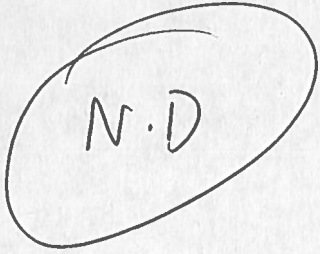


Truman:

This is a very hasty draft of the proposal for a paper at the conference at Eastern. Make any changes of fact or style that you feel ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ are necessary. Because we have to have it in by the middle of next week why not call me and we can talk about changes on the phone. I will type up the final ^{sent (T/N)} and we will see what happens.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Karl', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.The letters 'N.D.' are handwritten inside a hand-drawn oval.

[Danbury during the depression(a compilation of ideas and facts
based on a reading of the Danbury New-Times) 3/7/87]

There were many indications that the depression did not hit Danbury in 1929. Construction alone attests to the continuation of prosperity at the end of the decade of the 20's. 1.3 million dollars in building permits were issued. Much of the new building was in the form of residences (69) along with five new apartments. Three new homes, each valued at more than \$50,000, were constructed on Deer Hill Avenue. Many new homes were built in that year outside the borders of the city in areas still served by city water and sewer facilities, although others, such as the 40 Acre Mountain development, were as much as four miles from the center of the city lured to the north by Candlewood Lake. This construction boom continued into 1930. A new facade addition and modernization of the City National Bank to keep pace with its larger neighbors was begun in 1930 and completed the following year. *Henry Dick opened his completely remodeled Furniture store in 1930.*

Yet even in terms of construction many public concerns had not been addressed during the 1920's. Water supply had not been neglected but, particularly in the eyes of the hat manufacturers, progress had not been made. In order to by-pass the town officials who were reluctant to spend more money the Republican controlled state legislature in 1926 ~~had~~ established an independent Water Works Improvement Commission, headed by former ~~Mayor~~ Senator Charles Peck, and had given the commission authority to sell 1 million dollars in bonds to finance a new reservoir. However it was not until 1932 after much squabbling, ^{the} construction of the Margarie Reservoir was begun. Opposition to spending this amount of money in the early years of the depression became the key issue of the city

,an anti-Margarie candidate, elections in 1931. G.Walter Morgan in an unprecedented sweep of all four wards defeated former Mayor Homer Fillow, a member of the Danbury Water Works Improvment Commission, by 2,000 votes in a contest where 80% of the electorate participated. Morgan ~~aftervassening~~ immediately appointed a Citizens Committee, with Republican hat manufactuer Harry McLachlan as Chairman, to investigate the need for the reservoir. Even a positive report by this body failed to budge the Common Council (dominated by Democrats who argued not only that the reservoir was too expensive but that the "Margarie Swamp" was by engineering standards a poor location. This stance was approved by a town meeting in May of 1931.7 Ultimately the Water Commission ignored the Common and the town meeting Council and began construction of the reservior in 1932. To pheckmate the only hold the Council had on the operation, the Water Commission received from the state legislature power of eminent domain needed to condemn certain péeses of property ~~needed~~ in the water basin, an action that irked the politicians.

Other issues were not so easily resolved. Pollution of the Still River was an increasingly severe problem allied to the water question. The highest per capita consumption of water in the state put heavy pressure on an antiquated sewer system that combined storm water with ~~waste~~ industrial and residential waste. The city was not allowed to forget this problem by the Beaver Brook Neighborhood Association who engaged Alfred Levitt as their attorney and brought a series of suits against the city, and the State Water Commission that ~~referred to~~ ~~degraded~~ the Still River as the most polluted body of water in the state. ~~Mayor Morgan, whose grand~~

Commission engineers told the Board of Estimate in 1930 that the city should spend \$150, 000 over the next five years to bring the filtration plant up to minimgm standards. General Sandford Wadhams,

the head of the State Water Commission pointed out at the same time that the present filtration system had been installed thirty years before to serve a city of 12,000 people. Built to accomodate an annual flow of 750,000 gallons it was groaning under a load of over 2 million gallons a year.

Mayor G. Walter Morgan, whose grandfather had been one of the leaders of the 1895 protest that had forced Danbury to build a sewage treatment plant, was sympathetic terming the pollution of the Still River one of the cities most pressing problems. Yet he recognized that the city had no money to improve the sewers or modernize the treatment plant. Nor could it antagonize the hat manufactueres, who insisted that they did not contribute to the problem. "The hat industry", the Mayor lamented "is the very life of Danbury." He estimated that it would cost each large hat factory about \$40,000 to treat its waste before discharge, an amount they could or would not spend during a depression. Compromise was necessary, he felt, because "Danbury is absolutely dependant on the hat factories for sustenance."

No new elementary schools had been built in the city since the 19th century and the residents of Beaver Brook and South Street were pressing for new facilities. Although a new high school had been built in the midtwenties it had already passed its maximum capacity of 1200 students. Despite periodic grumblin from citizens Danbury had refused to invest in public parks. Indeed the only functioning playground at Osborne and Locust was funded and operated by the Lions Club. Lake Candlewood lapped Danbury on the north but as yet there was no public access. No action had been taken on Cephas Rogers' offer of an exchange of 22 acres of swamp land that he owned on South and Main that could be used for a park for forgiveness of \$6 000 in back taxes

One contention of this paper that will be documented in subsequent pages is that the depression, ^{PROVIDED} ~~and in particular~~ the opportunity for federal funds, ^{when} gave Danbury an opportunity to build an infrastructure of public amenities that it had slighted up to this point. The lure of federal dollars from the series of unemployment relief agencies: ~~The CWA, FERA, WPA, and the Public Works Administration of the~~ Department of Interior overcame the local antipathy to federal control. The federal government set the priorities and the timetable for this building program. Up to this point Danbury was proud of its local autonomy and its ability to handle problems on a voluntary basis. The New Deal increased tremendously the role of the federal government in the affairs of the community. Instead of looking first to their own resources Danbury looked immediately to Washington for funds and was willing to play by federal rules, a necessary part of the bargain. The action that symbolizes this change of emphasis comes at the end of the decade when in August of 1939 the Associated Charities, for fifty years the citizens organization responsible for care of the poor, passed out of existence its role assumed by the federal government.

The depression appeared for the first time in Danbury during the winter of 1930-31. The annual report of the Associated Charities issued in October, 1931 was troubling. ^{Long Time} President Charles Mallory pointed out that the case load of the agency had doubled in the past year. The Common Council the next month authorized the establishment of a Committee on Unemployment to investigate the condition but Mayor Anthony Sunderland reacted with the caution that "Personally I think Danbury is not so bad ⁱⁿ off as other places." Yet in January 1931 the Mayor was the first to purchase a special discount ticket for automobile service ^{from} ~~to~~ a local company ^{that} ~~who~~ would turn over double

the value of the ticket to unemployment relief. HELP THE UNEMPLOYED IT COSTS YOU NOTHING claimed the company advertisement. Heavy ~~SNOW~~ storms in January provided an opportunity to put 125 unemployed men to work shoveling snow. Still, if newspaper coverage can be believed, the most prevalent reaction to the depression in these early months was the fear that it was a Communist plot. Speakers at the American Legion, the Lions Club, and the K of C ~~spoke~~ made this charge, and certain auditoriums such as city hall, the Syrian-American Club, and the Polish-American Club were ~~closed~~ ^{BANNED} to Communist speakers.

Danbury's first response to the depression was typically a private one. In July, 1931 the Rotary, Lions and Businessmans Association joined forces to set up a Free Unemployment Office in City Hall. After two weeks of operation it had registered 148 applicants finding jobs for 20 of them. Then, suddenly, prosperity returned to the hatting industry. Milliners who had delayed placing new orders for women's felt hats because of concern about the economy began ~~placing~~ to demand large quantities of the latest fad, the Empress Eugénie hat. During June, July, and August Danbury factories turned out 120,000 hat bodies a day. Some factories worked three full shifts; others put in a full day on Saturday. This spurt, which was in decline by September, brought the city unwonted publicity as a haven for those seeking work. First Selectman Elijah Sturdevant, who will be defeated in October as the Democrats swept the town election for the first time since 1919, told desperate people to stay away and at the same time made some perceptive comments about Danbury's economy. "Danbury for the most part is a community of home owners and skilled workers. Toward the end of last winter people of that class began to apply

to us for relief, having used up their savings. So this sudden prosperity was badly needed."

~~The~~ The boom was also short lived. The Danbury Unemployment Committee under the chairmanship of businessman Frank Hanson ~~wanted the community~~ for sought to raise \$20,000 in donations ~~for~~ so that the unemployed could be hired for public improvement projects. The response was generous. The Mallory Company contributed \$1,000; Frank Lee sent a personal check for \$500. Employees of hat factories who were working contributed a portion of their salary. Hoyt-Messinger employees, for example, pledged \$300 a week over a six week period. Policemen and fireman contributed a portion of their pay.

From December 1931 to May 1932 the Unemployment Committee kept men at work on a variety of projects. The Balmforth School yard was graded, more than 16,000 trees were planted at the Westlake Reservoir, cinder sidewalks were built (an American Legion project for veterans) in outlying areas, and first work was begun on a public park on Lake Candlewood leased from Cland P. The most dramatic project was a clean-up of the Still River where teams of men in high rubber boots trudged through the river channel with forked sticks and rakes picking up debris. Still it was a hand to mouth operation that could place only a fraction of those who applied even by reducing work from three to two days a week. In late January, 1932 the Committee said it only had enough cash to give work to fifty men at a time, about 10% of the need.

~~of even greater concern to the newspaper and possibly to the people~~

Of even greater concern to the newspaper and possibly to the citizens was the financial distress of the city. The city grand list was down by almost a quarter million dollars due primarily to the decline in car purchases. By the start of 1932 it was estimated that almost \$500,000 was owed in back taxes. Added to this was the existence of a large floating debt accumulated to finance road improvement in palmier times. ~~Adding to the difficulties~~ **COMPLICATING THE SITUATION** was an antiquated tax collection schedule that did not coincide with the city's fiscal year. Taxes were due November 1 while the fiscal year began July 1 requiring the city to borrow in anticipation of taxes. This wasteful system was not devastating until the four local banks refused to loan any money for this purpose as they did in August 1933. ~~Then~~ **Then** a panic set in. An audit of the city books demanded by the banks revealed that Danbury was operating in the red. ~~When~~ **When** the first snow fell in ~~December~~ 1932 the city of Danbury had no funds to pay to plow it away.

City government, now controlled by the Democrats, attempted to put its house in order. ~~When~~ **When** auto assessments were increased more than 200 angry citizens stormed city hall. In March, 1932 the Board of Finance cut \$92,000 ~~from the budget~~ **MAINLY** ~~primarily~~ by deferring payment of the bill for paving West Street. Still more extreme measures were required. Automatic yearly pay increases ~~not to be reinstated for almost four years~~, for teachers were eliminated ~~and, ultimately, at the start of~~ **and** classes in September, 1932 it was decided that teachers wages would be ~~cut~~ **SLASHED** **CUT** by 10%, ~~an action~~ that a month earlier affected firemen, policemen, and other city employees. As a matter of fact city employees went from July to November in 1932 without pay, the longest of several pay interruptions suffered during the early years of the depression.

such painful measures were mere stopgaps. In the opinion of many a total restructuring of city finances was necessary. On July 2 about 70 representatives of civic groups, goaded by the Rotary Club, met at St. James Church and took matters into their own hands by appointing a Committee of 25 made up of bankers

headed by A.E. Tweedy, head of the Tweedy Silk Company and recently elected president of the City National Bank, to scrutinize the ~~operation of the city~~ city's financial affairs. A few months later in October this movement was broadened into the Danbury Civic Association which became the spearhead of tax reform and an advocate of consolidation. Even in the midst of such confusion Judge of Probate Martin Cunningham, a future Mayor and presently a member of the Committee of 25 could report to the Rotary that the "depression has been a good thing" because it made Danbury put its financial house in order.

The depression might make the balance sheets of the bankers more tidy but as the winter of 1932-33 approached the number of unemployed skyrocketed. This year there was no fashion boom to help the hatting industry. Frank Lee found it harder to live up to his pledge, made the previous year, to hire all the unemployed hatters in Danbury by stretching out the available work. The "Share the Work ~~Movement~~ Plan" advocated so confidently by hatting officials, was stymied by inadequate work to share. Jeremiah Scully, President of the Danbury Hat Makers Association, set up the city's first soup kitchen--the Danbury Unemployment Restaurant-- on Crosby Street in January 1933. Supported by private donations of money and labor the restaurant provided breakfast and supper to an average of 250 people a day until May 1. In February the soup kitchen began to serve lunch to over 100 students from the Balmforth and New Street schools, a practice that continued through the summer. One indication of the bias of the

newspaper, ~~that was~~ absorbed during 1933 with the coverage, and advocacy, of financial reform, ~~that there was~~ ^{THE FAILURE TO RECOVER} ~~no mention of~~ the continued activities of the Danbury Unemployment Relief Commission.

The Common Council, stung by criticisms of the city's financial mess--State Tax Commissioner Blodgett revealed that Danbury led the state in percentage of increase of long term debt-- hired New York consultant Herbert Swan, who in the 1920's had prepared the city's zoning regulations, to prepare a financial reform bill that would be submitted to the General Assembly. Swan startled the Council by stating that a 21 mill tax was necessary to wipe out the debt accumulated over the past forty years and recommended fundamental revision of the charter to provide more cooperation between the city and town. The urgency of his recommendations was underscored when in April 1933 the city was no longer able to borrow money and municipal employees again went without pay checks. Desperate, the city issued Taxpayers Anticipation Notes which gave property owners who paid taxes immediately rather than wait until November 1 a 6% discount. While the disappointing^{ly} small amount~~am~~ collected by this device did take care of city payrolls it made no dent in the combined city and town debt that Swan predicted would hit almost 2 million dollars by 1934.

Backed ~~by~~ by the Civic Association consultant Swan, an engineer who respected the values of efficiency, rationality, and professionalism, presented to the Common Council a bill with sweeping changes in the city charter. According to the proposal designed to eliminate partisan politics ^{a unicameral} ~~the~~ city council would be reduced to 7 members elected at large every 4 years with the daily operations of the

city in the hands of a professional city manager. This radical proposal touched off a heated debate. A mass meeting of the Civic Association enthusiastically endorsed the changes and voted to send representatives to Hartford to ~~support~~ testify for the bill. On the other hand the politicians were adamantly opposed. Tom Keating, the Democratic party chairman, termed it too ~~abrupt~~ ^{abrupt}, too expensive, and did not reflect the wishes of the citizens. Whether this was true or not the Common Council refused to submit it to a referendum and instead voted to back a more modest bill ~~that would~~ confined to financial changes. The battle was joined in Hartford on May 12, 1933 in a three hour meeting of the Cities and Boroughs Committee of the General Assembly. Attendance was so large that the proceedings had to be shifted from a hearing room to the House Chambers. Thomas Bowen, who had earlier told a Civic Association rally that this was a fight between the politicians and the "people", Judge Cunningham, and Lynn Wilson, the editorial writer of the News Times testified for the Swan bill. Alderman, Councilmen, and Corporation Counsel Keating were among the more than 100--twice the number in favor--who spoke for ~~the~~ ^a less drastic bill whose major provision was to make taxes due at the start of the fiscal year. ~~Thomas~~ This mild approach was ultimately approved by the legislature and along with ~~that~~ ^{that} eventually added almost 300 buildings to the tax rolls a reevaluation of town and city property ~~was~~ ^{was} voted by a town meeting April ¹⁹³³ in 1933, constituted the city's move toward fiscal responsibility.

The October, ¹⁹³³ sweep of the town elections by the Taxpayers League may be a judgement on politics as usual. ^{and The March 1935 ouster of Dr. Democrats from the mayor's office by Republican Adam Roth}

Meanwhile the depression ~~is~~ ^{is} worsening in human terms. While the newspaper managed ^A to ignore much of this, even cheerily reassuring readers that Danbury is not as badly off as other places, still

distress is evident. Labor unrest surfaced. In July, 1933 George McLachlan's shop on Rowan Street was the target of picketing and violence in protest of the discharge of union workers. State police had to be called when a crowd of 500 slashed tires and hurled stones at the cars of workers who remained at their machines. In September 1000 fur workers ~~organised by~~, most of them Lebanese, organized into the United Fur Workers of Danbury by Father Nicolas Wehby of ~~the~~ St. George's Antiochian Orthodox Church on Elm Street, walked out of 16 fur shops in Danbury and Bethel in a disagreement over NRA wage guarantees. A year later in June, 1934 unrest among fur workers erupted into violence that shocked Danburians. On June 5 about 1000 strikers stoned and wrecked three taxis carrying scabs ~~from the factory to~~ away from the American Fatters and Furriers Factory on River Street. Crowds of Syrians clashed with the police sending several including the police chief to the hospital. ^{Eleven} ~~Six~~ strikers, including several women, were arrested and lectured by Judge Henry Wilson that "we do not want this type of disturbance in Danbury." Marsh Asmer, the President of the United Fur Workers, complained in broken English that "this money earned by sweating of the brow is denied them, yet they are not even allowed to yell and complain." In an open letter to the Danbury Businessmens Association Asmer that his 1300 members needed money to support their families. In all the fur workers spent 14 weeks on strike during 1934 but failed to get recognition of their union. *Conditions among fur workers remained unsettled and at the end of the decade (Fall, 1938-39) sparked a rivalry between the IUPF & the CIO to bring them into a national union.*

The spectre of unemployment affected more than Syrians. As the winter of 1933-34 began the Danbury Unemployment Committee once again began to solicit funds for their relief operation. The Salvation Army in November was feeding 75 persons a day. At the start of

1934 Associated Charities had to add 21 more families to their ~~overburdened~~ overburdened case load. At this critical juncture the presence of the federal government began to intrude on the local scene soon becoming the almost exclusive source of relief and the eagerly sought font of funds for public works projects that had been ignored for years. A succession of New Deal relief agencies: the Civil Works Administration, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, and the Works Progress Administration ~~will~~ provide jobs for thousands of men on a range of projects from constructing Lake Candlewood Park, raising the grade of the airport, constructing Beaver Brook school, and giving Danbury its first park--Rogers Park. The Public Works Administration financed an almost \$2million modernization of the sewage treatment system, the construction of an eight room addition to the South Street School, and an even larger addition to the high school. In 1938 the decision to construct the Federal Correctional Institution in Danbury brought more jobs and a larger federal presence in the area.

The first workers on the federal payroll were hired in December 1933. ~~tax~~ Frank Hanson, ~~now~~ ^{then} the Chairman of the Danbury CWA put over 500 men to work at 50¢ per hour improving the filtration beds at the ~~filtration~~ ^{sewage treatment} plant in Beaver Brook. Later the same month another 200 men began to fill in the airport so that it would be level with the adjoining highways. The terms of these grants were similar to those of all the agencies whose primary purpose was unemployment relief. Workers had to be taken from the rolls of the unemployed--1500 had registered in Danbury by January 1934-- , federal funds would take care of wages, while the city was required only to supply equipment and supplies. By the time the CWA ended its ~~definitely~~ temporary

existence ~~inexpirily~~ on April 1, 1934 ~~Danbury~~ it had spent over \$125,000 in Danbury, 94,000 of it in federal money.

Although the winter emergency was over stubborn ~~unemployment~~ ~~persuaded~~ the New Deal to remain involved in relief. The FERA was established in April, 1934 ~~that~~ continued to fund the work at the ^{and sewage plant} airport and ~~add~~ hired 250 more men to repaint the firehouse, Broadview Farm and the Normal School. Danbury had already come to rely on this help as is evidenced by a personal visit of Mayor Morgan and Andrew Jones, who had replaced Hanson as the Director of the Fera, to Eleanor Little state head of FERA ^{in the summer of 1934} to seek increased funding for the local community.

One of the ^{new} valuable projects to be funded by the FERA was a survey of traffic on Main Street, long a concern of the community. The Main Street link between West and Wooster Street ~~the~~ funnel for two major federal highways and four state highways ~~had~~ been the scene of massive traffic jams. Many unprofessional estimates had been made of the volume including one done by a New-Times reporter in August, 1934 that concluded that 50,000 cars ~~passed~~ traveled that stretch on a summer weekend. In the fall of 1934 the FERA conducted a six week traffic study that utilized 50 people to get 24 hour counts at ^{six} critical points. The final report made ~~significantly~~ to a joint meeting of the Rotary, Lions and Business Mens Association at the Hotel Green in February 1935 said 15,000 cars pass through the city on a normal weekday and recommended such ~~dimprovements~~ as widening the street in several spots, eliminating diagonal parking, and proposing a series of by pass routes. The citys efforts to implement these recommendations which include a ludicrous abolishing, ^{OF ANGLE} ~~reinstating~~ ^{IT BECAUSE} ~~at the~~ ^{COMPLAINING} ~~eries~~ of merchants, and then abolishing ^{IT} again

depression, to have his back tax debt of \$6,000 canceled by ~~giving~~ ^{ceding} the city approximately 20 acres of land he owned at the intersection of Main and South Streets. ~~that had been stalled by technicalities.~~ The Lions persuaded the Council to accept Rogers proposal and to apply to the WPA for funds to drain the swampy land, construct an access roads and to build the athletic facilities. With the city providing originally only \$15,000 in equipment 200 laborers began to reclaim the land in 1937. Despite the cutbacks in WPA funding in the latter 30's the work on Rogers Park moved ahead. When finished in mid 1940 the project cost about \$175,000 of which the city paid a little over \$30,000.

Paralleling the work of the New Deal agencies just described was the activity of the Public Works Administration (PWA) set up by the WPA and administered by the Interior Department. More concerned with major capital projects this agency usually provided about 45% of the cost of each project leaving the city to finance generally by bond issues the balance. Work was not done by unemployed but by private contractors paying going wages. The major beneficiary of federal largesse was the ~~wastful~~ antiquated sewer system. By mid 1936 Danbury boasted a modern reservoir system with up to date pumping stations and filter plants that provided 3,000 gallons more than daily requirement. The sewage treatment plant was state of the art and substantial progress had been made on improving the sewer system. Half of the total cost of one million dollars was borne by Washington.

Another PWA project, ~~illustrating~~ the construction of a major addition to the South Street school, illustrated the way in which Danbury had become dependant on federal money and also the lingering local

resistance to federal control. In September 1936 the PWA approved of a grant of \$52,600 for the school addition. The ^{Bd of Finance} ~~Committee~~ quickly authorized the balance 64,500. Here trouble began. Acting on the advice of the State Board of Education the PWA officials recommended that the new building be built not adjacent to the present structure on South Street but a short distance away on Triangle Street where it would not be necessary to acquire private land at possibly exorbitant costs. Residents rebelled claiming the new location ~~was dangerous~~ exposed students to traffic danger and was unhealthy because of the fumes from a nearby fur factory. The school board dispatched Judge J. Moss Ives to Washington to clarify the issue. When the judge returned his message was blunt: if you want government money build on Triangle Street. Ignoring this edict an acrimonious town meeting on January 26, 1937 voted to locate the school on the original South Street location. Forced to condemn adjacent property and increase the cost of construction because of swampy foundation the city, thanks to the intervention of Senators Maloney and Lonergan and Congressman Phillips, ^{THE CTR} ~~was~~ still able to get PWA funding. The whole affair did spark local grumbling highlighted by a Rotary Club debate on the pitfalls of federal aid.

~~Danbury~~ Just as prosperity seemed to be on the horizon Danbury along with the rest of the nation was rocked by the recession that hit in late 1937 and continued to mid 1938. A census taken during the week of November 16-20, 1937 revealed that a staggering total of 3074 people were either unemployed, under employed or already on government relief rolls. When it is realized that this survey was not conducted ^{IN THE FIELD} by professionals but relied on ^{voluntarily} sending in information to the government via the mails the governments own admission that there was a 30% error in the direction of underreporting makes the problem even more serious.

By January 1938 the town was providing relief services for 550 families, a ~~new~~ record high, on a budget that had been reduced to \$70,000 in anticipation of better times. Free food staples were distributed to the unemployed from a store room in City Hall basement. Less than five months into the fiscal year the entire annual budget for outdoor relief had been expended, and the city was again reduced to borrowing from a local bank. When First Selectman Marcus Schlitter proposed levying a special 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ mill tax to repay this loan the scheme was rejected at another storm town meeting that was so well attended that the audience spilled out of City Hall onto the sidewalk. One president was quoted by the newspaper as saying this was the "ugliest" assembly he had encountered in 35 years of attending town meetings. As a substitute the town undertook an aggressive campaign to collect more than \$500,000 in back taxes that would be spent on the unemployed, a decision that was endorsed by at a standing room only town meeting meeting of 1200 in the high school auditorium. The "Danbury disaster" attracted much attention from the press in the state who emphasized that Danbury did not even have enough cash to pay their small share of WPA projects.

The federal government was again looked to as a savior in this crisis. Mayor Cunningham and Selectman Schlitter conferred with Congressman Phillips about ways of pumping more federal money into the city. The WPA approved additional support for existing projects like Rogers Park and new ones like mosquito control by draining swampy areas of the city. The PWA approved of the high school addition and plans were made for the construction of a new state

trade school on the land behind the Normal School. Also in 1938 it was announced that retiring Attorney General Homer Cummings had secured the first federal prison in New England for the ~~by~~ outskirts of Danbury. Initial local fear gave way to anticipation of increased employment and business brought to the community by this two million dollar facility. Additional PWA grants and a Department of Justice loan enabled the city to extend water and sewer lines to the new Federal Correctional Institute that opened in 1940. Shortly after the announcement that Danbury was the lucky city to get ~~this federal~~ a huge federal institution the News Times proclaimed in a headline "FEDERAL FUNDS ARE POURING IN" When the economy began an upturn in late 1938 local officials complained to Washington about projected cuts in the WPA budget First Selectman Schlitter in a letter to federal officials indicated that reductions in federal spending would be "a matter of grave concern" to the people of Danbury indicates the shift in thinking that had affected the community in the decade. The Annual Town Report for 1939-40 was even more explicit in stating the power of federal funds when it concluded "although extremely reluctant to incur any additional obligations, this administration felt that the town should avail itself of every opportunity to obtain its share of federal grants in connection with needed and useful improvement."

NOTE: Two issues were not adequately treated in this hasty summary. One was the labor situation. The fur workers were in turmoil during the entire decade. The Hat Makers union went on strike almost every year when a new bill of prices was drawn up. George McLanham's shops seem to have been particularly unruly.

The other issue was the effort of the State Department of Education to consolidate the Normal schools in New Britain by phasing out the other three branches. School Commissioner Bennett was the primary force behind this move and justified it on grounds of efficiency. He first tried to directly eliminate Danbury, Willimantic, and New Haven, and when frustrated here tried to make New Britain a four year school while keeping the others as three year institutions requiring all teachers to finish their programs at New Britain. Danbury residents took the lead in frustrating these plans. Danbury Forward a coalition of about 70 local organizations came together and provided delegations at legislative hearings in opposition to this scheme and pressure on legislators. In fact it was Nathan Spiro, a local legislator, who sponsored the bill making all four schools four year colleges that passed in 1937. The community unity and lobbying is consistent with the way that Danbury has supported the school over the years and the reliance on voluntary organizations to deal with problems is also a typical local response.