

**STATE OF COLORADO.
COMMITTEE ON
UNEMPLOYMENT AND
RELIEF**

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State of Colorado. Committee on unemployment and relief by F. J. Radford & H. J. Alexander
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F. J. RADFORD & H. J. ALEXANDER & ALFRED A. REED

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F. J. RADFORD, Trinidad, Chairman
H. J. ALEXANDER, Denver, Treasurer
ALBERT A. REED, Boulder, Secretary



REPORT

STATE OF COLORADO
1916

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TO HIS EXCELLENCY, HONORABLE GEORGE A. CARLSON,
GOVERNOR OF COLORADO.

On behalf of the State of Colorado Committee on Unemployment and Relief, I respectfully submit the following report:

Appointment of Committee.

Your Committee came into existence on March 23rd, 1915, by virtue of an executive order* issued by your Excellency when it became apparent that the State was confronted by an extraordinary problem of unemployment the solution of which demanded the creation of some extra governmental agency. A succession of circumstances had combined to throw thousands of men out of work and to deprive them utterly of any means of livelihood. As a result many families, ordinarily self-supporting and thrifty, were suffering the greatest privation. Many of them, if not actually without food, were on the verge of starvation. There was no governmental board or officer charged with the duty or supplied with the funds to remedy this destitution, and the facilities of the usual social and charitable organizations were wholly inadequate. Realizing that the State must find some method of alleviating this distress, your Excellency felt constrained to appoint a committee of citizens, serving without pay, to study the situation and to devise ways and means of meeting it. To this committee you appointed Mr. F. J. Radford of Trinidad, Mr. H. J. Alexander of Denver, and Mr. Albert A. Reed of Boulder. The members of the committee as designated by your Excellency accepted appointment and at once organized by electing the following officers: Mr. F. J. Radford, president; Mr. H. J. Alexander, treasurer; Mr. Albert A. Reed, secretary.

Origin of Unemployment Problem.

An immediate survey developed the fact that the problem was most acute in the coal mining counties of the State; namely, Las Animas, Huerfano, Boulder, Fremont, Gunnison and Weld. The protracted coal strike which had been in progress in the Northern fields since April 1st, 1910, and in the Southern fields since September 23rd, 1913, had come to an end in the Fall of 1914. The succeeding Winter was an unusually mild one, with the result that the demand for coal was far below normal. There was consequently little demand for labor in the mines and the strikers were compelled to remain in idleness. So long as the coal miners' union continued to pay strike benefits to its members, the strikers were able to provide themselves with the bare necessities of life, but upon the withdrawal of these benefits in February, 1915, the

*See Appendix "A."

men were deprived of their only means of support. It was then that the spectre of starvation made its appearance.

Survey of Conditions.

In Las Animas and Huerfano Counties, where conditions were worst, the Trinidad Chamber of Commerce, under the leadership of its then president, Mr. F. J. Radford, and with the assistance of the County, began to do what it could to alleviate the distress. A system of county road building was inaugurated to provide work for the unemployed, but the funds at the disposal of Mr. Radford were far from sufficient. In Boulder, likewise, the county commissioners with limited public money were endeavor-



Santa Fe Trail, Near Trinidad, Colorado. Fisher's Peak in Background. Work Prosecuted Under Supervision of Committee

ing to supply the needs of those who were in greatest distress. In spite of these efforts on the part of the Trinidad Chamber of Commerce and of the county authorities, assisted to some extent by private charitable organizations, the situation was but slightly improved.

The committee found that in Las Animas County there were from one thousand to fifteen hundred families in immediate need; in Huerfano County an equal number; in Boulder County from five hundred to eight hundred families; in Fremont County from three hundred to five hundred; in Gunnison County from one hundred fifty to three hundred; in Weld County from one hundred to two hundred; and in Garfield County about one hundred.

Work, Not Charity, Wanted.

It was obvious at once that the problem was not one of charity. The families in need were not such as would be willing to become objects of ordinary public aid; they had been overtaken by an unusual industrial disaster and they sought only an opportunity to work. It was the task of the committee to find this work. The plan of road building which had been evolved in Las Animas County under Mr. Radford seemed peculiarly adapted to the situation and, at the suggestion of your Excellency, the committee undertook to see what could be done to extend the plan so as to embrace the entire State, or at least all those counties which were most afflicted with unemployment.

The first appeal, therefore, was to the State Highway Commissioner. It was found, however, that owing to circumstances which had arisen before the unemployment problem was foreseen, no funds were available from this source for immediate use. It was impossible to divert any money from the State Treasury to immediate relief. Turning to the various counties, the committee found a similar condition. Provision had already been made for the expenditure of the county revenues and in every instance the road fund was being used as far as it would go without in any sensible degree reducing the distress.

Appeal to Rockefeller Foundation.

Immediate relief was necessary. Private charity had done what it could and public resources were being employed to their utmost. To have launched a campaign for contributions would have been of doubtful value and would have occasioned delay, an element which the committee felt bound to eliminate. At this juncture, therefore, the committee turned to the Rockefeller Foundation.

After the strike benefits had been withdrawn and the coal miners' union had indicated that no further relief could be expected from it, a mass meeting of strikers at Trinidad had appealed to Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., for assistance.* The appeal of the miners to Mr. Rockefeller was seconded by the Trinidad Chamber of Commerce, but Mr. Rockefeller in reply pointed out that the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company was making every provision for the assistance of the families of its former employees and that in the absence of a formal request from an authorized state body, any contribution from without the state would be susceptible of misinterpretation. Mr. Rockefeller intimated, however, that if the state should make representations to the Rockefeller Foundation, that organization would act.

In its capacity as a state agency, therefore, the committee laid the situation before the Foundation, after a conference with Mr. W. L. Mackenzie King, Director of the Industrial Relations Department of the Foundation, who was then in Colorado. As a result of the negotiations which then ensued, the details of which are more fully set out elsewhere in this report,* the Foundation

*See Appendix "A."

pledged itself to supplement whatever funds the committee might be able to secure to the extent of \$100,000, if so much should be necessary. The sum of \$30,000 was deposited in the First National Bank of New York City by the Rockefeller Foundation on April 1st to the credit of the First National Bank of Denver for the immediate use of the committee.

Organization of Relief Work.

Thus financially equipped through the prompt and generous action of the Foundation, the committee began the organization of relief. The system already devised by Mr. F. J. Radford and in operation in Las Animas County of providing the unemployed with work on the public highways appealed at once to the committee as the most direct and useful method of disbursing relief, inasmuch as it served the double purpose of effecting permanent public improvements and of furnishing an opportunity to work



Pioneer Work on Stonewall Road, Near Trinidad. Mr. Radford's Cottage in Right Background. Work Prosecuted Under Supervision of Committee

to the men who were idle. Out of justice to the Rockefeller Foundation which had placed its funds at the disposal of the committee to relieve the distress of the unemployed, the committee established its first fundamental principle; namely—that none of the money so generously provided by the Foundation should be used for any other purpose whatever. It was decided, therefore, that all expenses incurred in the organization of the work and the disbursement of the fund should be met from other sources in order that every cent of the Rockefeller fund could be used for the purpose for which it was given.

Plan of Relief.*

This end was secured by laying down the condition that every county in which any of the fund was to be disbursed should undertake the responsibility of furnishing at its own expense the immediate supervision of the actual road work, all necessary tools and a pro rata share of the incidental expenses of the committee, which included only the cost of publicity and correspondence. The next consideration was to prevent any possibility of improper use of the funds. For this reason, the committee laid down the rule that it would not pay for work on the roads in cash, but in orders for food and clothing drawn upon reputable merchants in the immediate vicinity of places where the work was being done. To guard against misuse of the orders, the committee made the rule; first, that the issuance of the orders should be entrusted only to foremen of known integrity who should be paid by the county when it proved impossible to find men who could donate their time to the work; second, that every order should have a corresponding stub showing to whom it was issued and for what amount and that the foreman should make out a report in duplicate of all orders, one copy to be filed with the county commissioners and one copy with the treasurer of the committee; and last, that every order should bear the signature of the foreman, the signature of the merchant who honored it and the signature of the banker who accepted it for deposit. To further protect the issuance of the orders it was made necessary that every foreman should provide a bond of \$1,000 to guarantee the faithful discharge of his trust. Finally, in order that as many families as possible might be benefited, it was provided that the men should be employed in shifts, that is to say, that the personnel of the working force should be changed as often as was necessary to give every idle man in the immediate vicinity who wanted work an opportunity to labor at least one or two days every week.

County Officers Co-operate.

The plan won the immediate approval of the county authorities wherever it was suggested. In every instance the county commissioners responded with alacrity and interest. The committee cannot say too much in praise of the spirit of co-operation that was exhibited by the commissioners of every county in which the relief fund was disbursed. The necessary foremen were supplied, as well as the tools, and in some cases even the use of teams was donated by private individuals to further the object of the committee. The commissioners, particularly in Las Animas, Huerfano and Boulder Counties, where the greatest need existed, threw themselves whole-heartedly into the work, and the splendid results that were achieved, especially in actual road improvement, are permanent testimonials to the value of their services.

*See Appendix "B."