

Women Head Many Families On Rural Relief

**FERA Survey Discloses
One-Eighth of Groups
are Matriarchal.**

WOMEN ARE HEADS of about one-eighth of all rural relief households, a study by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration shows.

These women, whose average age is 50 years, have been left to take care of families numbering on the average four persons. More than one-fourth of the women have children less than 16 years old, one-fifth have aged dependents and some have both types of dependents. Only about one-fifth are without either old people or children to look after.

These rural relief households headed by women constitute an especially difficult problem, according to Corrington Gill, assistant Federal Emergency Relief Administrator.

Possess Limited Resources.

"They represent a group more handicapped than the average because they possess very limited resources and because the household so frequently contain no employable males," said Mr. Gill.

More than two-thirds of the women at the head of relief households were not accustomed to working at regular employment and the loss of the normal bread-winner left them without any occupation to fall back on.

The survey showed that about one-twelfth of non-relief rural households were headed by women. The women heads, who were working, were not much better off financially than the totally jobless. Most of them were farming or employed at domestic service. Their earnings averaged only \$13 a month, and many of those who were farming had no cash income at all. While employment in domestic and personal service had declined by one-third since 1929, the number of women heads of relief households attempting to operate farms had increased by one-fifth.

Debt Average Is Low.

A study was made of the assets and liabilities of the relief households with female heads. Very few were found to own livestock and that in small numbers. As for debts, they were a luxury which these households could not afford. Without assets they could get little or no credit. About two-fifths owed nothing at all and those who had debts owed an average of only \$380 each. Compared with these figures were those for relief households with men at the head. Six out of seven of such households on relief owed money and their average indebtedness was \$514.

Families in which women were left to assume responsibilities were found more frequently among Negroes and other races, chiefly Mexican, than among white, and more frequently among foreign-born whites than among native whites. The greater difficulties that less favored racial groups have in holding their families together in times when jobs are scarce was cited by Mr. Gill as one factor accounting for the greater proportion of broken families among such groups on the relief rolls. Mr. Gill also pointed out that households with employable persons are removed from the relief rolls during the work season in the South and Southwest, a fact which would cause the Negro and Mexican relief populations to show high proportions of households with women heads at harvest time when the survey was made.