

Kansas City, Mo.

February 17, 1941.

Senator Harry S. Truman:

Washington, D.C.

Dear Senator:

I am enclosing copy of a letter just mailed to Howard Williams, local Director of the WPA. I believe you as our Senator in Congress from this State should be informed as to the administration of work relief in Kansas City and to be in position to advise me as to what procedure I should pursue under the circumstances.

There is nothing against my record on WPA. It is my belief that these tactics are being used as a result of my activity in behalf of our party during the past year.

I have nothing on which to base this belief except suspicion and coincidence. It did seem strange to receive my first layoff just before the most bitter primary in the history of our local party and then again when our party was in the midst of a heated state controversy. I have been active in my party and have been affiliated with only the one faction (Goaat) since I have been old enough to vote. And if loyalty to my convictions during a year when our local party faced its darkest period is a sin and forbids me this right to a livelihood then I am willing that both myself and family shall suffer for it.

For character and other references, I refer you to J. Donal O'Hern of this city.

Respectfully,

Edwin A. Ferguson 2910 Walnut St., Kansas City, Mo.

Kansas City, Mo., February 17, 1941.

Mr. Howard Williams,

Director W.P.A.,

Kansas City, Mo.

Dear Sir:

Since October 17, 1940 I have been employed on W.P. 8671-9, 309 Broadway, as a foreman under the supervision of Mr. R. E. Richardson. On February 19, 1941 I received notification of dismissal on account of "Inability to perform assigned duties."

I feel that I would be derelict in my duty to my wife and four children if I should let this statement remain unchallenged.

During three months of this time I was out on the line with a gang of laborers and I can truthfully say that during that time I did not receive one word of criticism from Mr. Richardson or any one else on the project as to the manner in which my duties were performed. The day after receiving this notice I went to see Mr. Richardson and he stated definitely that he had made no such statement as to my ability.

About three weeks ago I was called into the project office to work with the Assistant Chief Clerks because of my knowledge of the preparation of Form 351 and my ability to handle the records of material and equipment (Forms 741, 720 and 742). Mr. Geo. Reiser and Mr. Richards are the Assistant Chief Clerks on this project and I am sure that they will verify my statement that I know this work thoroughly and perform my duties in a competent manner.

During the four years of my employment on WPA I have, with the caption of two months, held some classified position. This, I have always been happy to know was because of my ability - not through the generosity of some friend within nor the influence of some outside source.

I say to you, Mr. Williams, that it is not our American Way to try a man, to convict him and then dismiss him without a hearing. I contend that I have a right to know who preferred such charges and on what specific grounds they are based. That I have a right to defend myself on these charges.

It has been said that these dismissals are the result of an investigation by a so-called secret group of investigators. Why not give a man an opportunity to face these investigators, to inquire into the charges and as to their ability to judge working conditions on a project.

Again it has been said that these dismissals are made through a clerical study of a man's post industrial record. I say that some of your most competent Superintendents and foremen had no construction experience prior to their employment on WPA, but have advanced through their intelligence and ability to learn from others. If this is true of a non-certified man isn't it possibly true of some certified men?

It has always been my belief and it was so stated that dismissals were to be made

"According to need". What is meant "According to need"? I am 46 years of age and have four small children. My wife has been seriously ill three times during the past year. All four of my children have just recovered from six weeks illness.

It is also stated that a War Veteran is given employment preference on WPA. How? It is my impression that WPA was created as a work relief organization. Yet men of 25 and 26, with no children and their wives working are retained steadily in non-certified positions while ex-servicemen with large families are periodically layed off. A rule is made that a certified man must be layed off at the completion of a project, yet a non-certified man can be transferred without loss of time.

I contend that a great many of these straight time positions can be filled from the ranks of the certified men. However it is easier for the camel to pass through the needle's eye than it is for the certified man to pass from the ranks of the certified to the ranks of the non-certified.

At the time of my employment on W.P. 8671-9, I had just completed a years work as an "S" foreman performing the duties of an "S" timekeeper under the supervision of Tom Farley; for five months prior that I was an "S" foreman in charge of the records of material and equipment under B.B. Richards; for one year prior to that I was an "S" foreman in charge of first aid and safety inspection. In the face of this record I was placed out on the line in charge of a labor construction gang. And I am proud of my record while working in that capacity and not ashamed of any act performed.

In all these statements I am confident of confirmation by my superiors.

Let's not defeat the purpose for which WPA was intended. I ask reinstatement without loss of time or classification.

Respectfully,

Edwin A. Ferguson, Identi 9967
2910 Walnut St., Kansas City, Mo.