



NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE RELIEF LOAD IN OKLAHOMA

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The total relief load including FERA units, county poor relief cases and private relief cases in Oklahoma in August, 1934, was approximately 200,000. If it is assumed that each case represented a family, approximately one family in three in Oklahoma was receiving some form of relief in August, 1934. Approximately nine relief cases in every ten were being cared for by the FERA units in different counties. In 13 of the 77 counties in the state no relief was expended from county poor funds. Apparently, no such funds were available. In those counties which had expended no county poor funds, the largest proportion of the total population was on relief. This indicates that local relief resources were absolutely unable to meet the needs. In 44 of the 77 counties in the state there were no cases under care by such private relief agencies as the Red Cross and the United Charities. In six additional counties, private agencies were caring for less than 25 cases. In only four counties were private relief societies caring for as many as 500 cases.

A survey of 5,700 families on relief in 14 counties revealed that one family in eight lived in a one-room dwelling. Two families in five lived in one and two-room dwellings. Two-thirds lived in dwellings with less than four rooms. A few families, mostly rural, were living in dwellings with 10 or more rooms.

Slightly over three-fourths of the family heads were born either in Oklahoma or in the four adjoining states of Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, and Texas. Less than 1 per cent of the male heads of families were of foreign birth. Foreign born persons appeared less than half as frequently in the relief group as their numbers in the general population would warrant. Two-thirds of the family heads were classified as farmers. Only 54 per cent of the population in the twelve counties where the study was made were farmers. In other words, farmers appeared on relief rolls more frequently than their numbers in the general population would warrant.

The same is true of miners. Slightly over one-fourth of the families owned the dwelling or farm or both where they resided.

About one-half of the families had been living at the present place of residence for less than three years, and three-fourths less than 10 years. Apparently, a high rate of mobility was the basis of some of the economic difficulties of many families. For the most part the families had been living in Oklahoma for an extended period of time. Only one family in three had been living in Oklahoma less than 20 years. One-half of the families had lived in the state for 20 to 35 years, one in six from 35 to 85 years, and one in twenty all their lives.

The average number of persons per family was 4.56. The average size of families in the general population is 4.03. In other words, relief families averaged about one-half of a person more than families in the general population. About one-half of the families had only one sleeping room. Eighty-five per cent had only one or two sleeping rooms. The average number of sleeping rooms per household was 1.7. The average number of persons per sleeping room was 2.7. Apparently, therefore, there was considerable over-crowding in sleeping quarters among relief households, especially in the one and two-room dwellings.

Three dwellings in ten had no windows screened. Three dwellings in every five had one or more windows broken. One family in eight had no radio. One family in six had a telephone. Nearly two-thirds of the families had an automobile. This would indicate too heavy investment in cars. Only one family in fourteen had a piano. Nine-tenths of the families used the oil lamp for lighting. One in 20 had electric lights. Sixty per cent of the families used either coal or wood for heating. Other dwellings were heated by gas. Only one family head in 25 was illiterate. One-half had completed from one to seven grades, one-third had completed the eighth grade and one in eight had completed from nine to 12 grades. Fifty-two had from one to four years of college work. Sixteen had four years of college work.

