Franklin D. Roosevelt entered the White House in the cruelest month of the cruelest year of the Great Depression. As he took the oath of office, a quarter of American workers were jobless. Millions more were eking by on part-time work. Life, the historian Irving Bernstein would recall, was “physically painful.”

There simply was no relief in sight. Many state, county, and city governments were broke and legally prohibited from taking on more debt even for so urgent a matter as feeding and clothing their desperate unemployed citizens. “It is hard today to reconstruct the atmosphere of 1933, and to evoke the terror caused by unrelieved poverty and prolonged unemployment,” Frances Perkins, FDR’s secretary of labor, would write in her 1946 memoir *The Roosevelt I Knew*.

FDR recognized the people’s despair and desperation. As governor of New York, he had led the call for unemployment insurance and old-age pensions. He also had established the nation’s most effective relief program, although it could help only a fraction of New York’s unemployed. As a presidential candidate, FDR had promised to work for “the forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid” and to tackle the economic crisis with “bold, persistent experimentation.”

On Inauguration Day, as anxious crowds thronged the Capitol, swirling dust storms buried barns in the Midwest, and the nation’s banking system teetered toward collapse, FDR told the nation: “Our greatest primary task is to put people to work. This is no unsolvable problem if we face it wisely and courageously.”

6. Putting People to Work: Job Creation and Work Relief in the New Deal
The central question of FDR’s early months in the White House was how, exactly, to create an economy that would generate jobs. Should the New Deal focus on helping businesses recover so that they could rehire part of their workforce, or should government concentrate on creating useful work for as many unemployed workers as possible?

FDR was torn. He believed in a balanced budget but also wanted to alleviate as much misery as possible. He thought “the dole” (direct relief) threatened a person’s dignity and paralyzed initiative. He favored work relief—government-sponsored jobs—but was worried about its cost and how it might affect local businesses.

FDR’s key advisors disagreed on the best course to take.

**Competing ideas**

Some, led by Budget Director Lewis Douglas, insisted that a balanced budget must take priority and that the government should cut rather than increase spending. They argued that if relief must be provided, it should be the least expensive type—short-term assistance for food, shelter, and heating fuel rather than a long-term, labor-intensive work-relief program.

Others, led by Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins and Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, urged FDR to launch a massive public-works program. The nation cried out for improved dams, bridges, and hospitals. Money spent on construction, this group argued, would help both manufacturers and the construction industry recover enough to hire new workers and stimulate spending.

A third group, led by Harry Hopkins and championed by Eleanor Roosevelt, advocated work relief—a program designed to directly employ as many jobless Americans as possible on “useful” projects. These advisors believed that work relief would put the highest number of people into jobs right away, and in the process would resurrect their spirits, and allow them to buy food and clothing and pay their rent, which would boost sagging local economies.

**Bold action**

FDR listened to his team and made his own decisions. Within a year of his taking office, the New Deal embraced all three approaches: direct relief, a nationwide public-works program, and a precedent-shattering commitment to work relief.

This multipronged approach to joblessness, the centerpiece of the New Deal, brought millions of Americans through very dark days. It also transformed the American landscape and established a vision, imperfectly realized but still powerful today, of a resilient, productive America backed by a humane federal government—a country where roads, bridges, and tunnels connect cities with the countryside; where trees adorn hillsides and provide crucial support to the environment; where public parks offer citizens a haven and public ball fields give athletes the chance to compete—a country that encourages education, celebrates art, and respects work.
“Roosevelt’s Tree Army”: The Civilian Conservation Corps

On March 9, 1933, less than a week after his inauguration, Franklin D. Roosevelt summoned Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, and Secretary of War George Dern to the White House to present his idea for what would soon be the New Deal’s most popular program—the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), affectionately nicknamed “Roosevelt’s Tree Army.” FDR told the three men he wanted a bill drafted by 9:30 p.m. that would engage as many young, unemployed urban men as possible in work across the countryside planting trees, laying roads, and building projects to control floods and prevent soil erosion. The military would erect and supervise camps to house the men near worksites.

The next day, FDR introduced the novel plan to reporters gathered around his desk, carefully noting that the corps would take only “people performing absolutely no work at all and now just being barely supported by communities and States”; pay them one dollar a day plus food, clothing, and shelter; and ensure that the projects they joined would not affect existing public-works programs.

On March 21, 1933, Congress passed legislation establishing the corps. By 1935 there were more than 2,600 camps in every state and more than half a million workers tackling all kinds of conservation work.

The “boys of the CCC” built dams, wells, roads, waterlines, fences, bridges, and lookout towers; tended to and preserved national parks and rehabilitated historic properties; and fought forest fires. By the time the program ended in 1942, CCC crews had planted more than three billion trees across a landscape that had been ruthlessly deforested.

The program not only buoyed the life prospects of hundreds of thousands of young people—some chose to settle in communities near their camps rather than return home—but also established the lasting value of efforts to protect the country’s natural resources, and gave the U.S. government a role in that work.
Emergency Aid: The Federal Emergency Relief Administration

Harry Hopkins, who had directed New York State relief efforts under Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt, traveled to Washington, DC, a few days after FDR assumed the presidency, determined to meet with him. When Hopkins couldn’t get an appointment, he turned to newly minted secretary of labor Frances Perkins, who agreed to meet Hopkins that night before she gave a speech. Seeking privacy under a crowded stairwell, the two caucused briefly. In minutes, Hopkins laid out the simple and practical relief plan that, only two weeks later, FDR would deliver as a bill to Congress.

Quick work
When Hopkins reported for work, FDR’s brief instruction was to open the spigot, providing “immediate and adequate” relief to hungry, beleaguered families. Hopkins’s office on the tenth floor of the cockroach-ridden Walter Johnson Building was not ready, so he set up in a hallway and began scribbling out the telegram he would send to all the nation’s governors. It assured them that their needs would not be discounted and instructed them to create a system to distribute the relief coming their way. Then Hopkins began reviewing a backlog of governors’ requests for aid—and that very afternoon approved more than five million dollars in aid to fund relief programs in Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Mississippi, Ohio, and Texas.

The press criticized Hopkins as profligate. “I’m not going to last six months here,” responded the famously disheveled administrator, “so I’ll do as I please.”

The agency Hopkins assembled was lean and efficient and, like Hopkins, adopted a new attitude toward Americans in need. He staffed FERA with 121 full-time social workers who would see applicants for assistance as people lacking a job, not people short on character or fortitude. But it proved challenging to disseminate this attitude to states and localities where long tradition stigmatized the recipients of charity or aid.

Hurdles to getting help
Many states, for example, required multiple proofs that an individual was utterly without resources before giving out aid. Caseworkers verified that the applicant had lost his or her job, then visited the person’s home (or shack or park bench) to determine there was nothing of value the family could sell (furniture, books, radio, food from the garden, etc.), then asked clergy members and relatives to vouch for the applicant’s poverty. Having passed these hurdles, an applicant might receive a voucher to use at the grocery store or used-clothes warehouse or, in the luckiest scenario, a check for the landlord or a bucket of coal.

Harry Hopkins (right) with Republican senator Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan, before facing questioning by the Senate Commerce Committee about politically subversive influences in federal relief programs, January 1939. Hopkins’s unapologetically left-leaning views, coupled with his vigorous effort to provide sustaining, dignified federal relief to all Americans in need, made him an intensely controversial figure in the 1930s. LOC
The process was humiliating and dispiriting, to say the least. One Birmingham engineer confessed to Eleanor Roosevelt’s confidant Lorena Hickok that in order to get food for his family, “I simply had to murder my pride.”

Hopkins was frustrated and angry, lamenting that help given to the jobless was distributed “in a way to intensify [their] shame.” He’d wanted the needy to get an adequate cash payment or paying work without delay. But within FERA, structured to fund aid programs proposed by states, there was little to be done.

As FERA entered its fifth month, a tenth of the American population relied on it for food and help paying rent. But it was helping less than half of all Americans in need. Moreover, FERA focused on unemployed men who supported families. State programs excluded single workers and women. Despite FERA guidelines saying programs should consider applications from all sectors of the unemployed, many states, especially in the South, either refused to assist African Americans in need or dispensed such paltry assistance that their needs were barely addressed.

As the winter of ’33–’34 approached, FERA’s funds were spent and millions of Americans continued to struggle against hunger and homelessness. Hopkins began looking hard for new ways to help, with programs offering paid work—and no longer requiring humiliating investigations of need. The result would be the Civil Works Administration and, later, the massive and ambitious Works Progress Administration.
C

Building Big: The Public Works Administration

When Franklin D. Roosevelt took office, the construction industry was in a swoon. A critical sector of the American economy, building had accounted for 11.5 percent of the gross national product and 5 percent of nonfarm workers in 1929. By 1933 construction spending had dropped by more than three-quarters and about 40 percent of its workers were idled. Construction's decline affected an array of other businesses. Even the formidable U.S. Steel operated on a skeletal crew of part-time workers.

Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins and Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes pushed FDR to support an extensive program of publicly financed construction projects, arguing it would rehire construction workers, lift auxiliary industries and local economies, and ultimately boost government tax revenues. Other members of FDR's cabinet objected to the budget-busting public spending involved in such a program. But in the end proponents won FDR's assent. In June 1933, he signed the National Industrial Recovery Act, which (in addition to allowing industries to set wage and price codes) created the Public Works Administration (PWA) to be placed in the Department of the Interior and headed by Ickes.

The PWA would give low-interest loans and grants to state, county, and local governments and private associations to build large, high-quality public structures. PWA funds would cover all the costs of building federal projects (the Boulder, Bonneville, and Grand Coulee Dams, for example) and 30 percent of the cost of materials and labor of nonfederal projects (municipal buildings, roads, etc.). Congress appropriated $3.3 billion for the PWA.

Both FDR and Ickes envisioned projects that would meaningfully improve the day-to-day lives of average Americans. They didn't want "pretty buildings," but functional structures of all kinds—schools, hospitals, city halls, courthouses, jails, and other municipal buildings; roads, airports, and railroad lines; parks, sewers, and sanitation systems; and public power plants.

An unhurried review process
The PWA's focus on projects of substantial scale and durability, coupled with administrators' determination to prevent the patronage that had been a perennial problem in publicly funded contracts, meant the projects had to be extensively vetted and planned before construction could begin. Thus, unlike other New Deal work-relief programs whose priority was to get unemployed people to work fast—the Civilian Conservation Corps the Civil Works Administration of '33–'34, and eventually the Works Progress Administration—the PWA was slow to hire.

In sharp contrast to Harry Hopkins, who often approved Federal Emergency Relief Administration grants and CWA projects with less than a day's review, Ickes spent the entire summer of 1933 hiring experienced lawyers, engineers, urban planners, and accountants to staff PWA's Washington, DC, office and review PWA proposals. As he noted in his diary, "There are always a lot of incompetent or corked [corrupt] lawyers with strong political backing, and we can handle that situation better by building up our staff.
here than by finding a lawyer in each state.” He also instituted a complex, multilevel review that went from approval by state authorities all the way up to an okay by FDR himself.

**America transformed**

Nevertheless, shovels did ultimately go in the ground, and the PWA’s achievements accrued. In all it spent more than $6 billion on 34,508 public-works projects in 3,040 of the nation’s 3,073 counties and four of the nation’s protectorates. More than 1.2 million men worked on these projects. Although the PWA did not require companies to restrict hiring to the unemployed, there can be no doubt that the pay earned by newly hired workers helped their families and the local businesses they frequented.

By far the most significant contribution of the PWA to America was its physical legacy. By March 1939, PWA workers had constructed 70 percent of all the school buildings constructed in the country since 1933; 65 percent of courthouses, city halls, and sewage treatment plants built in that period; and 35 percent of hospitals and public health facilities erected in those six years. Indeed, the scope of PWA construction, FDR scholar William Leuchtenburg has observed, makes Ickes a builder rivaling Cheops (or Khufu), the Egyptian king who oversaw construction of the Great Pyramid. The PWA constructed:

- 340 electric power plants,
- 44 hydroelectric programs,
- 1,527 sewer systems,
- 2,419 municipal waterworks,
- 762 hospitals,
- 100 public housing buildings,
- 206 town halls,
- 295 courthouses,
- 7,282 school buildings,
- 11,428 roads and highways,
- 388 bridges,
- 384 airports,
- 741 river navigation projects, and
- 32 railroad-related projects.

PWA workers gave San Francisco and Washington, DC, world-class zoos. They built monumental football stadiums for the University of Arkansas, Louisiana State University, the University of Mississippi, and the Orange Bowl. Their labor erected state-of-the-art public hospitals for Chicago, New Orleans, Houston, and Boston. They designed and built the landmark boardwalk for Cape May, New Jersey; three new bridges spanning Cape Cod Canal in Massachusetts; a new deep-water port terminal for Richmond, Virginia; and the Lincoln Tunnel and the Triborough Bridge for New York City.

These were all eminently functional. But they were also symbolic—highly visible signs of America’s resourcefulness and capability. As Perkins later reflected, the PWA “had little to do with recovery in economic terms, but it had an enormous amount to do with recovery in psychological terms.”

---

Top: The Triborough Bridge (later renamed for Robert F. Kennedy) connecting Queens, Manhattan, and the Bronx, 1991. Franklin D. Roosevelt dedicated the bridge, built with funds from the Public Works Administration, in July 1936. “Not much more than a hundred years ago,” he said, “my own great-grandfather owned a farm in Harlem, right across there (indicating), close to the Manhattan approach of this bridge. But I am quite sure that he never dreamed of the bridge.” LOC

Above, left: A public library in De Pere, Wisconsin, newly built by the Public Works Administration (PWA), 1939. The PWA stimulated local economies by hiring construction workers and contributed many thousands of high-quality public buildings to communities around the country. LOC

Above, right: The Elephant House at the National Zoo in Washington, DC, in 2006. The facility, built in 1936 with Public Works Administration funds and decorated with New Deal art depicting the evolution of elephants, underwent a major expansion and was reopened in 2013 as the Elephant Community Center, complete with water features and a deep sand floor. LOC
Emergency Public Works: The Civil Works Administration

On a November day in 1933, New Deal relief administrator Harry Hopkins walked over to the White House to lunch with Franklin D. Roosevelt. At that point, the New Deal had three programs to help the jobless—the popular work camps of the Civilian Conservation Corps; the ambitious but slow-moving Public Works Administration (PWA); and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), a grant-making agency funnelling aid to state relief programs, which was often stymied by local policies that made it overly difficult to qualify for help. The scourge of mass unemployment continued and promised to worsen over the coming winter. So when Hopkins told FDR he had a way to put four million Americans to work quickly, the president was intrigued. FDR told Hopkins to design the program and transferred $400 million from the PWA to fund it.

Hopkins’s plan: A new division of the FERA, the Civil Works Administration (CWA), would hire the unemployed to build projects that would last, rather than the make-work projects relief funds traditionally supported. It would hire half these men from FERA relief rolls and half from the unemployment line, thus sidestepping any need to verify a worker’s needy status.

“The main point,” FDR told reporters in introducing the proposal, “is that it takes two and a half million people off the relief rolls; and there are a lot of people that would rather be off those rolls and working for cash than have their names on the rolls getting relief. It adds to the self-respect of the country, and we are trying to find out whether a plan of that kind is a feasible thing to do.”

Getting to work
With a purposeful Hopkins at the helm, the CWA approval process was speedy. By November 10, for example, only two days after FDR authorized the new agency, CWA staffers had approved 233 projects for Indiana. Within thirty days, it would create jobs for four million men and women and, by January, put them to work. As the historian William Leuchtenburg has noted, Hopkins and his team mobilized in one winter as many men as had served in all the armies engaged in World War I.

By the time CWA ended in July 1934, more than 4.3 million people working on eighty thousand federal projects had built or improved 255,000 miles of roads, 3,700 playgrounds, and 429 small airports. They had laid more than eleven million feet of sewer pipe, cleared blocked waterways and drainage ditches, and, to help rural communities combat typhoid and dysentery, built more than 250,000 outdoor toilets. They had constructed or refurbished more than forty thousand schools.
Applications were pouring in to the emergency program, and FDR authorized an additional $950 million for CWA work. CWA used those funds not only to finance construction work but also to pay fifty thousand teacher salaries so that rural schools could continue to operate and illiterate urban adults could learn to read. CWA projects bought surplus cotton and converted abandoned warehouses into sewing factories where women made mattresses and coats for those on relief. Engineers, architects, and writers surveyed coastlines, public buildings, and archives. Archeologists excavated mounds for the Smithsonian, and artists, in a precursor to the much larger arts program called Federal Project Number One, painted murals for San Francisco’s Coit Tower and the Key West Auditorium.

**The experiment comes to an end**
Putting people to work so rapidly meant that some CWA programs were poorly developed and allowed men to collect pay for raking leaves or making belts, or permitted a few greedy local officials to profit from the sale of construction products. However, despite the press attention these projects received, they were a tiny minority. Hopkins moved quickly to address corruption and, in three cases, placed CWA projects under federal rather than state leadership.

Most projects were very successful; Americans liked the CWA. Eleanor Roosevelt’s friend Lorena Hickok reported to Hopkins on a happy scene in Iowa, for example: “Something over 5,000 men, who went to work with picks and shovels and wheelbarrows last Monday morning, lined up and got paid—MONEY... They took it with wide grins and made bee-lines for the grocery stores, not to shove a grocery order across the counter, but to go where they please and buy what they pleased, with cash... I wonder if you have any idea of what CWA is doing for the morale of these people and their communities.”

Yet, concerned about the CWA’s rising costs, FDR yielded to pressure from Budget Director Lewis Douglas and refused to extend the program beyond the summer of 1934. Hopkins did not object but strove to create a new work program in a similar vein. As he told the press, “I would hate to see a decline in the work program and a return to direct relief. Of course, we have some serious problems to work out.”
Embracing Work Relief: The Works Progress Administration

As the year 1934 came to a close, five million Americans were still on relief and millions more were unemployed. The Civil Works Administration (CWA) work-relief program had shut down in July, and the large-scale construction projects of the Public Works Administration (PWA) pumped federal funds into materials and supplies before hiring began. Franklin D. Roosevelt, pushed by relief administrator Harry Hopkins, grew increasingly concerned that the New Deal programs were not doing enough to help jobless people—and the economy—get back on their feet.

In his State of the Union address on January 4, 1935, the president told Congress the country should fundamentally change its approach to helping the unemployed, offering jobs instead of the direct relief he called “fundamentally destructive to our moral fiber.” “To dole out relief in this way,” he said, “is to administer a narcotic, a subtle destroyer of the human spirit. It is inimical to the dictates of sound policy. It is in violation of the traditions of America. Work must be found for able-bodied but destitute workers.”

In the days that followed, FDR pitched a massive work-relief program that would employ millions and come with a huge price tag. It was unprecedented in scope. The Washington Post responded cautiously, informing readers there was “no parallel in history for a successful effort by any government . . . to create direct employment for 3.5 million people, as Mr. Roosevelt asks the Congress to make it possible to do.”

But on January 24, 1935, the House passed legislation establishing the Works Progress Administration (WPA) by an overwhelming majority. After hearings and extensive questioning of Hopkins, the Senate passed the bill on April 8, 1935. Congress authorized a whopping $4.8 billion dollars—then the largest single peacetime appropriation anywhere—to support the new agency.

A “great national crusade”
As plans for the WPA took shape, FDR returned to the radio on April 28 to deliver a fireside chat on work relief. “This,” he said, “is a great national crusade to destroy
enforced idleness, which is an enemy of the human spirit generated by this depression. Our attack upon [this enemy] must be without stint and without discrimination.” Nearly 20 percent of Americans were unemployed.

In the program’s four years, it moved more than 3.3 million Americans from relief rolls into jobs, and employed many more jobless who hadn’t qualified for relief. The sixty dollar monthly paycheck from a WPA job performing any of three hundred kinds of work provided the sole income for nearly twenty million Americans in all.

The WPA’s long-term funding allowed it to undertake significant labor-intensive projects that (unlike the even larger PWA projects) could be launched quickly—the sort of projects state and local leaders had planned but only dreamed of implementing.

If the PWA transformed the American landscape with major dams, highways, bridges, conservation projects, and stunning municipal and federal buildings, the WPA graced American communities with parks and athletic fields, concerts and plays, libraries and post offices. Its workers constructed and staffed nursery schools, taught illiterate adults to read, and translated American literary classics into Braille. They made extensive improvements to transportation systems. They sealed abandoned mines, reinforced riverbanks, and installed thousands of water treatment plants. In Oakland, California, WPA workers strove to rid the city of rats, install concrete sidewalks, clear areas long covered by mudslides, repair fraying library books, construct the underground tunnels protecting the city’s fire and police alarm system, and build the sewer system that kept body waste and trash out of the San Francisco Bay.

Workers gave Washington, DC, a refurbished National Mall and Washington National Airport (later renamed Reagan National Airport). Rural residents of Kentucky, who had never seen a library or been able to buy a book, benefited from a WPA “pack-horse library” that climbed the back hills to lend its books. Half a million women (who unlike their male counterparts had to qualify for relief to work on a WPA job) crammed repossessed factories to make and stuff mattresses, sew warm coats, and can fruit for the needy.

From 1935 through 1939, WPA construction workers:

- improved 572,000 miles of rural roads,
- repaired 85,000 public buildings and 45,000 bridges,
- built 78,000 new bridges and viaducts and 2,500 new hospitals,
- laid 67,000 miles of city streets and 24,000 miles of sidewalk,
- created 5,898 new parks and athletic fields and repaired an additional 11,849,
- constructed 256 new airports and renovated an additional 385, and
- erected 5,584 new school buildings and repaired an additional 31,629.

WPA community-service projects made just as dramatic a contribution. For example, workers in this sector:

- sewed 300 million garments to clothe the destitute,
- cooked 575 million hot school lunches,
- repaired 80 million library books,
- operated 1,460 nursery schools,
- taught 1.5 million adults to read, write, and do basic math,
- provided naturalization services for immigrants and day care for working mothers,
- wrote and published 48 WPA travel guides to the states, and
- performed thousands of free concerts, dance recitals, and plays.

Popular—and controversial

Americans appreciated these contributions; 60 percent said they approved of the work WPA did specifically for their communities. But the WPA was the most controversial of New Deal programs. It was the costliest, and most Americans did not want to pay more taxes to support the unemployed. It also became the most political, despite FDR’s
and Hopkins’s intention to keep patronage out of relief, because all WPA projects were designed and managed at the state and local level and required the applicant to contribute at least 24 percent of the project’s cost. Political bosses in Memphis, Jersey City, Kansas City, and Chicago exerted their clout to direct contracts to supporters and urged WPA workers to support their reelection.

Artists, especially those in the Federal Theatre Project, also drew congressional disapproval when they staged a play based on the provocative contemporary novel *It Can’t Happen Here* and original works New Deal critics deemed “un-American.” In 1938 conservative Democrats united with Republicans to hold three congressional hearings investigating the Federal Theatre Project as well as allegations that urban bosses pressured WPA workers to vote for them.

In December 1938, Hopkins resigned as WPA administrator to become secretary of commerce. By mid-1939, as FDR shifted his attention to the war in Europe, he renamed the WPA the Works Projects Administration, merged it into the Federal Works Administration, and insisted that all projects be completed by June 1, 1940.

Yet Adolf Hitler’s advance across Europe kept the WPA alive until 1943. Its workers shifted from constructing roads, bridges, and schools to building destroyers, aircraft carriers, and small arms. On June 30, 1943, FDR “decommissioned” the WPA, declaring it had “earned its honorable discharge.”

**An enduring legacy**

By then, the WPA had injected more than $10 billion into the American economy and employed an average of 2.1 million Americans a month. These Americans, along with those of the CWA and PWA, designed and built the infrastructure the nation depends upon in the twenty-first century. They regained self-respect, learned skills, took a new pride in their communities, and saw government play a positive role in their lives.

Frances Perkins, FDR’s secretary of labor, would later recall the touching example of an elderly lawyer, a Harvard graduate, who got a WPA job as assistant caretaker of a seaside park. “He made little extra plantings, arranged charming paths and walks, acted as a guide to visitors, supervised children’s play, and made himself useful and agreeable to the whole community,” Perkins wrote. “I had occasion to see him from time to time, and he would always ask me to take a message to the President—a message of gratitude for a job which paid him fifteen dollars a week and kept him from starving to death. It was an honorable occupation that made him feel useful and not like a bum and derelict, he would say with tears in his eyes.”

“It was this kind of feeling,” Perkins added, “that Roosevelt cared about.”

In 1939, the New Deal’s largest program, the Works Progress Administration, was renamed the Works Projects Administration (WPA) and shifted its focus from enhancing civilian life to supporting the Allied cause in World War II. Until its termination in 1943, the WPA continued to create posters like this one promoting the war effort, and to employ American workers in war-related production jobs. LOC