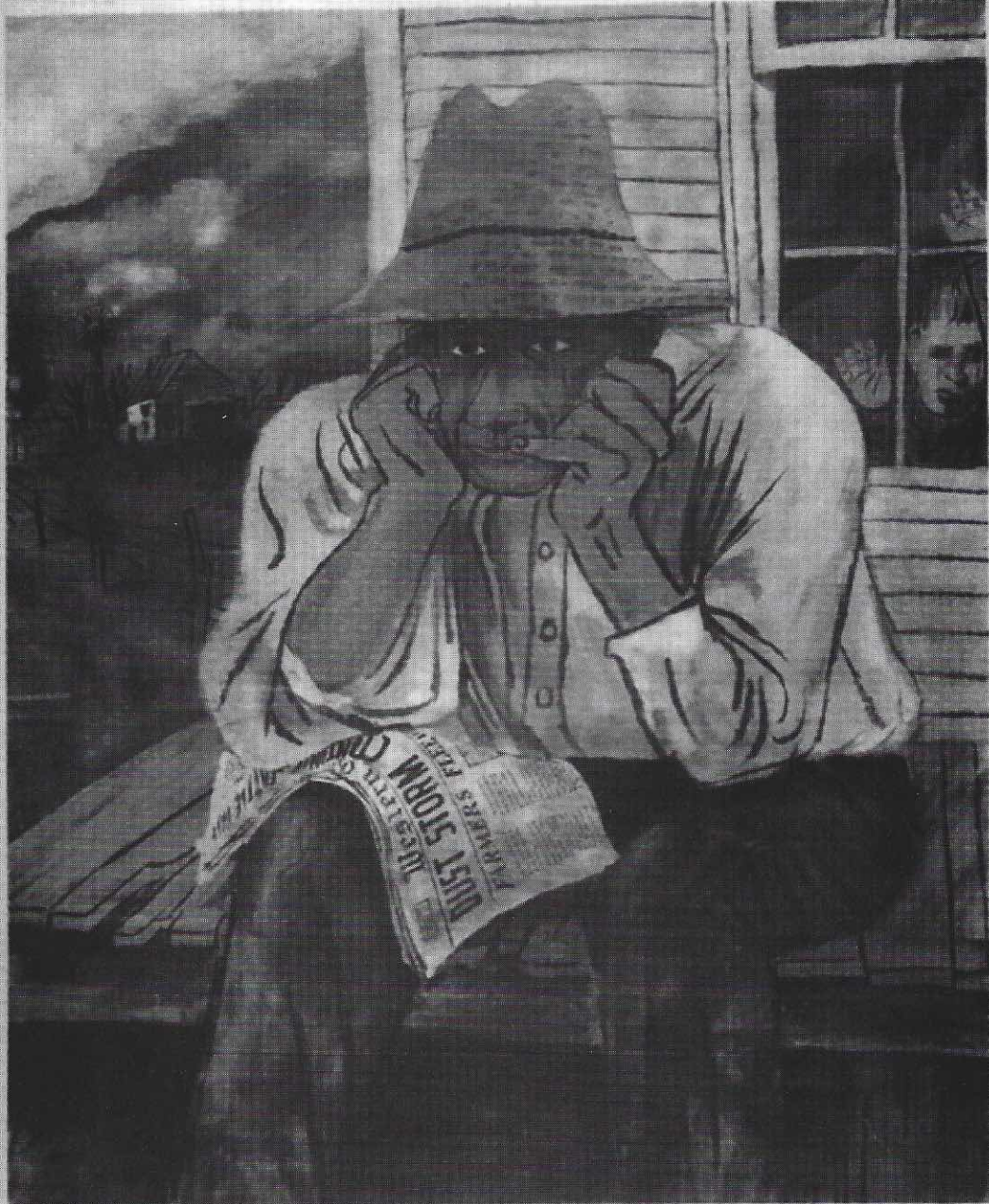


YEARS OF DUST



RESETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION
Rescues Victims
Restores Land to Proper Use

Agricultural Adjustment Act AAA

Caption Placard 4.3B

This poster was created by Ben Shahn in 1937 entitled "Years of Dust." Shahn's promotional poster for the Resettlement Administration contrasts the plight of Dust Bowl Farmers with the bold actions of the New Deal. Shahn explained that the purpose of his posters was to "explain...to people who need it what is being done for them and to the others what they are paying for."

Aid to Farmers

The New Deal included several programs intended to relieve the economic decline of America's 30 million farming families. The Agricultural Adjustment Act aimed to adjust farmers' production of goods to the country's ability to purchase and consume those goods. Through the act, the government subsidized (paid) farmers to plant fewer crops and to destroy a portion of their crops and livestock (farm animals). Twenty-two thousand government agents convinced over one million cotton farmers to destroy about 10 million acres' worth of crops. Corn farmers reduced their crops by one fifth, slaughterhouses killed six million baby pigs, and farmers killed millions of cows. At the height of the government subsidies, clerks generated over 80,000 subsidy checks per day, ranging from a few thousand dollars to as much as \$200,000. In addition, government programs moved thousands of farming families to better, more fertile farmland and irrigated (watered) millions of acres of dry land. Over 127 million trees were planted to block the terrible dust storms in the Great Plains, and the government loaned hundreds of millions of dollars to farmers to help them repay their mortgages and bank loans.

In the late 1990s, the federal government continued to pay—or subsidize—farmers to plant fewer crops in an effort to control prices and prevent soil from becoming overused and useless. In the late 1980s, the federal government paid American farmers over \$22 billion in subsidies. However, by the mid 1990s, Congress had passed legislation to eventually eliminate federal support of farmers.



Direct Relief

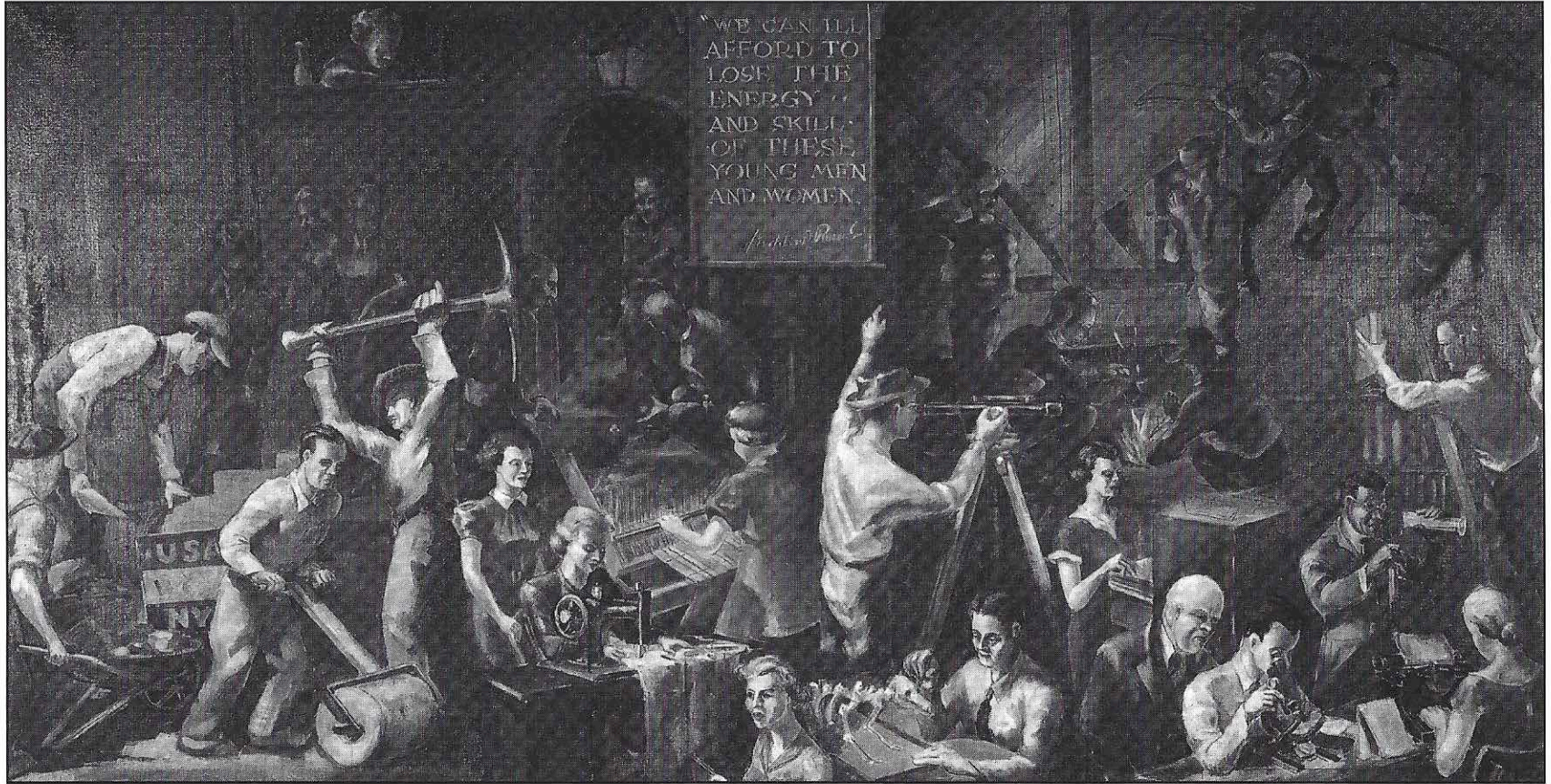
The New Deal included various measures to provide immediate, direct relief to Americans in desperate need of food, shelter, and money. Despite a long American tradition of despising “the dole”—public charity—the federal government recognized that many people needed help. Therefore, Congress passed the Federal Emergency Act, which provided \$500 million in federal grants to state and local relief agencies. States used the money to set up soup kitchens and food-distribution warehouses for the hungry, establish housing camps for homeless jobseekers, and provide families with small cash payments for their monthly living expenses. While the payments were typically quite low—about \$15 to \$20 per month—they were often double what families had previously received from relief agencies. Another form of direct relief was the conversion of farmers’ extra crops and livestock (farm animals) into food for the needy. The government purchased such foods as butter, cheese, pork, and flour and had agencies distribute them to hungry families. Workers also transformed surplus cotton into blankets and mattresses for those in need. As one historian has noted, direct relief under the New Deal was intended to be “local, minimal, and temporary.” Therefore, the federal government eventually favored other forms of relief, such as government-created jobs, or work relief.

In the 1990s, the government continued to provide direct relief to American families in need through federal and state welfare programs. Public assistance programs included monthly payments to poverty-stricken families, low-cost or free healthcare, and food stamps.

Federal Emergency Act FEA

Caption Placard 4.3C

A group of people waiting in line to receive surplus food from a government agency. Their facial expression and slumped postures reveal how difficult it was for Depression-era Americas to accept government aid.



Investment in Youth


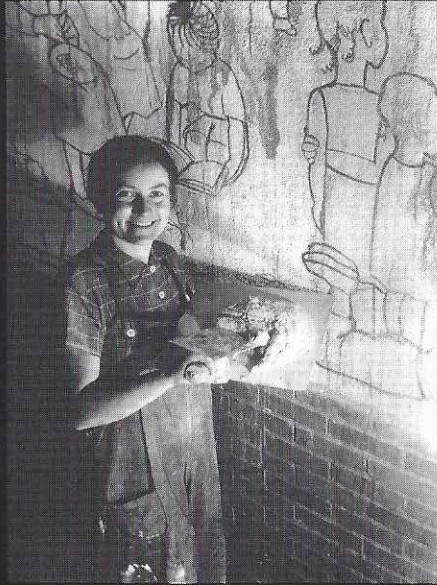
As part of the New Deal, the federal government established the National Youth Administration (NYA) to oversee work programs and educational grants (financial gifts) that catered to men and women ages 16 to 25. At the time the NYA was founded, one in seven youths was poverty-stricken and receiving relief payments, and over 4.5 million youth were unemployed. The goal of the NYA was to provide financial and work assistance to unemployed youth and to help high school and college students continue their education. The NYA paid young men and women from \$10 to \$25 per month to perform a variety of jobs. Youth workers—including African Americans, whites, and in smaller numbers, Native Americans—built public swimming pools, cleaned and landscaped public parks, cooked food in local cafeterias, sewed garments, watched over children, built summer camps, performed office work, created geographical maps, participated in archeological digs, and worked in libraries, museums, science labs, and hospitals. In addition, the NYA provided financial assistance and part-time jobs—also known as work-study—that helped over 600,000 students pay for college and 1.5 million students stay in high school. Other NYA programs trained young people to work in a trade, such as construction or farming.

In the late 1990s, the government continued to support a variety of programs dedicated to providing youth with a solid future. For example, financial aid programs provided college students with educational grants and work-study opportunities, and job-training programs gave young people the skills they needed to make a living.

National Youth Administration NYA

Caption Placard 4.4E

This is a 1936 painting created by Alden Krider for a Kansas State Fair exhibit. The painting celebrates the accomplishments of the National Youth Administration (NYA). In the foreground we see youth involved in a variety of NYA activities including road construction, surveying, and laboratory research. At the top are President Roosevelt's words when he established the NYA in 1935: "We can ill afford to lose the energy and skills of these young men and women." In the background of the painting lurk the dangers that the NYA hopes to help young people to avoid: poverty, crime, and homelessness.



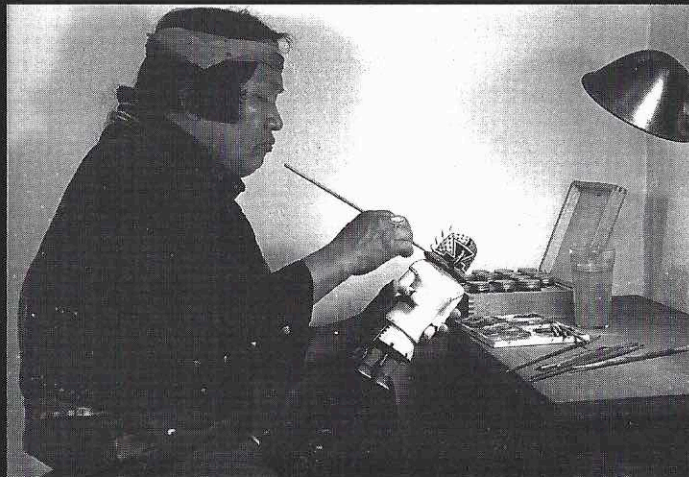
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Federal Arts Project FAP

Caption Placard 4.4L

A montage of New Deal arts programs includes (clockwise from the upper left) Lucienne Bloc working on a mural entitled "Cycle of a Woman's Life" for the House Detention in New York City; Myra Kinch and Clay Dalton in the Los Angeles production of "American Exodus"; a handbill for the play "Life and Death of an American," a production of the New York City WPA; the Rhode Island WPA Music Project Symphony Orchestra; and an image of a Hopi artist painting a doll.

Support for the Arts

The New Deal established the Federal Art Project, which used over \$27 million to fund projects in fine art, literature, music, and theater. The art programs employed over 40,000 professionals: actors, architects, dancers, historians, librarians, musicians, painters, photographers, playwrights, sculptors, and writers. From coast to coast, in large cities and in small towns, federally sponsored artists brought their works to millions of Americans. Over 7,500 writers created nearly 380 guidebooks describing U.S. cities and states, artists created thousands of illustrations of American handicrafts and historical buildings, and over 12,000 actors and stagehands put on free shows. Composers wrote over 5,000 new musical pieces, and 15,000 musicians presented 150,000 music programs, reaching over 100 million Americans. Other art projects included African-American theater, circuses, murals, music and painting lessons, operas, performances of plays, photography exhibits, radio programs, "Living Newspapers" in which performers acted out current events, and vaudeville shows. Many of the projects celebrated American life or praised aspects of the New Deal. While the government occasionally censored (banned) politically or socially controversial material, overall, New Deal artists had a remarkable amount of creative freedom.

In the 1990s, the federal government continued to support the arts through the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The NEA provided grants (financial gifts) to a variety of artists, and funded museums, theaters, student art programs, and projects to preserve American art, such as traditional crafts and folksongs.