community-oriented projects including block clean up campaigns in slum neighborhoods and the co-sponsorship of the United Negro Improvement Association's annual cavalcade of black accomplishment in the city. In addition, the WPA and the Board of Education co-sponsored a school for domestic workers in North Philadelphia whose operating costs were picked up by the black parishioners of Haven Methodist Episcopal Church. Day and night classes were offered in no less than 12 predominantly black schools in the city under the general supervision of black principal Clarence Whyte. At Barratt Junior High School, FEP enrollees presented an elaborate Negro History Week program as well as a free concert portraying the role played by blacks in the American Revolution. By January, 1937. Adult Education activities had spread to 43 centers in the black wards, while 95 WPA-supervised recreation centers were in operation in these neighborhoods. After surveying the scene of thousands of the city's blacks attending emergency classes, the once-hostile E. Washington Rhodes had only praise for the educational and community-oriented work of the New Deal agency. "The Philadelphia Negro," he declared, "has received more benefit from the WPA than from any other agency of the federal government." (341)

One of the projects which received a particularly good press was Workers Education. Begun as a Board of Education experiment in the winter of 1933-1934, the program was designed to come to the assistance of newly organized unions in Philadelphia (e.g. the ILGWU) whose preoccupation with recruitment had forced them to neglect their educational function. Workers education classes were subsequently organized in schools, settlement houses, and union halls, and staffed with teachers who were hired on the basis of their ability to deal interestingly and accurately with issues affecting the average worker.

From its inception, the project encouraged and actively sought the participation of black groups in the city. Donald Wyatt of the Armstrong Association launched the first such class for black workers at the Barratt Junior High School in January, 1935. Wyatt's action was considered important because it linked three institutions, two public and one private, in a common cause. Each institution was responsible for fulfilling a key function; the Armstrong Association for recruiting and sponsoring the class, the school system for providing the physical facilities and necessary teaching equipment, and the WEP for providing the teaching staff. WPA officials in Philadelphia also made no secret of the fact that co-sponsorship of the project was sought for the Association because of its influence in the Negro community and for its ability to advise on the special problems of Negro workers. (342)

The Workers Education program at Barratt reflected the WPA's concern with creating a well-informed black working force. The classes were composed, on average, of 18 students who met two evenings a week for a total of four hours.

Attendance was voluntary. Courses were offered in a variety of fields, including consumer's education, the role of the Negro in the American labor movement, current events, and Negro history. Discussion often grew heated over such issues as the poll tax, the Scottsboro case, and the allegedly pro-communist stance of the National Negro Congress. In the course on current events, portions of the Harlem Riot Commission's report were listed as required reading. In order to alert the black population to the existence of these courses, the Armstrong Association, with the help of WPA funds, put together a throw-away called The Neighborhood News which was distributed by WEP personnel in the schools of the black wards for eventual consumption by the Negro parent. Word of mouth, however, proved the project's best advertiser, and by September, 1936, popular demand had "forced" WPA officials to offer similar courses in workers education at the Sulzberger school in West Philadelphia, the Reynolds school in North Philadelphia, at Mount Olivet Baptist Church, at the Catherine Street YWCA, and at the United Negro Improvement Association's headquarters on Columbia Street. (343)

Another facet of the WPA's multi-faceted approach to the educational and social problems besetting the ghetto involved the data-collecting work of the agency's Research and Survey Division. Conducted in an intellectual atmosphere heavily influenced by environmentalist theories of urban development, the WPA-financed surveys sought to discover the underlying causes of juvenile delinquency in Philadelphia. The research began early in 1934 under a grant furnished by the Civil Works Authority and eventually developed into a detailed case by case study of more than 30,000 delinquents, one-third of whom were black. After months of study, WPA researchers concluded that an expanded guidance program was needed to counteract the rapid rise in asocial behavior among youth. The study's conclusion was hailed by many of the city's social action groups including the Inter-Agency Council for Youth, an interracial committee of prominent citizens organized "to protest the incarceration of innocent Negro boys in jail." Lauding the WPA surveys as "an opportunity for the Negro community of this city to become more aware of its many problems," the Council made arrangements for the use of 25 WPA professional employees to work with 400 Negro boys who had recently been discharged at preliminary hearings of the Juvenile Court. When this experiment paid off in a lower rate of juvenile delinquency for the affected

Negro districts, the Council described the result as "another instance of how the WPA has worked within the framework of existing permanent agencies to provide a valuable service not before available." (344)

A good example of the WPA's potential benefit to the concept of community cohesiveness was illustrated by two of its programs in geographically separate communities in the city. The first of these “community experiments” was initiated in late 1939 when WPA officials were asked by school principals in South Philadelphia to help plan and carry out an approach to the problem of pregnancy among unmarried Negro students. Utilizing the community council concept (a concept which had proved effective in white areas of the city), the New Deal agency formed a general committee composed of representatives from local organizations willing to share the fruits of their experience with the rest of the community, which eventually included representatives from social agencies, schools, churches, and the black press, who went out into the streets, interviewing residents, speaking to unwed black mothers, and examining the efforts of the schools in the area to meet the problem at hand. Their findings meshed neatly with the theories of the environmentalists. According to the Committee, the problem was not racial but social in origin. The solution involved coming to grips with the many concomitants of poverty including malnutrition, sex maladjustment, poor housing, lack of home relationships, and sparsity of recreational opportunities. By the fall of 1940, the Committee had acted to make its findings meaningful for the urban ghetto dweller. Monthly meetings with parents and student groups were held to discuss the problem, added school space was provided for afternoon groups, social agencies and churches made more space available for evening groups, and a home visiting project was launched in conjunction with the Barratt Junior High School to reach and counsel unmarried Negro mothers in South Philadelphia. (345)

In the multi-racial Germantown section of the city, the WPA again demonstrated its willingness to experiment with a community-based system of educational activity. Declaring that "the interests of the school and the community must be made to coincide," the Germantown WPA Community Council organized a weekly series of meetings (conducted by EEP teachers) for parents and regular teachers in the local school district. Topics discussed at these well-attended meetings ranged from personal problems to neighborhood conditions such as sub-standard housing, low incomes, delinquency, poor health facilities, and the need for more government-sponsored nursery schools. A Negro History Club was formed and its members presented assembly programs in the neighborhood schools with an eye towards correcting the racial myths contained in many social studies texts. Less academically oriented was the format at the Germantown Settlement House, where Italians and Negroes sat side by side learning shoe-making, doll-making, and leather work from a biracial staff of WPA instructors. (346)

As in the case of Harlem and the Black Belt, the WPA's educational activities in the black wards of Philadelphia were supplemented by the work of the National Youth Administration. Although faced with the nagging problems of inadequate facilities, frequent changes in personnel, and the lack of funds, the NYA operation in Philadelphia was given a clean bill of health by many black leaders because of its apparently genuine concern for "the special needs of the Negro race." A key factor in this favorable response was the NYA's decision to create a Pennsylvania State Office of Negro Affairs in December,

1935. The man chosen to head the new NYA division was Rufus Watson, a black Harvard-trained Philadelphia lawyer. Watson's initial operating instructions were issued from the Washington desk of Mary McLeod Bethune and included the tacit understanding that any memorandum from the NYA's Division of Negro Affairs was intended to be "only suggestive and must naturally be adjusted to the administrative pattern in your area." Watson did, however, follow Bethune's major "suggestion" that he attempt "to foster good relations with Negro school people and with those schools having a substantial enrollment of Negroes." In addition, the former Juvenile Court lawyer adopted a policy of maintaining good relations with the black press and made a conscious effort not to antagonize existing black social welfare institutions. Watson viewed the latter as the "lifeblood of any program designed to rehabilitate black youth." (347)

Watson's desire to reduce the huge Negro dropout rate and to find suitable training opportunities and jobs for blacks discouraged by prejudicial guidance counselors and teachers proved much easier said than done. Blacks were at a serious disadvantage when it came to competing in the Philadelphia job market; the average black youth applying for a position through the NYA had less than an eighth-grade education and a median I.Q. of 75. Fully one-third of the black applicants were classified by school authorities as "feebleminded." In addition to these educational disadvantages, black NYA employees suffered from grave social disabilities. When questioned by NYA counselors, many of these youths were found to be living in highly disorganized social and psychological circumstances. Many resided alone in fire-trap rooming houses, spending much of their spare time "loafing" with friends who lived in a similar environment. In discussing their future plans, blacks between the ages of 16 and 24 often expressed a willingness to find some kind of work while quickly adding that there seemed to be "only a few lines of work open to them and those were the jobs no one else wanted and paid the lowest wage." NYA researchers also discovered a deep suspicion of the established school system and with existing social agencies. Making the solution to these problems even more difficult was the attitude adopted by a sizeable minority of black churches and property owners in the black wards who responded negatively to the suggestion that they convert space on their property to handle youth-related activities.

Excuses from these sources ranged from the lack of remuneration to the complaint by some black ministers that constant use of church property would contribute to a disruption of the religious function of the institution. (348)

Painfully aware of this "crisis in confidence," NYA officials attempted to counter defeatist attitudes and suspicions by convincing skeptics that its program represented a means of uniting blacks in a common effort to achieve personal and community betterment. The youth agency tried hard to make these intentions a reality. For the black drop-out, a "Back-to-School" campaign was launched in the black wards with the cooperation of the Inter-Center Council of the Workers of the NYA, an organization dedicated to improving the quality of vocational education for nonwhite youth. Council members spoke before audiences of unemployed youth, outlining all available facilities in the city for vocational training and arranging for private conferences to work out individual educational plans. Assistants were also made available by the NYA to council black youth on any problem related to education. Writing to Bethune in

the summer of 1937, Watson referred to this counseling as a "welcome relief" from the prejudicial guidance meted out to Negro students by the public school system. Watson was also proud of the work done in the city to "encourage Negroes to return to school even if only for a few specialized classes and to read books and litera- ture pertaining to our social condition." Singled out for praise was Miss Marochal-Neil Ellison, under whose leadership a group of 60 young blacks registered for evening school work and almost without exception, successfully completed the course work necessary for graduation from Central Evening School. Finally, to combat the problem of truancy, 50 NYA workers were assigned to predominantly black schools in the city to serve as the school's "personal" liaison with the truant. Home visits were made to the homes of truants on a regular basis and clients were referred to NYA counselors and FEP psychologists for future advisement. (349)

Complimenting these attempts to revivify the crushed spirits of the black dropout was the NYA's attempt to break down the emotional barrier between the average black youth and the institutions in his community. Operating from his initial premise that strong community support was essential for the success of the NYA's program, Watson used the prestige of his office to convince property owners in the black wards that the creation of community stability was in their best interests. Owners were asked to donate a room or a basement as a center for NYA and FEP-supervised activities with the understanding that light and heating expenses would be picked up by the Philadelphia Board of Education or local black groups. The teaching and recreation staff was to be provided free of charge by the federal government. Favorable response was at first slow in coming, but Watson's insistence on the need for "wholesome activities to keep Negro youth away from the pernicious influences of their environment" proved, in the end, the NYA's best selling point. (350)

In February 1936 the first of these new Youth Centers was established in the parish house of the St. Simon Protestant Episcopal Church on Reed Street in South Philadelphia. Utilizing two floors of the church and the gymnasium in the basement, an all-Negro staff of trained youth workers and teachers operated a program for an estimated 3,000 black enrollees. The latter made use of Board of Education equipment to conduct concerts, forums, plays, athletic contests, and classes in sewing, cooking, typing, and bookkeeping. The St. Simon Center also sent out young blacks to make contact with local street gangs with the result that many of these "fighting gangs" dissolved into nonviolent social clubs with headquarters at the St. Simon facility. A month after the creation of the Center, two more Youth Centers of a similar nature were opened in West and North Philadelphia. In each case, local contributors and the Board of Education combined to pay for the operational costs of the new centers. By April, 1936; Rufus Watson's goal of making the Youth Centers a social and educational center for disaffected black youth had moved one step closer to fruition, as the average weekly attendance at these three facilities passed the 2,000 mark. (351)

The summer of 1936 found NYA officials focusing their attention on a high crime area in North Philadelphia, an area largely populated by blacks and almost totally devoid of recreational facilities. Rather than move in and tackle the problem by "government fiat," the youth agency adopted a two-step approach. The first step involved accumulating pertinent social and economic data on the black wards

west of Broad Street. The second step involved turning over this data to a local advisory board committee composed of concerned citizens (many of whom were black) anxious to see the construction of a Youth Center in their neighborhood. The chairman of the Citizen's Committee was black principal John Henry Brodhead, who began his new assignment by convincing his school's Parent-Teachers Association to allocate funds for the rental of a three-story, nine-room house on 22nd and Dauphin. Underlying the use of school money for this purpose was the understanding that the building would be renovated and quipped by the WPA and then turned into a community center staffed by EEP and NYA personnel. After the dilapidated facility had been put into working order (and furniture provided by local residents), a fund-raising drive including raffles and bazaars was launched by Dr. John Turner and Negro fraternal organizations to defray long-range operational expenses. For its part, the NYA supplied a director for the center; and assigned 30 young blacks to help as librarians, recreation leaders, and club leaders. NYP teachers were employed in woodcrafting, radio, music, and sewing classes. The great popularity of what became known as the Northwest Center (4,000 youths each month availed themselves of its services) led police observers to enthusiastically applaud the project as an "ideal example of community cooperation" and as an important factor in the reduction of the juvenile delinquency rate in the black wards of North Philadelphia. (352)

While the Youth Center concept stole most of the headlines in the black press, the NYA was active on other fronts, making life somewhat easier for nearly 20,000 people in the black community. To meet the growing health needs of nonwhites in the city, health classes were conducted at all four predominantly black Youth Centers. NYA health teams lectured Negro groups often as large as 300 on the importance of personal and community hygiene. Much-needed recreational facilities were made available by the youth agency's Colored Playfield Project which enlisted the support of local blacks in constructing fully-equipped playgrounds and athletic fields out of what were formerly rubbish-strewn vacant lots. Equipment for the new playgrounds (10 in all were built) came from a combination of sources, notably the WPA, the Board of Education, and from local residents. In addition, blacks participated in a Street Name and Number Stenciling Project; and in April, 1936, an all-Negro Music Choral Group was formed under the direction of W. Franklin Hoxter, a well-known Negro musician and choir conductor. Finally, as a measure of thanks for the support given the NYA during the year, the youth agency in conjunction with local community groups sponsored annual Christmas parties at the four Negro Youth Centers, at which time food, clothing, and toys were distributed to the needy children of the surrounding neighborhood. (353)

While the term "revolutionary" would be exaggerating the case, it was clear that the educational and community-oriented programs offered by the WPA's operation in Philadelphia marked a significant improvement over what federal, state, and local government had done in the past to improve conditions in the black wards. The key to this improvement was the method by which problems in black neighborhoods were approached. No longer was it considered wise to rush headlong into a problem requiring patient understanding; the better approach involved a cautious, factual appraisal of the problem followed by a well-planned and sensitive intervention by governmental agencies to meet what were considered the very personal needs of any given community. (354)

Symptomatic of this new approach were the massive WPA-financed surveys on such neighborhood problems as housing, vocational opportunity, recreational facilities, and juvenile delinquency. These surveys were initiated not simply to give unemployed professionals jobs, but to gather pertinent data in the belief that social change must be preceded by a full documentation of the facts surrounding a particular problem. Once a community's physical and human resources had been ascertained, interested individuals were contacted and asked to share in the responsibility of promoting social or educational projects. Just like the civil engineer who carefully maps out the terrain before laying out a railroad, the WPA found it necessary in Philadelphia to document the needs of the city's black population and then to strive for the implementation of a program with the largest base of community support. (355)

The consequences of this approach were evident in the WPA's handling of the social and educational crisis afflicting the black wards of the city. Responding to the call by black social welfare agencies for help in keeping their doors open and their programs operational, the WPA supplied hundreds of black youth to work free of charge in these agencies. Free guidance and placement services were made available to blacks by the agency, and local neighborhood improvement campaigns received the financial backing of the federal government. In addition, the WPA offered the black wards an educational program which reflected the progressive intellectual atmosphere of the 1930's. For the first time in the city's history, schools in black neighborhoods opened their doors to those previously ignored by the established school system. Under prodding by WPA officials, the Philadelphia Board of Education was forced to adjust its essentially middle-class frame of reference and come to grips with the educational needs of Philadelphia's black masses. The Board sponsored courses in health care, nursery and parent education, Negro history, typing, and vocational education, all with the aid of WPA funds and EEP personnel. The pattern in all of these activities was clear. Rather than acting as a roadblock to community development and educational reform, the New Deal reacted imaginatively and positively to the pressures for social and educational change in the black wards of Philadelphia.

XI. DISMANTLING THE WPA, 1939-1942

We have made mistakes. I know that better than anyone else. But the greatest mistake has not been in doing too much, but in doing too little. -Harry Hopkins (356) (1938)

Ironically, the success and popularity of the New Deal's emergency education program sowed the seeds of its eventual demise. Originally intended as a temporary measure to reduce the ranks of the unemployed professional class, the program continually suffered from the attacks of budget-minded Congressmen and from the hostile opinions of conservative educators who saw in the WPA's educational activities an attempt by the federal "bogeyman" to set up a permanent alternative to the established public school system. Powerful unions, especially those with apprenticeship programs, were also cool to the idea of federally-sponsored vocational training courses which aimed to place the disadvantaged in secure, well-paying jobs. In short, large vested interest groups opposed sharing their power with a government agency noted for its disregard of traditional views of the Negro's ability to profit from an education. (357)

The only ones not complaining, it seemed, were the EEP enrollees themselves. By the spring of 1939, New Deal educational programs were serving an estimated 400,000 regular and 200,000 occasional students in 12,000 classrooms across the nation. Many of these students (who ranged in age from 3 to 103) were at first reluctant to confess their "ignorance" publicly. However, this reluctance turned into enthusiasm in the face of the WPA's determination to reject conventional academic patterns and to adopt instead a flexible set of teaching techniques. The adoption of these new techniques paid off handsomely a New York Times survey in the winter of 1938 reported that adult education had replaced bridge, golf, and dancing as the major choice of adults in search of relaxation. Even more significant were the results of a nation-wide WPA questionnaire sent by random selection to 10,000 Americans requesting their opinions of the work of the WPA. Well over 90 per cent of the respondents gave a highly favorable rating to the agency's educational, recreational, and public health activities. Nearly 95 per cent of all respondents felt that federal intervention in the field of education had contributed "significantly" towards making possible long-range community planning. (358)

Federal officials reacted in widely divergent ways to the WPA's apparent widespread popularity. Addressing a Seattle business group in September, 1938, Harry Hopkins referred to the WPA as "a great federal government program which will continue indefinitely for possibly 20 years or more." "I look to such a program," Hopkins added, "plus unemployment insurance as the only way to take care of our permanent unemployed." At the same time Hopkins was making his statement, Congressional critics of the mammoth governmental agency were busy pushing through Congress legislation designed to establish a maximum term of service for all WPA employees. According to these critics, limiting the term of such service to 18 months would serve as "a warning to those on the dole that they were not expected to make a career out of relief jobs but to get back into private employment."

Eventual enactment of the 18 month rule in July, 1939, was followed by an administrative order from Washington authorizing all WPA project supervisors to begin laying-off workers solely on the basis of length of service, regardless of merit or need. The order took the steam out of the program just as it was peaking in popularity and efficiency. In the space of two months (July and August of 1939), nearly 800,000 WPA workers lost their jobs. Many employees on educational, recreational, and cultural projects were affected, including hundreds of counselors assigned to assist in the direction of the innovative Neighborhood Cellar Club projects. Of those fired in the summer months of 1939, roughly 87 per cent were subsequently unable to find new employment and quickly became statistics on the nation's already overloaded relief rolls.

The cost in human terms was especially great. Reports reaching Washington told of thousands of ex-WPA employees forced to exist by begging or foraging in garbage cans for left-overs and unsalable food. School officials in a dozen cities noted a dramatic decrease in school attendance among children of recently fired WPA workers many children were simply being kept home for want of any decent clothing to wear. (359)

While budget-minded Congressmen were responsible for the passage of the 18-month rule, they were not the major reason for the passing of the WPA from the American scene. The war clouds forming over Europe had increased Presidential concern with the ability of the nation to prepare itself in the event of a global conflict. As early as February, 1938, the Executive Office had initiated plans to redirect NYA projects with their ready reserve of unemployed youth towards a defense-oriented posture. Gradually courses in social work, community planning, and in non-defense related vocational training were eased out of the youth agency's agenda. These courses were replaced with training activities in aviation, automobile mechanics, iron foundry, electrical machine, sheet-metal and welding work. In June, 1939 this change in direction was further accentuated by the placing of the WPA (including the semi-autonomous NYA) under the administrative umbrella of the newly created Federal Security Agency. The new agency's defense-orientation surfaced a year later, in August, 1940, when FSA Administrator Paul N. McNutt announced that 20,000 ex-WPA employees would be assigned to schools and given classroom instruction in skills related to defense work. In the following months, orders went out from Washington suspending all NYA projects not related to the defense industry. These orders effectively eliminated all sewing, clerical, recreation, and choral projects. These cutbacks were accentuated one month prior to Pearl Harbor when WPA officials decided to change the emphasis of homemaking and nursery projects to conform to the needs of young children left at home by parents working in defense plants. From now on, the agency ruled, the major emphasis in these classes would be given to family feeding, proper care and guidance of children, readjustments of family budgets, and maintenance of family morale. (360)

The reaction of black leaders to the drastic budget cuts and the realignment of priorities was loud and overwhelmingly negative. Many blacks viewed the cutbacks in community-oriented programs as the first step towards the dismal return to the brand of municipal services that were made available to the urban Negro prior to the New Deal. Others, like the Urban League's Eugene Kinkle Jones, linked the slow death of the WPA to the eventual decline of "the spiritual reawakening to the plight of the Negro which has

occurred in this country in the last five or six years." The Philadelphia Independent, sounding an equally pessimistic note, wondered if future civil disturbances in the ghettoes of the North could be prevented. "If the WPA projects," the paper added, "are not sufficient for the needs of our youth now, what must we expect if the WPA is entirely wiped out." (361)

The threat of the WPA's dissolution caused blacks who had earlier expressed reservations as to the agency's hiring practices to concede publicly that the WPA's impending demise as an agent for educational and social change was both "ill-timed and ill-conceived." Faced with the loss of the program, black observers during this period seemed overly anxious to credit the educational activities of the WPA with a highly commendable, non-discriminatory record of accomplishment. Lester Granger, a former critic of the program, listed these accomplishments as including a nationwide program to stimulate community interest in Negro neighborhoods, a 200 per cent increase in recreational facilities for the urban Negro of the North, and the operation of a youth placement service, which in Granger's words, "has been more scrupulously careful to insure that Negro young people have a fair degree of the job opportunities passing through its office than any previous public or private community service of its kind." (362)

In view of such laudatory comments, blacks within the Administration were hard-pressed to find suitable excuses to explain why the federal government appeared so intent upon phasing out the urban projects of the WPA. Ambrose Caliver, speaking at a Hampton Institute Workshop for black FEP teachers, suggested testily that it was "now time for Negroes to stop relying on the government for support and to start pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps." A different method of pacifying pro-WPA blacks was offered by Alfred Edgar Smith. In an interview published in the Chicago Defender in February, 1940, Smith asked black critics of recent Administration policy to look at the long-term accomplishments of the New Deal before coming to a conclusion based on an emotional appraisal of "an admittedly difficult decision for the President." Among the New Deal's race-related accomplishments which Smith felt were worthy of recall, were the following (1) the first opportunity for Negro women to work in jobs other than domestic or personal service (2) a remarkable drop in the black illiteracy rate to a point where it was considered by Department of Census officials "no longer necessary to include a question on this subject in the 1940 census." (3) a drop in the juvenile delinquency rate among urban Negroes (4) adult education classes which gave nearly 50,000 blacks their first chance to attend school (5) WPA travelling libraries and cultural centers for the ghetto (6) child-care centers that allowed black mothers to work and (7) the opportunity for Negro teachers to gain meaningful training and work experience through employment on EEP projects. (363)

Adding his voice to the defense of Administration policy was James Atkins, the WPA's cautious and persistent specialist in Negro Education. Asked why the Administration was terminating the community work of the WPA at the point of its greatest effectiveness. Atkins responded by calling upon blacks to measure up to the "new crisis which is upon us." "China up," he told the Fourth Annual Conference on Adult Education and the Negro, "we must begin to face the tasks of the day without apology.... Whether the WPA lasts, whether I stay or go, our work has shed unexpected light in unusual places." Atkins reiterated his contention that the New Deal, insofar as the black American was concerned, "had helped to remove the shackles of greed and hate and brought closer the day when opportunity would be limited

only by the ability and the willingness to seek and strive." The education specialist further deflected criticisms of the WPA cutbacks by noting that it was now time for the Negro advisory committees created with WPA funds and direction on the local level "to stand on their own feet, and to begin to function without the financial aid of the Government." (364)

Black leaders did not dispute the seemingly endless litany of WPA successes rattled off by Smith and Atkins. Many, however, remained unconvinced as to the wisdom of reshaping the WPA's community-oriented projects. When confronted with the argument that the New Deal had done wonders for the black man in the past, these critics responded by suggesting that the Administration prove its current racial sincerity by offering the Negro a wider scope of employment and training in the nation's rapidly growing defense industries. Government officials were asked to reject outright the racist argumentation of white defense employers and to push for greater nonwhite participation in the NYA's war production training activities. Anxious to assuage the ruffled feathers of his black critics, Roosevelt appointed Robert Weaver in June, 1940, to serve as Administrative Assistant to the Advisory Committee on National Defense. One of Weaver's first actions was to assure black leaders of the federal government's "good intentions." In answer to the question of who was eligible for NYA defense training positions, Weaver declared that the new program differed from previous vocational training programs in that "the selection of applicants will ignore existing local school boundaries and will be guided by an official NYA directive specifically prohibiting discrimination." These assurances were quickly followed by announcements from the U. S. Office of Education that the proposed $7,000,000 project to conduct vocational training in established public vocational schools for 50,000 ex-WPA employees would be administered without regard for race, creed, or color.

Although black cynics regarded these safeguards as politically motivated by the upcoming national election, they represented, nonetheless, an important step towards the President's eventual signing of Executive Order 8802 which prohibited job discrimination by all private employers with government defense contracts. (365)

The changing complexion of the WPA's activities created predictable effects in the urban ghettoes of the North. As anticipated by WPA officials, the flexible nature of the agency's educational agenda allowed the EEP and the NYA to be reshaped on the local level to meet the nation's new lineup of priorities. In New York City, for example, the theme of the WPA Adult Education Program was changed in 1941 from "Education For All the People" to "Education Aids Defense." The new emphasis on preparedness training courses and classes designed to promote civilian morale was felt keenly in the WPA's Harlem operation. During the 1941-1942 term, over 3,000 black students were enrolled in "defense" courses at four large centers in the ghetto. Each training center employed an educational guidance counselor whose job it was to direct the prospective student towards an appropriate defense-related course. In a typical classroom, Harlem housewives learned how to convert waste materials for the home and to conserve cotton, steel wire, and other raw materials urgently needed in defense industries. Instruction was given in ways to use readily available and inexpensive foods to produce balanced and appetizing meals. According to the EEP staff at the West 120th Street Center, this type of salvage was particularly

important at a time when housewives were faced with the necessity of readjusting themselves to rationing and other wartime measures intended to conserve certain foods. (366)

Harlem's NYA projects experienced a similar shift in emphasis. Black NYA trainees were taken out of positions as clerks, typists, and community workers, and placed as trainees in war plants across the city. Under the combined pressure of the NYA and the Brooklyn Urban League, two locals of the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers were integrated successfully by a dozen black NYA trainees. The New York City Negro Advisory Committee (a public group appointed by Mayor LaGuardia) worked together with local NYA officials to recruit Negro youth for defense projects but found few nonwhite youths interested in such training. Officials blamed this indifference on the desire by young blacks to avoid the discouragement in not being able to find private employment after completing the training program. Nonetheless, the NYA, along with the Negro press and the Urban League, launched an all-out campaign to publicize what was called the "unusual opportunities for Negro youth in the training centers." Families of reluctant youth were contacted and the NYA conducted house-by-house canvassing to weed out potential trainees. Not until the nation was actually at war did the drive begin to pay off. By Christmas, 1942, a machine training shop was in operation on 125th Street, with a capacity of over 100 employees and a well-equipped supply of the latest in machine hardware. After taking courses in such subjects as instrument reading, blueprint reading, and shop mathematics, young blacks at the center were ready for jobs as machine operators or apprentice machinists -- jobs which the NYA in conjunction with the Council on National Defense guaranteed. (367)

The lure of full Negro participation in the nation's defense build-up failed to pacify a significant and vocal faction in the Harlem community who were reluctant to give up a functioning educational, recreational, and cultural program for a "promise of equal opportunity." These critics received moral encouragement from the statements of Mayor LaGuardia who lamented the closing of the Music and Art Centers in Harlem and of William Hodson, the city's Commissioner of Welfare, who presented a strong case for the educational and social activities of the WPA. Also against the WPA's demise was Children's Court Judge, Stephen Jackson, who claimed that the closing of the WPA Recreation Centers would result in a sharp increase in the crime rate in Harlem. Black intellectuals were particularly incensed over the cutbacks in cultural programs. Librarian L. D. Reddick predicted gloomily that a "vast cultural wasteland" in Harlem was now almost a certainty. Henry Pope, the black Executive Secretary of the West Harlem Council of Social Agencies, added his voice to the growing outcry over the firing of EEP visiting teachers, calling the latter "a most valuable connecting link between the home and the school." Pope warned that in the future "the ghetto could expect a large increase in serious juvenile maladjustment." Protesting the loudest was the Harlem branch of the Communist Party which praised the WPA for bringing "the school to the student." The Party also lauded the agency for its work in turning the formerly staid ghetto school into "a neighborhood and fraternal headquarters," and singled out the EEP teaching staffs in Harlem for developing nonracist reading materials for the children of the district. (368)

On Chicago's South Side, the promise of nondiscriminatory employment in the city's defense-related industries kept black dissatisfaction with the curtailment of the WPA's community-oriented projects at a

minimum. With nearly 60 per cent of the Black Belt's working force on relief (1940 figures), nonwhites in the city were anxious to benefit from the multi-million dollar Chicago defense program. Under pressure from Robert Weaver (who, in the summer of 1941, became chief of the Negro Employment and Training branch of the Office of Education), the city's defense employers began employing sizeable numbers of NYA-trained blacks as steam-fitters, bricklayers, carpenters, cement finishers, and building laborers. Efforts were also made by the NYA and the Industrial Relations Department of the Chicago Urban League to open up new employment opportunities for Negro women. Through a special NYA salary grant of $2,500, three Urban League workers were hired to interview women seeking work and to visit employers in search of job openings. After nine months of preliminary study, new jobs were found for black women in 25 previously all-white companies, and the employment of additional nonwhite female workers was found in 24 other firms. Although many problems continued to exist (e.g., clothing companies with defense contracts were rejecting Negroes with WPA Sewing Project experience and advertising for white workers with similar experience), significant progress was made in the highly sensitive area of black employment in formerly all-white industries. (369)

The spreading war fever was greeted with mixed feelings in the black wards of Philadelphia. A prominent black doctor, only half in jest, suggested that if Hitler bombed the city "we'll clear everybody out of the 7th Ward between Spruce and South Streets and 11th and the Delaware River. Then let the bombs drop and we'll rebuild better homes in the section of the city with the worst health record." Less impassioned observers were obviously disappointed at the way in which the Emergency Education Program in the city was being reduced in stature. The program (which in March, 1939, was serving an estimated 154,000 Philadelphians in 4,000 classes), was dealt a near fatal blow in March 1940, when the state's WPA Community Service Division curbed all social and educational activities not related to the war effort. Among the activities curtailed was the nursery school project for children of parents not employed in defense plants. The exclusion of these children (many of whom were from black homes) angered the Philadelphia Teachers Union, and particularly, Edith Hurley, a black kindergarten teacher. Writing in the union's monthly journal, Miss Hurley charged that blacks were often kept out of defense jobs through no fault of their own, and that the black child was often left without supervision "while his parents were out doing the laundry for white folks who were off working in defense plants." The only solution to the problem, she continued, was to reinstate the extensive system of day care centers made available to children of all races and economic status by the WPA. (370)

One of the major factors behind the Philadelphia Negro's ambivalence towards the war effort was the inability of the New Deal's defense training program to put a dent in the city's nonwhite unemployment problem. Of the 3,500 Negroes who began training under this program in February 1940, only 166 managed to complete their course work by Christmas, 1941. The huge drop-out rate was attributed by E. Washington Rhodes to "a growing awareness among blacks that it is almost impossible for them to get jobs working at the trades for which they are preparing." Also aware of the problem was the Armstrong Association which petitioned Dr. Charles F. Bauder, the city's Superintendent of Vocational Education, to allow any qualified Negro student an unlimited opportunity to take courses in defense-related subjects. Bauder was also asked to secure a job in private industry for every student who successfully completed the preliminary course work.

The Superintendent's eventual acceptance of these demands had little effect on black employment prospects. Not until mid-1943, when a drop in the number of white applicants for defense training created an acute shortage of skilled labor, did employers in Philadelphia begin to hire every Negro trainee who was of "average intelligence." (371)

The fact that blacks in these three cities had to wait for a wartime emergency to recoup occupational losses sustained during the Depression was a reflection on the New Deal's inability to alter private industry's hiring practices. But for those determined to see the glass half-filled rather than half-emptied, the last years of the WPA's existence were marked by some hopeful signs. Figures compiled by the United States Employment Service over the five-year period 1939-1944 indicated a decline in the number of blacks placed in domestic or unskilled labor occupations (83 per cent in 1939, 60 per cent in 1944). Significantly, the largest number of nonwhites who benefited from this shift in demand to the semi-skilled and skilled black worker in the industrial sector were those blacks trained by the EEP and NYA in such trades as machine tool and power sewing machine operation. Another hopeful sign was a growing militancy among blacks of all ages, a militancy which manifested itself in protests against the WPA cutbacks, talk of a black government employee strike, and a threatened march on Washington to protest inequalities in the defense industry's hiring practices. The rise in the quantity and quality of black protests, generally absent from the World War I period, was attributed by the Philadelphia Independent to the extensive black participation in the WPA's educational and community-oriented projects. According to the paper: these projects exposed blacks to intelligent discussions of the major issues facing the race and how the Negro's plight might be intelligently relieved. Other observers, like black youth expert Robert Sutherland of the American Youth Congress, pointed to the educational opportunities offered black youth by the NYA as the wellspring of black protest in the decades to come. Tragically, Sutherland added, the first chance for many young blacks to use their expanded powers of expression and understanding was in following the gun loading instructions in a U. S. Army training manual. (372)

With the nation marching off to war; there seemed little sense in prolonging the WPA's ultimate dissolution. In a rapid series of post-Pearl Harbor decrees, the already bare bones of the agency's educational apparatus were picked clean. Gone were the free music and art lessons, the free concerts and plays in the park; the remedial reading and child guidance program for maladjusted children, the teaching of homebound children, and the recreation centers in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Only the pre-school nursery school program remained relatively intact it gave the female defense worker a place to drop off her child in the morning. The final blow was delivered in a report submitted to the President by the Senate's Special Committee Investigating the National Defense Program. The report demanded in no uncertain terms that "the WPA should be eliminated entirely and the money thus saved channeled directly into the war effort." After reading the document, Roosevelt acted promptly and decisively. Orders went out on November 13, 1942, to all state WPA Administrators requesting that a final report of their operations (not to exceed 250 typewritten pages) be placed on WPA Commissioner Howard C. Hunter's desk no later than January 1, 1943. Less than three weeks later on December 4, 1942, a two-inch article hidden in the back pages of the New York Times announced that the alphabet agency which

spent nearly 10.7 billion dollars improving the quality of life for millions of Americans had slipped quietly out of existence. (373)

XII. CONCLUSION

Cut short by the exigencies of war, the WPA left behind an important legacy to the Northern ghetto. Rather than continuing a policy of neglect, the WPA tried to assuage the educational and social crisis in black neighborhoods by introducing programs of an unmistakably progressive nature.

The agency's progressive instinct was initially demonstrated in its handling of the question of black educability. WPA policy-makers, moving in stride with the conclusions of liberals in the physical and social sciences, rejected the notion that intelligence was an inflexible commodity and advanced instead the proposition that the intellectual level of black communities could be significantly raised if blacks were allowed an equal chance to receive a good education.

Equal educational opportunity, New Dealers argued, was a goal clearly in the best interests of the nation.

The WPA's acceptance of the environmentalist position that intelligence was conditioned by societal factors also led the agency to reject the traditionally passive role of the urban school. Convinced that education could be used as an agent for social change, New Deal educational planners demonstrated time and time again their unwillingness to have the school exist as a "foreign outpost" in an encapsulated community. Men and women like Lewis Alderman and Grace Langdon argued forcefully that the educational process in poor neighborhoods could and should not operate in isolation of the needs and aspirations of local residents. (374)

In practice, the WPA's fidelity to the concepts of equal educational opportunity and the nonpassive school resulted in some important changes for black education in the North. The ghetto school, long considered a liability rather than an asset to the community, became a beehive of activity with the introduction of emergency classes in over 100 subjects. By the end of the decade, nearly 100,000 Northern blacks had availed themselves of the EEP's course offerings. Significantly, many of these courses, including literacy training, workers education, Negro history, and nursery and parent education, were unavailable to urban blacks prior to the New Deal. The EEP also brought to the ghetto scores of dedicated teachers anxious to experiment with new curricula and teaching techniques. EEP personnel regularly went out into the streets to recruit students and often donated their services to upgrade the educational agenda of local black organizations. The net result of these efforts was to make the ghetto school a unifying institution in the community, a place where innovative programs designed for all phases of urban life -- intellectual and cultural, vocational and recreational -- could be brought together under one roof. (375)

The WPA also fostered changes outside of the classroom. Acting on the premise that strong, community-based organizations were vitally needed to counter social dislocation and asocial behavior in black

neighborhoods, the agency came to the aid of financially-plagued black social welfare institutions; allowing these institutions to carry on activities which could not otherwise be undertaken. With the salaries of instructional personnel paid for by the federal government, the social programs of the black church, the Urban League, the black "Y's", and Negro settlement houses were able to flourish during the Depression. Thanks to the WPA, the problem of juvenile delinquency eased in the Northern ghetto -- a direct result of the agency's efforts to build more playgrounds, establish community centers; and aid in the formation of community-oriented social clubs. In addition, the WPA supplied funds for the construction and staffing of community-run Art and Music Cultural Centers. These monies, along with the services of black artists hired by the WPA, helped keep alive the ghetto's creative impulse at a time of great economic and social stress (376).

The agency's commitment to progressive ideals was demonstrated clearly in its response to the educational and social crises in the black ghettoes of New York City, Chicago, and Philadelphia. In the case of Harlem, the WPA found itself caught between the conservative instincts of the Board of Education and the growing demand in the ghetto for educational change. To appease the former, the WPA chose conservative bureaucrats such as Colonel Somerville to head its New York City operations. To appease educational militants, the agency formulated projects which were most likely to appeal to those ghetto residents previously regarded by the established school system as uneducable or to those whom the public school had neglected in the past. The resulting projects, which were strategically located in areas of Harlem hardest hit by the Depression, offered blacks of all ages an opportunity to learn the skills necessary to survive in the urban complex. The fact that these skills were being dispensed with a minimum of racial discrimination and a maximum of cooperation by local black agencies made even the militant Permanent Committee for Better Schools in Harlem sing the praises of the WPA.

The story in Chicago's Black Belt was much the same. As in the New York ghetto, the agency's educational efforts were hampered from the start by inadequate facilities and equipment, and the ever-present threat of a curtailment of federal funds. An even more serious threat was posed by Chicago's educational climate, a climate characterized by an anti-black Board of Education and a weak Teachers Union incapable of curbing the Board's excesses. In such a situation, the WPA could very well have followed the Board's lead and given the Black Belt an unequal share of project funds and personnel. It chose instead to deal equitably with the needs of the Chicago Negro. The WPA took the initiative to acquaint local blacks with course offerings and helped organize black leaders into advisory committees to aid in the planning of all projects affecting the Black Belt. These cooperative efforts paid handsome dividends. Hundreds of emergency classes were set up, a fine Cultural Center was built, and organizations like the Chicago Urban League were able to keep their doors open. In addition, the NYA, working in harmony with EEP personnel, gave thousands of black youth in the city their first opportunity to contribute in a positive way to the physical and moral uplifting of their community.

A willingness to improve local conditions also characterized the WPA's educational activities in the black wards of Philadelphia. The agency began by conducting extensive socio-economic surveys of black neighborhoods in an effort to determine what projects were needed the most. Local advisory

committees were then created to handle the details of project planning and implementation. Support for proposed projects was sought and received from the Philadelphia Teachers Union, and from local black organizations and churches. Under prodding from federal and state WPA officials, the Philadelphia Board of Education took steps to insure that project funds and personnel were equitably distributed in nonwhite areas of the city. The resulting projects, which included lectures in community health, a "Back-to-School" campaign in the black wards, and a full-scale attack on the problem of black juvenile delinquency, were carried out in the spirit of community cooperation and racial fairness.

The WPA's record in these three cities casts doubt on the accuracy of the charge that the New Deal offered really nothing new for the Negro. Despite initial doubts and suspicions, a majority of black leaders in New York City, Chicago, and Philadelphia came to regard the WPA as a worthwhile governmental agency sincerely interested in upgrading the intellectual life of black communities. Their support of the WPA's educational projects was especially strong. Compared to the hypocritical and insensitive attitudes of Northern public school officials, these projects appeared as a welcome relief from the status quo. Although black leaders recognized that political expediency was often behind the nonprejudiced administration of these projects, they also recognized that for the first time in the twentieth century black education was being viewed by the federal government as not only a problem of the rural South, but as a problem affecting the stability and future of urban centers in the North. (377)

In short, it appears that the arguments for the New Deal's alleged insensitivity to the needs of the urban Negro are overstated. At least in the implementation of its educational projects in the three largest ghettoes of the North, the New Deal represented a positive, nonracist impulse for change. By rejecting the notion that blacks could not benefit from an increased exposure to education, and the traditional concept of the ghetto school, the New Deal demonstrated its sensitivity to the special problems incident to the education of blacks in America. By coming to the aid of Negro social welfare institutions through the financing of a wide range of educational and cultural offerings (as well as hundreds of community development projects), the New Deal sought to pull together the threads of community life in these three black neighborhoods, and to activate an untapped mine of human creativity which lay below a shroud of poverty and neglect. (378)

Fortunately, the WPA's demise did not cast the urban projects of the agency into oblivion. In recent years, these projects have become of considerably more than antiquarian interest. Signs of this renewed interest include the Emergency Employment Act of 1971, President Nixon's Public Employment Program, the proposed Child Development Act, the use of Data Banks to collect socio-economic information on depressed neighborhoods, local Neighborhood Action Programs, and the use of local people as paraprofessionals in urban school systems. Behind each of these programs is the recognition that the problems faced by cities in the 1970's may well have their solutions in the reforms of the 1930's. If such is the case, then the educational activities of the WPA may emerge not only as an interesting and unique part of our past, but as a constructive and workable part of our present and future.

ENDNOTES

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9. James Denson Sayers, Can the White Race Survive? (Washington, D.C.: The Independent Publishing Co., 1929), p. 5.

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16. Marion Mayo, The Mental Capacity of the American Negro (The Science Press, 1913), p. 67; Josiah Morse, 'A Comparison of White and Colored Children Measured by the Binet Scale of Intelligence,' The Popular Science Monthly, LXXXIV (January, 1914), 78.

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18. Robert Terry, "The American Negro," Science, LXIV (March, 1929), 340; James Denson Sayers, "Our Platform," The White Race Herald, I (October, 1930); Mary Hood, "Which Will America Choose," The White Race Herald, I (September 1930). J. Sayers himself was equally pessimistic: "There is damning proof that the quality of a mongrel people is distinctly inferior to that of the pure white and no amount of breeding and education can change that fact." Sayers, op. cit., 2.

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118. Report of the Conference of Negro Administrative Assistants of the NYA Washington, D. C., June 2-3, 1936, p. 5, U. S. National Youth Administration, Division of Negro Affairs, "inactive correspondence, 1935-1938 NA, RG 119, Box 119.

119. Ibid.

120. Report of First Six Months of Office of Negro Affairs, May 1, 1936, p. 1, U. S. National Youth Administration, Division of Negro Affairs, inactive correspondence, 1935-1938, NA, RC 119, Box 116; New York Times, July 2, 1936.

121. Donald Young, "Minority Groups in the Depression" (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1937), p. 150; Ernest H. Collins, "Economic Status, Negroes and Presidential Politics," Journal of Negro History, XLI (April, 1956), 133; Gunnar Myrdal, op. cit., pp. 1094-95; For an analysis of the New Deal's effect on black voting patterns in Chicago see John H. Allswang, "The Chicago Negro Voter and the Democratic Consensus: A Case Study, 1938-1936," Illinois State Historical Society, LX (Summer, 1967), 142-175; and Ruth Werner Gordon, "The Change in the Political Alignment of Chicago's Negroes During the New Deal," Journal of American History, LVI (December, 1969), 584-603.

122. Memorandum from Lewis Alderman to Richard Brown, January 4, 1937, U. S. Works Progress Administration, Emergency Education Program, Subject Series 1937-1938, NA, RG 69, Box 142; Memorandum from James Atkins to Hilda Smith, January 21, 1937; ibid.

123. James Atkins, "The WPA and the Negro," U. S. Works Progress Administration, Division of Information, Primary File, 1937, NA, RG 69, Box 89.

124. Memorandum from Lewis Alderman to Henry Hopkins, February 6, 1937, U. S. Works Progress Administration, Emergency Education Program; Subject Series, 1937-1938, NA, RG 69, Box 42; Memorandum from James Atkins to Lewis Alderman, March 19, 1937, ibid.

125. Press Release, "Negroes Benefited by the WPA," September 18, 1937, U. S. Works Progress Administration, Division of Information, Primary File, 1935-1942, NA RG 69, Box 90, Edward Lawson, "Recreation for Negro Youth," Opportunity, XV (June 1937), 202.

126. Press Release, July 27, 1937, U. S. Works Progress Administration, Division or Information, Primary File, 1936-1942; NA RG 69, Box 90.

127. Letters from James Atkins to Lewis Alderman, November 10, 1937; ibid.; Memorandum from James Atkins to Lewis Alderman, March 19, 1937; ibid.; Doxey Wilkerson, op. cit., p. 162.

128. Ibid., pp. 168-169.

129. Memorandum from James Atkins to Lewis Alderman, November 10, 1937; U. S. Works Progress Administration, o. cit.; Letter from Aubrey Williams to C. A. Barnett, Director, Associated Negro Press, April 1, 1936; U. S. National Youth Administration, Division of Negro Affairs, "Inactive" correspondence No. 119, November 1938; Clark S. Smith, September 30, 1938; Jamies Ball, No 116 by Kansas City Call, September 30, 1938; Pittsburgh Courier, November 14, 1938; Washington Tribune, October 15, 1938; Atlanta Daily World, October 16, 1938; Pittsburgh Courier, October 17, 1938; Chicago Defender, July 23, 1938.

130. Memorandum from James Atkins to Alfred Edgar Smith, January 2, 1938; U.S. Works Progress Administration, op. cit.; U.S. Works Progress Administration, Operating Procedures 1938 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939), p. 343; Pittsburgh Courier, November 19, 1939. The appointment of Hill, a close friend of Mrs. Roosevelt's was greeted with some consternation by the black press who

called upon the white civil rights leaders to publicly deny that his appointment had meant the demotion or dismissal of anybody or the loss of any jobs to colored people." Washington Tribune, November 26, 1938; Kansas City Call, January 2, 1939.

131. Letter from Lewis Alderman to Dr. Paul T. David, May 12, 1939, U.S. Works Progress Administration General Subject File, Negro Education, 1939, NA RG 69 Box 501; Press Release, June 9, 1938, U.S. Works Progress Administration Division of Information; Proimary File 1935-1942, NA RG 69, Box 90; Press Release, July 20, 1938; Ibid; James Atkins, "The Participation of Negroes in Pre-school and Adult Education Programs," Journal of Negro Education, VII (July 1938) 346; "The WPA and After," Opportunity, XVI (November, 1939), 322.

132. Franklin Frazier, Negro Youth at the Crossways (Washington: American Council on Education, 1940), pp. 177-178; Letter from Mary McLeod Bethune to Dr. Stanley High, August 10, 1936, U.S. National Youth Administration, Division of Negro Affairs, Miscellaneous Correspondence, NA RG 119, Box 640.

133. U.S. National Youth Administration, Division of Negro Affairs, Annual Report, 1937-1938 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939), p. 9; U.S. National Youth Administration, Division of Negro Affairs, Final Report (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), p. 16. Using her influence with Roosevelt, Bethune secured a special NYA fund for Negro college students that made it possible for blacks from states that denied Negroes graduate facilities to attend Negro universities in the South and integrated institutions in the North. Frazier, Op. cit., p. 178; Holt, Op. cit., p. 211.

134. George Rawick, Op. cit., p. 238; Letter from Mary McLeod Bethune to Aubrey Williams, June 10, 1938, U.S. National Youth Administration Division of Negro Affairs, Inactive Correspondence, 1937-1938, NA, RG 119, Box 166 Walter Daniel and Carroll Miller, "The Participation of the Negro in the National Youth Administration Program," Journal of Negro Education, VII (July, 1938), 362. Similar concern for the Negro's inability to make inroads into the private sector was voiced by T. Arnold Hill in a 1937 letter to Alfred Edgar Smith protesting planned cutbacks in government relief expenditures. Letter from Arnold Hill to Alfred Edgar Smith, October 5, 1937, Howard University Moorland Collection, Smith MSS., Box 119

135. Amsterdam News, July 18, 1936.

136. U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Negroes in the U.S., 1920-1932 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1935), p. 69.

137. John B. Kennedy, "So This Is Harlem*" Collier's; XCII (October, 1933); 50; New York Times, August 11, 1929; New York Times September 6, 1931; New York Herald-Tribune, October 8, 1933.

138. Kennedy, Op. cit., 51; Stanley High, "Black Omens," Saturday Evening Post, May 21, 1938, 37. Examining conditions in 1931 on a single block in Harlem, Urban League official James R. Hubert found 70 per cent of the tenants jobless 18 per cent ill; 33 per cent receiving either public or private aid; and 60 per cent behind in their rent. James Hubert, "Harlem Faces Unemployment," Opportunity, IX (February 1931), 42.

139. Myrtle Pollard, "Harlem As Is" (unpublished Master's Thesis, City College of New York, 1936), p. 328. The Louisiana Weekly, March 9, 1935; Chicago Defender, November 19, 1932.

140. New York Post, March 27, 1935; New York World-Telegram, March 27, 1935. A month after the riot, a feature story in the New York Times pictured Harlem's residents as "troubled yet joyous with a fundamental love of life." New York Times, May 19, 1935.

141. Daily Worker, August 12, 1935; Alain Locke, "Harlem Dark-Weather Vane," Survey Graphic XXV (August 1936), 457+462; Mayor's Committee on City Planning, West Harlem Community Study (New York: Committee on City Planning, 1937), p. 15; New York Age, June 3, 1939 George E. Payne, "A Preliminary Winifred Nathan, Health Conditions in North Harlem (New York: National Tuberculosis Association, 1932), p. 21; Preliminary Report on the Subject of Health and Hospitalization in the Harlem Community, December 27, 1935, P. 6; Municipal Archives, LaGuardia Mss. Box 2549.

142. Ruth Reed, "Negro Illegitimacy in New York City," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University; 1926), p. 132; R. Insley-Casper ("the Negro Unmarried Mother," New York Opportunity, XIII (June 1933), 173; Clyde Kiser, "Fertility of Harlem Negroes," The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly, XIII (July 1935) 282; Brooklyn Daily Eagle, March 26, 1935; J. Franklin Frazier, "The Negro Family and Negro Youth," Journal of Negro Education, IX (July 1940), 298; New York Age, July 3, 1937; Michael Carter, "Crime in Harlem," The Crisis, XLVI (December 1939) 366; Nettie McGill and Ellen Matthews, The Youth of New York City (New York: Macmillan Co., 1940), p. 25.

143. New York Times, September 6, 1927; New York Times, September 25, 1927; New York Sun, September 17, 1927.

144. Robert Ely, "Social Work in Brooklyn," Opportunity, v (August 1927), 239; Eugene Kinckle Jones, "Op. Cit.," 290-291 (Elmer Carter), "The Utopia Children's House," Opportunity, X (December; 1932), 384.

145. Insley-Casper, op. cit.; Chicago Defender, December 19, 1931; New York Age, August 18, 1934)

146. New York Age, November 9, 1935; Francis E. Rivers, "Negro Judges For Harlem," The Crisis XXXVII (November, 1930), 393; Louis LeCount, "Party Affiliation in Harlem," Opportunity, X (April, 1933), 117; New York Times, June 21, 1936; New York Age, June 27, 1936.

147. New York Age, December 25, 1937; James Hubert, op. cit., 44; Doxey Wilkerson, op. cit., p 70; Also appreciated was an experimental program of adult education conducted by the 135th Street Harlem Branch of the New York Public Library from 1932 to 1935. Jean Blackwell, "Choosing Books for Harlemites," Opportunity, XVII (May 1939), 148.

148. Myrtle Pollard, op. cit., 232: Hadley Cantrill and Muzafar Sherif, "The Kingdom of Father Divine," Journal of Ambnormal and Social Psychology, XXXIII (April, 1938).

149. Robert Daniel, A Psychological Study of Delinquent and Non-Deliquent Negro Boys (New York: Teacher's College, 1932), p. 54.

150. New York Daily Mirror, April 11, 1935; New York Post, March 27, 1935; New York Post; April 11, 1935.

151. New York Times, April 11, 1935; Memorandum from the Sub-committee on Education to Mayor LaGuardia, April 30, 1935, Municipal Archives; LaGuardia Mss. Box 667.

152. Letter from Walter White to LaGuardia, May 26, 1935, Municipal Archives, LaGuardia Mss., Box 2550; Letter from Council, Saunders to Bundel Carter, Secretary, Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem, May 21, 1935, Municipal Archives, LaGuardia Mss., Box 667.

153. Minutes of the Sub-committee on Education, May 4, 1935, p.2., Municipal Archives, LaGuardia Mss., Box 667.

154. New York Times, May 9, 1935; New York Times, May 16, 1935; Minutes of the Sub-committee on Education, May 28, 1935, p. 4; Municipal Archives, LaGuardia Mss. Box 667.

155. Letter from Julius Gluck to Dewitt Carson Baker. May 29, 1935; ibid.,

156. Letter from James Hubert to Eunice Carter, June 16, 1935, Municipal Archives, LaGuardia Mss., Box 2550; Report of the Sub-committee on Education, June 22, 1935; P. 1, Municipal Archives, LaGuardia Mss.; Box 668.

157. New York Post, August 15, 1935; Letter from Lester Stone, Secretary to LaGuardia, to Alain Locke December 9, 1937; Municipal Archives; LaGuardia Mss.; Box 2549; Letter from James Marshall to LaGuardia, May 5, 1936; Municipal Archives; LaGuardia Mss.; Box 2550.

158. Ibid.

159. State of New York, Second Report of the New York State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population (Albany: J. B. Lyon and Co., 1939), pp. 104-106. In 1934 Countee Cullen was assigned to one of these schools, Frederick Douglass Junior High, as a regular teacher of French. Blanche Ferguson, Countee Cullen and the Negro Renaissance (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1966), pp. 143-144.

160. U. S. Works Progress Administration, Federal Writers Project, New York City Negroes of New York, 1936-1941 (Washington U. S. Government Printing Office 1942), pp. 13-15. Report on a conference with a group of New York City teachers, May 17, 1940. DAW Notes)

161. Ibid. memorandum from Edith Silverglied to Doxey Wilkerson, April 20, 1940; DAW Notes; interview with Miss Lucille Spence, vice president of the Permanent Committee for Better Schools in Harlem - November 19, 1970. Blacks seeking to enter the well-equipped George Washington High School in Washington were blocked by constantly changing zone regulations, regulations which fluctuated in direct response to Negro population movements. Ibid.

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163. Conference with Miss Fanny Sagalyn, March 13, 1940, DAW Notes; Fanny Sagalyn, "Jobs for Negro Youth," New York Teacher, V (March 1940), 18.

164. Conference with Miss Fanny Sagalyn, op. cit.

165. New York Times, February 5, 1935; New York Times, May 19, 1935; New York Times, January 23, 1936; letter from Mrs. Gertrude Ayer to Doxey Wilkerson, May 17, 1940; DAW Notes; Gertrude Ayer, "Notes on My Native Sons," Freedomways, III (Summer, 1963), 379.

166. "Our Platform," Education, I (April, 1935, 1; "Wake Up, Negroes!," Education, I (June, 1935 by Myles A. Paige, "The School System of Harlem," Education, II (April, 1936), 2-5.

167. United Parents Associations, Report on the Study of P. S. 89, Manhattan (New York: United Parents Associations, 1935); p. 6; Mayor's Committee on City Planning, West Harlem Community Study (New York City Planning Commission, 1937), p. 23; Edith Stern, "Jim Crow Goes to School in New York," The Crisis, XLIV (July 1937), 202; Fanny Saeglyn, op. cit. 19 New York Age, November 19, 1938.

168. New York Times, January 19, 1936; letter from Reverend John W. Robinson to LaGuardia, February 10, 1937; Municipal Archives; LaGuardia Mss.: Box 25501; New York Age, February 29, 1936; New York Age, November 21, 1936.

169. New York Age, November 14, 1936; New York Age, April 3, 1937; Daily Worker, February 4, 1937; Interview with Miss Lucille Spence; November 19, 1970.

170. Letter from Reverend John W. Robinson to LaGuardia, ibid., Daily Worker, February 4, 1937.

171. Celia Lewis Zitron, The New York City Teachers Union 1916-1964 (New York: Humanities Press © 1968), p. 88; Telegram from Isadore Begun, chairman of the Executive Board Unemployed Teachers Association, to LaGuardia, March 22, 1935. Municipal Archives LaGuardia Ms. Box 5249.

172. New York Age; December 7; 1935.

173. New York Age, January 4, 1936; Alice Citron, "Harlem Wants Schools," New York Teacher, 1 (May 1936): 126; interview with Alice Citron, June 5, 1970. The Harlem Committee of the Teachers Union also called for the opening of all school playgrounds until 6:00 P.M. "to encourage after activities such as arts and crafts, dancing, and dramatics," and for free lunch and winter clothing for the children of the unemployed. "Neglected Harlem," New York Teacher, 1 (February, 1936), 56.

174. "The Schoenchen Case," New York Teachers Guild Bulletin, II (December 1936), 1; "Step-Children of New York," New York Teacher; II (February, 1937), pp. 9-10.

175. Ibid., 10 New York Age, January 4, 1936; Doxey Wilkerson, "Caste in Education," New York Teacher, III (April, 1938), 14-15; New York Post, June 13, 1937.

176. "A New Deal Demanded," Harlem Lesson Plan, II (January, 1938); "P.S. 68," Harlem Lesson Plan; II (October, 1938); 1.

177. Ira Gibbons, "Education of the Negro Child in New York City: An Exploratory Study of a Group of Thirty Negro Children," (unpublished Master's Thesis, Columbia University, 1942) passim; Amsterdam News; March 25, 1939.

178. New York Times, May 9, 1937.

179. Grace Adams, Workers on Relief (New Haven: Yale University

Press, 1939) p. 240.

180. New York Times, November 25, 1933; New York Times, December 3, 1933.

181. New York Times, August 27, 1935 letter from Henry R. Linville, President of the New York City Teachers Union, to Harry Hopkins, January 29, 1935; U. S. Federal Emergency Relief Administration, State Series, New York; NA RG 69, Box 15 letter from Harold Campbell to Mayor LaGuardia, January 14, 1935; Municipal Archives, LaGuardia Mss. Box 665

182. "William Lloyd Imes," The Crisis, XLI (March, 1935); 72, letter from William Lloyd Imes to James Atkins, May 28, 1935, letter from William Lloyd Imes to James Atkins May 6, 1935, letter from William Lloyd Imes to James Atkins May 14, 1935, U.S. Federal Emergency Relief Administration State Series, New York, NA RG 69, Box 79.

183. Letter from Grace Langdon to William Lloyd Imes, June 20, 1935. Letter from Margaret Allen to Grace Langdon, July 11, 1935. Ibid.

184. Letter from James Atkins to William Lloyd Imes, July 3, 1935, Ibid.

185. Letter from Leroy Collins, reporter from the New York Daily News, to Juliet Beil, EEP Assistant Unit Manager in New York City, July 5, 1935; Letter from Margaret Allen to Grace Langdon, July 23, 1935. Ibid.

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187. Interview with Ann Rubinstein, EEP nursery school supervisor in Harlem May 30, 1970: Monthly Report on Nursery School Activities in the Harlem Area April 1936, p. 4, U.S. Works Progress Administration, Division of Information, Primary File, 1936-1943, NA, RG 69, Box 72.

188. Ibid.; The Nursery School and Parent Education Project in Harlem, ibid.; Daily Worker, February 19, 1939.

189. U. S. Works Progress Administration, New York City, Report on Service and Professional Projects for the Period August 1 to December 1, 1935 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office 1936), p. 22.

190. Report on Juvenile Delinquency Survey in Harlem, May 4, 1936, p. 5; U. S. Works Progress Administration, Division of Information, Primary File, 1936-1942, NA RG 69, Box 74, No. 13; New York Herald Tribune September 19, 1936; Annual Report: Emergency Education Projects, 1937, p. 3, U. S. Works Progress Administration, State Series, New York, NA RG 69, Box 106.

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194. McGill and Matthews op. cit., p. 209; Edward Lawson, “Recreation for Negro Youth,” Opportunity, XV (June, 1937), 203; Robert G. Jones, “A Social Experiment,” The Crisis, XLI (April, 1934), 100.

195. Chicago Defender, June 26, 1937.

196. Adult Education Program Leaflets, Municipal Archives, LaGuardia MSS. Box 1791, New York City, Board of Education, Annual Report, 1933-1934, (New York: Board of Education, 1934), pp. 184-185.

197. Letter from James Hubert to Harry Hopkins, May 24,1935, U.S. Works Progress Administration, State Series, New York, NA RG 69, Box 77.

198. Letter from Harry Hopkins to James Hubert, June 1, 1935, ibid. Grace Adams op. cit., p. 31; Ernestine Rose, "Racial Development and Cooperation," Journal of Adult Education, V (January 1933), 54.

199. New York Times, April 25, 1936; Doxey Wilkerson, The Negro in American Education, p. 91; New York Age, February 1, 1936.

200. New York Sunday Mirror, March 14, 1937; Bessie M. Johnson, A Study of Three Adult Education Interests as Applied to WPA Adult Education in Harlem (New York: By the author, 1936), p. 3.

201. Myrtle Pollard, op. cit., p. 194; Doxey Wilkerson, op. cit., p. 180; U. S. Works Progress Administration, Federal Writers Program of New York City, Negroes of New York (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office 1939), p. 131; New York Times, December 8, 1935.

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203. Doxey Wilkerson, op. cit., pp. 119-120; "Conference on Workers Education," Conference of Workers Education, I (April 1934), 8-9; Lewis Alderman, "Workers Education as Related to the Emergency Education Program," Concerning Workers Education, I (May 1934), 8.

204. Letter from Miss Bettie Parham to Hilda Smith, May 31, 1935, U. S. Works Progress Administration, Emergency Education Program, State Series, New York, NRG 69, Box 797 letter from Hilda Smith to T. Arnold Hill, July 21, 1935, Ibid. New York Times, October 19, 1936; Etta Ress and "Education in the Workers' Schools of New York City." Social Research, V (February, 1940.) Pg 16; letter from Lester Granger to Harry Hopkins, December 30, 1936, U. S. Works Progress Administration, Emergency Education Program; State Series, New York, NRG 69, Box 106; letter from Hilda Smith to Lester Granger, January 13, 1937, ibid.

205. James H. Baker, Jr., "Art Comes to the People of Harlem," The Crisis, XLVI (March, 1939) 79.

206. Ida S. Steinbach "Harlem Goes in for Art," Opportunity, XIV (April, 1936) 114.

207. James H. Baker, Jr. op. cit.; Press Release, November 26, 1937, U.S. Works Progress Administration, Division of Information, Primaru File, 1936-1942, New York Times, December 19, 1937.

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209. New York Times, January 3, 1938.

210. U. S. National Youth Administration, The NYA in New York City (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1936), pp. 3-25; Monthly Report for December, 1938, p. 3. U. S. National Youth Administration, Division of Negro Affairs, New York City, NAG 119, Box 636.

211. Monthly Report October, 1938, p. 4, ibid; Monthly Report, February 1936, p. 2, ibid. U. S. National Youth Administration, op. cit., p. 9.

212. Letter from Mary Brady, Director of the Harmon Foundation, to James Atkins, December 8, 1937, U. S. Works Progress Administration, Emergency Education Program; State Series, New York, NA; RG 69, Box 107; Gustav Stumpf, "Harlem Tops New York WPA Classes," The Crisis, XV (January 1938); "400 In Jersey

City Journal, May 28, 1936; Rachel Davis-DuBois, "A School and Community Project in Developing Sympathetic Attitudes Toward Other Races and Nations," U. S. Works Progress Administration, Professional and Service Division, New York City, NA; RG 69, Box 600; Inventory of Negro Manuscripts, U. S. Works Progress Administration, Historical Records Survey, NA; RG 69, Box 195; "Music and Art Center in Harlem," Opportunity, XV (April, 1937); 122; Levi C. Hubert, "Harlem WPA Group Sings Opera," The Crisis, XLIII (July, 1936), 203; 'Harlem Players Give 'Macbeth'," The Crisis, XLIII (June, 1936); 119; Raphael Knighth, "Stage Spotlights Harlem Housing," The Crisis, XLV (May, 1938), 145.

213. New York Times, September 1, 1936.

214. New York Times, September 7, 1935; New York Times, October 20, 1935.

215. New York Age, November 25, 1935; New York Times, February 8, 1936; New York Age, February 15, 1936; New York Age, February 22, 1936; New York Times, March 3, 1936.

216. New York Times, March 8, 1936; New York Times, March 12, 1936; California Eagle, March 20, 1936; New York Amsterdam News April 11, 1936; New York Times, April 12, 1936; New York Amsterdam News April 18, 1936; Baltimore Afro-American, April 25, 1936.

217. New York Times, June 8, 1936; New York Times, June 9, 1936.

218. New York Age, July 25, 1936; Pittsburgh Courier; July 15, 1936; Pittsburgh Courier; July 4, 1936.

219. New York Times, September 1, 1936; New York Age, August 1, 1936; Baltimore Morning Sun, August 25, 1936.

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221. Brief from the New York Association of Educational Supervisors and Administrators to Lewis Alderman, April 15, 1937; U. S. Works Progress Administration, Emergency Education Program, New York NA, RG 69, Box 1051; New York Times, July 18, 1937

222. New York Times; October 7, 1937; New York Age, August 14, 1937; New York Age, February 12, 1937.

223. Radio talk by Colonel Brehon Somerville over Station WOR, New York City, May 22, 1937. U. S. Works Progress Administration, Emergency Education Program; New York; NA; RG 69, Box 105; U. S. Works Progress Administration, New York City, "The WPA in New York: A Record of Accomplishment 1937" (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office; July 27, 1938), letter from Brehon Somerville to Harry Hopkins advising the bid minutes on the Work Experience Opportunity Project "Feeding; New York City, September 22, 1937. U. S. Works Progress Administration, "Emergency Education Program New York; NA, RG 69, Box 105.

224. New York Herald Tribune, December 1, 1936; letter from Archibald Simon to Alfred Edgar Smith, June 29, 1937, Alfred Edgar Smith Mss. Box 4, Folder "Education 1936-1937" New York Post; August 30, 1937; interview with Alfred Edgar Smith, April 20, 1970.

225. New York Sun, March 18, 1939; letter from Mayor LaGuardia to Harry Hopkins, March 20, 1938, Municipal Archives, LaGuardia Ms.s., Box 2601. The Mayor was constantly fighting with federal authorities for more WPA funds for the city, Angered at a form-letter sent to him by Aubrey Williams, LaGuardia fired back "Don't use form letters to a first-class Mayor of a first-class city. Keep them for second-rate politicians. What we want is action and plenty of it." Letter from LaGuardia to Aubrey Williams, February 25, 1938, Ibid. Letter from James Marshall to LaGuardia, November 29, 1939, Ibid. When Somerville retired from his post in November, 1940 he bragged that he had "cut administrative costs on WPA to 2.31 cents to the dollar." New York Times, November 9, 1940.

226. New York Times, April 10, 1938; New York Times, August 19, 1938; New York Age, October 15, 1938; New York Age, March 19, 1938. 1938 also saw the development of Harlem's New York Industrial High School into one of the finest equipped schools in the state, with a WPA program that included courses in electricity, auto mechanics, carpentry, mechanical drawing, community health problems, English and mathematics. New York Age, July 23, 1938.

227. Radio program, "The WPA in Action," station WNYC, August 19, 1941, U. S. Works Progress Administration, Division of Information, Radio Scripts, New York City; NA, RG 69, Box 3173; Interview with Alice Citron, Harlem parents leader, April 18, 1970.

228. Interview with James Egbert Allen, Urban League Secretary, June 20, 1970; "Scuttling Education," New York Teacher, V (November, 1939); 4; Interview with Lucille Spence, October 20, 1970; Interview with Mrs. Laura Lebman, President of The New York City WPA Teachers Union, March 23, 1970; Press

Release, July 6, 1939; U. S. Works Progress Administration, Division of Information, Primary File, 1936-1942, NA; RG 69, Box 72.

229. Langston Hughes, "Visitors to the Black Belt," Opportunity, XVIII (January, 1940) 13.

230. Richard Wright, Native Son (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1940) p. 327.

231. Ibid., p. 162; Edwin Embree, op. cit., p. 40.

232. U. S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census, Negroes in the United States, 1920-1932, (Washington, U. S. Government Printing Office, 1935) pp. 672-693; Chicago Defender, February 18, 1933; Elizabeth Wood, Abbott, The Tenements of Chicago, 1908-1935 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936), p. 123. Despite these conditions, blacks were not the worst-treated ethnic group in Chicago. That dubious honor fell to the Italians who, unlike the Negroes, were able to eventually move out of the slum areas in which they were concentrated. Robert Weaver, The Negro Ghetto (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1948) p. 1.

233. Frederick L. Hoffman, "Present Day Trends of the Negro Population," Opportunity, IX (November, 1931), 334; Thyra Edwards, "Chicago in the Rain," Opportunity, X (May, 1932), pp. 148-149; U. S. Works Progress Administration, Illinois: Illinois Persons on Relief in 1935 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1937), pp. 68-78; Chicago Tribune, October 18, 1939; U. S. Works Progress Administration, Illinois: Shifts and Trends in Occupational Statue and Social Stratification on the Relief Population in Metropolitan Chicago, (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1941), p. 34; Edwin Sutherland and Harvey Locke, Twenty Thousand Homeless Men (Chicago: J. C. Lippincott Co., 1936), p. 580.

234. Thyra Edwards, "Attitudes of Negro Families on Relief," Opportunity, XIV (July 1936); 215 St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, Black Metropolis (New York: Harper and Row, 1945) p. 580.

235. State of Illinois, Report on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population (Springfield: Illinois State Commission, 1941); Page 71. The Report of the Commission on Inter-Community Relations on the Hyde Park-Kenwood Council of Churches and Synagogues on "The Problem of the Negro Community to the West," January 23, 1940; DAV Newcomb, "Chicago Folders Martha Hardy, H. H. Boyle and Alvah

Newton's Physical Fitness of Children from Different Economic Levels in Chicago," Journal of the American Medical Association CVII (December, 1941); 6: Irene Graham, "The Negro Family in a Northern City," Opportunity VIII (February 1930), 50.

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368. Memorandum from Mayor LaGuardia to James D. Blaine, June 18, 1942, Municipal Archives, LaGuardia Papers, Box 2601, William Hodson, "The Case for Retaining the Federal WPA," "Public Adminis tration Review", I(Spring 1941), 21; New York Age, October 25, 1942, New York Age, November 9, 1940; New York Amsterdam News, Daily Worker, November 1, 1940, Daily Worker, January 12, 1941. In a

November 18, 1940 editorial the New York Age charged that the passing of the WPA from the Harlem scene meant "the removal of a beacon light representing stability and community betterment."

369. Chicago Defender, June 29, 1941, Arvarh Strickland, op. cit., p. 179; Illinois State Commission to Investigate the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, op. cit., p. 44.

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371. Philadelphia Independent, August 24, 1941; letter from Walter S. Cowing, Pennsylvania State Youth Director, to Rufus Watson, March 1, 1940.

372. Urban League of Greater New York; An Analysis of the Characteristics of the Population in Central Harlem (New York: New York Urban League, 1946), Pp. 33-34; Armstrong Association of Philadelphia, Industrial Employment Gains of Negro Workers in Philadelphia During the War Years 1940-1944 (Philadelphia: Armstrong Association, 1944), P. 22; Philadelphia Independent, July 16, 1939; New York Times; June 13, 1942; Robert Sutherland, "Planning for Negro Youth," Journal of Educational Sociology XV (May; 1942) 563.

373. New York Times, April 6, 1942; New York Times, April 9, 1942; New York Times, December 2, 1942; New York Times, November 13, 1942; Forrest Allen, "Reporting the Educational Services of the PWA and the WPA," American School Board Journal, C (January 1940), 61; New York Times, December 5, 1942. The NYA managed to hold on in a much reduced state until January 1, 1944. Aubrey Williams presided over NYA as Administrator in September, 1943; angered at what he called a Congressional hunting expedition aimed at the NYA's social organization. Many of the agency's local records were destroyed and the final reports were put together on the basis of the memories of former staff members. New York Times, September 8, 1943; New York Times, July 13,1943; New York Times, January 1, 1944.

374. Press Release from Lewis Alderman, September 5, 1941, U. S. Works Progress Administration, Division of Information, Adult Education, NA RG 69, Box 65 Robert Sutherland op. cit.

375. New York Times, May 27, 1943; New York TIMES, September 29, 1943; Interview with Miss Lucille Spence, November 15, 1970; Lawrence Cremin, op. cit. pp. 323-324; New York City Board of Education, Report on Problem Schools in Harlem, November 17, 1942, p. 2; New York City Board of Education Library 'Vertical File; Harlem Project Folder' Chicago Defender, March 7, 1936.

376. Mckiss and Welch, op. cit.; pp. 90-147; Press Release, February 12, 1940; U. S. Works Progress Administration, Division of Information, Primary File, NA RG 69, Box 174; Press Release from Grace Langdon, February 12, 1940; U. S. Works Progress Administration, Division of Information, Nursery Schools, NA RG 69; Box 72; Chicago Defender, February 23, 1935.

377. Seeds and Stanley, op cit. (4), p. 155; Harry Zeitlin, op. cit., (4) p. 155; New York Times, December 5, 1942; New York Times, December 13, 1942.

378. Interview with Sterling Brown, April 27, 1970, Chicago Tribune, February 4, 1939; Robert C. Weaver, "The Problem of Race Relations in Public Administration," Opportunity, XX (July, 1943); 111; Gunnar Myrdal, op. cit., p. 343.

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Records pertaining to the local operation of the WPA's emergency education program are largely absent from state and municipal archives. A sizeable number of these records were misplaced or destroyed during World War II. The pressures of war were also responsible for the brief final reports submitted by local WPA officials to their Washington supervisors. Many of the records of the WPA's educational operations (both local and national) which do survive are housed in the National Archives in Washington. Informative materials may be found in the following record collections:

Record Group 69 -- Works Progress Administration

U.S., FERA, Emergency Education Program, Primary File, 1933-1935

U.S., FERA, Emergency Education Program, State Series, New York, 1933-1935

U.S., FERA, Emergency Education Program, State Series, Illinois, 1933-1935^1

U.S., FERA, Emergency Education Program, State Series, Pennsylvania, 1933-1935

U.S., WPA, Emergency Education Program, Primary File, 1935-1939

U.S., WPA, Emergency Education Program, State Series, New York, 1935-1939

U.S., WPA, Emergency Education Program, State Series, Illinois, 1935-1939

U.S., WPA, Emergency Education Program, State Series, Pennsylvania, 1935-1939

U.S., NYA, New York, Administrative Correspondence, 1935-1943

U.S., NYA, Illinois, Administrative Correspondence, 1935-1943

U.S., NYA, Pennsylvania, Administrative Correspondence, 1935-1943

U.S., NYA, Division of Negro Affairs, Correspondence File, 1936-1939

U.S., NYA, Division of Negro Affairs, Reports, 1936-1939

Record Group 12 -- U. S. Office of Education

U. S., Department of the Interior, Office of Education, Negro Guidance, 1936-1939

II. Manuscript Collections

Informative are the Alfred Edgar Smith Mss. (Boxes I-IV) housed in the Moorland Collection at Howard University. Smith was a black New Dealer in charge of handling local complaints relating to the racial practices of the WPA in cities across the nation. The letters he received from "average" black citizens provide an insight into the workings of the New Deal oftentimes overlooked.

The LaGuardia Mss. at the Municipal Archives contain valuable information about conditions in Harlem during the 1930's and what local officials, in conjunction with the WPA, were doing to improve the life style of the ghetto dweller. Helpful also were the Municipal Library's vertical file on the subjects of "Harlem Schools" and "New York City, Education." At the Schomburg Collection, scrapbooks on "Harlem" and "Education" proved valuable.

Of great benefit were the files kept by Professor Doxey Wilkerson (now of Yeshiva University) when he was commissioned by the Carnegie Foundation to survey black education in American cities. Professor Wilkerson collected a large number of important on-the-spot reports, questionnaires, and personal interviews with leading educators in the three cities under consideration which he graciously allowed me to use.

In Philadelphia, Temple University's Urban Archives collection contained useful information on the city's social and educational milieu during the Depression. Much of this information can be found in the records of the Armstrong Association (URB/1-86.)

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4. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. State Temporary Commission. Condition of Pennsylvania's Colored Population. Harrisburg: Pennsylvania State Commission, 1941.

5. New York City. Board of Education. Annual Reports. 1930-1942.

6. Philadelphia. City Planning Commission. Social Survey. Philadelphia: City Planning Commission. 1935.

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8. State of Illinois. Report on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population. Springfield: Illinois State Commission, 1941.

9. State of New York. Second Report of the New York State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population. Albany: J. B. Lyon and Co., 1939.

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