

As a result of growing popular discontent with Hoover's depression policies, Franklin D. Roosevelt was swept into the presidency in 1932. In the whirlwind activity which occurred during his famous first Hundred Days, numerous anti-depression measures were signed into law. One of the most significant was the Federal Emergency Relief Act of 1933 (ERA of 1933).

Creation of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), headed by Harry L. Hopkins, reflected Roosevelt's view that while providing for millions of hungry and unemployed was traditionally a state and local responsibility, the federal government should provide emergency assistance. In contrast to loans made by earlier relief programs, the FERA provided grants to state governments for direct relief. Initially \$500 million were appropriated by the ERA of 1933 for distribution through state emergency relief administrations (in Kentucky: KERA).

While the FERA made direct grants to the states it was fully the responsibility of the states to determine the eligibility of those applying and the amount of money to be administered to any particular family case—within FERA regulations. FERA regulations required people on work relief be given cash rather than payment-in-kind (clothing; foodstuffs). Cash payment was also urged for those on direct relief.

Other federal agencies were created to administer aspects of relief not within the realm of FERA activities. Chief among these were the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), first called Emergency Conservation Work (ECW), and the Public Works Administration (PWA), both created in 1933. Three agencies were created that had administrative ties to FERA—the Civil Works Administration (CWA), the Federal Surplus Relief Corporation (FSRC), and the Works Progress Administration (WPA). (For a discussion of CWA, CCC, PWA, and FSRC see subgroup XII Material from Other Federal Agencies of the Depression Era.)

The FERA was a stopgap relief program designed to make funds immediately available to those most needing them. These direct payments filled a need but did not appreciably reduce the numbers of unemployed. Work relief programs designed and implemented by state and local governments with FERA funds were intended to conserve the skills and work habits, and restore the morale and self-respect of the able-bodied unemployed. The experience gained from the administration of FERA programs was of considerable value in planning WPA programs.

Executive Order 7034, May 6, 1935, established the Works Progress Administration for the "coordinated execution of the relief program as a whole, and for the execution of that program in such manner as to move from the relief rolls to work on such projects or in private employment the maximum number of persons in the shortest time possible."