



EMPIRE STATE
POSTAL HISTORY
SOCIETY

APS UNIT 28

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NRA PROPAGANDA ON BUSINESS MAIL

By Maris Tirums

These covers mailed from New York post offices bear the National Recovery Administration blue eagle. NRA implemented the National Industrial Recovery Act adopted June 16, 1933. Similar covers from large and small businesses in the early 1930s show use of mail to propagandize a government program. NIRA was passed during Franklin D. Roosevelt's first 100 days as president. The New Deal legislation included union collective bargaining rights expansion, fair competition industrial codes, and regulation of working standards and some commodities.

The NRA emblem has an eagle with outstretched wings. One claw holds lightning bolts while the other holds a cog representing business and industry. Above the eagle is NRA MEMBER while WE DO OUR PART is printed below. Businesses were encouraged to display the emblem as a sign of cooperation with the NRA and as a patriotic gesture. Commercial mail from 1933–1935 often includes the emblem as an adhesive label, printed on the envelope, or hand stamped.

The first cover is machine canceled BUFFALO, DEC 13 1933, N.Y. on a three-cent Washington regular issue (Scott No. 720). The sender, Direct Sales Company, used a blue hand-stamp of the NRA eagle which appears under the circular date stamp.

The second cover, machine canceled ANDOVER, DEC 19 1935, N.Y. on a three-cent Michigan statehood centenary commemorative (Scott No. 775), was sent by the Dairymen's League Co-Operative Association and has a printed NRA eagle below the mailer's logo and address. The Supreme Court had declared NIRA unconstitutional on May 27, in a case brought by a New York City poultry company. This had little practical effect as NIRA would have expired in June without congressional reauthorization. By then, Congress was very unlikely to have done so.

The Post Office Department issued a stamp (Scott No. 732) publicizing NIRA. FDR drafted a sketch for its design. This chapter of US history can be studied through this issue and several other stamps with subjects associated with New Deal legislation and personalities. Likewise, postal history items paint an interesting picture of this chapter of our history. ■