

# Hoover's Response to the Great Depression: 1929-1933

- President Herbert Hoover was the first president to deal with the deepening Depression.

## Hoover's Economic Plan:

- Restore confidence in American economy with statements: "prosperity is just around the corner".
- Promoted programs to aid business, believing once businesses recovered, economic benefits would trickle down to workers and consumers.
- Established the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to lend money to railroads, mortgage and insurance companies, and banks on the verge of bankruptcy.

# Hoover's Response to the Great Depression: 1929-1933

- Used federal works projects to create jobs and stimulate the economy (this set a precedent for FDR'S New Deal programs).
  - Halted payment of war debts by European nations.
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- Despite these efforts...
    - Hoover's refusal to provide direct relief damaged his image as the nation's leader.
    - Hoover continually insisted that the economy was actually improving (even the face of worsening conditions!)

# What were “Hoovervilles”?

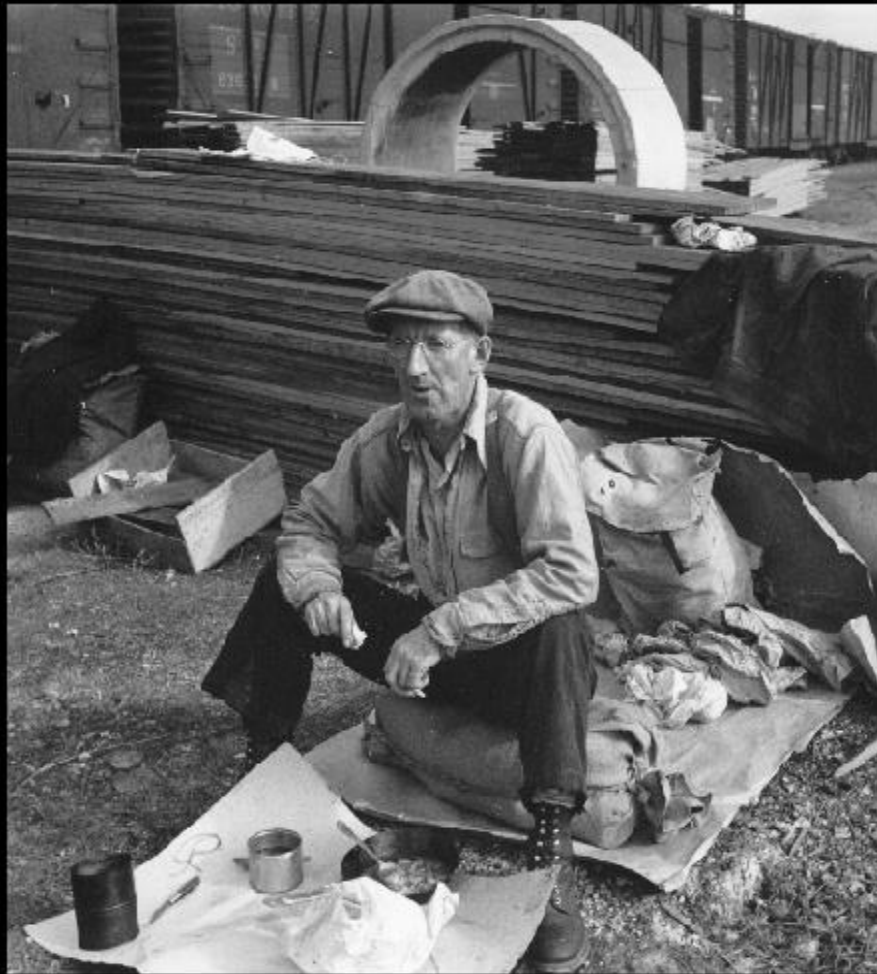
Families who lost their homes lived in unheated shacks built from cardboard, tin, or crates— these were called “Hoovervilles”.

People slept under old newspapers called “Hoover blankets.” Others slept in city parks. People selling apples and shoelaces on the street became common sight.

Cases of malnutrition, tuberculosis, and typhoid increased, also death from starvation and suicide. Parents often went hungry giving what food they had to their children.



# Growth of "Hoovervilles"



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**Hoovervilles in Bakersfield, California**



# Growth of "Hoovervilles"



59  
TYPICAL HOOVERVILLE FAMILY INSIDE THE HOME MADE FROM  
MATERIALS NOT RECOGNIZED BY HOUSING LAWS.

S.E.R.A. PHOTO 2/17/35

Family inside a Hooverville Home

# Growth of "Hoovervilles"



**Fact: In 1932, 273,000 families were evicted from their homes. Here: A Hooverville in Portland, Oregon.**

# Growth of "Hoovervilles"



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Dwellers in Local Hooverville (Circleville, Ohio)



# Growth of "Hoovervilles"



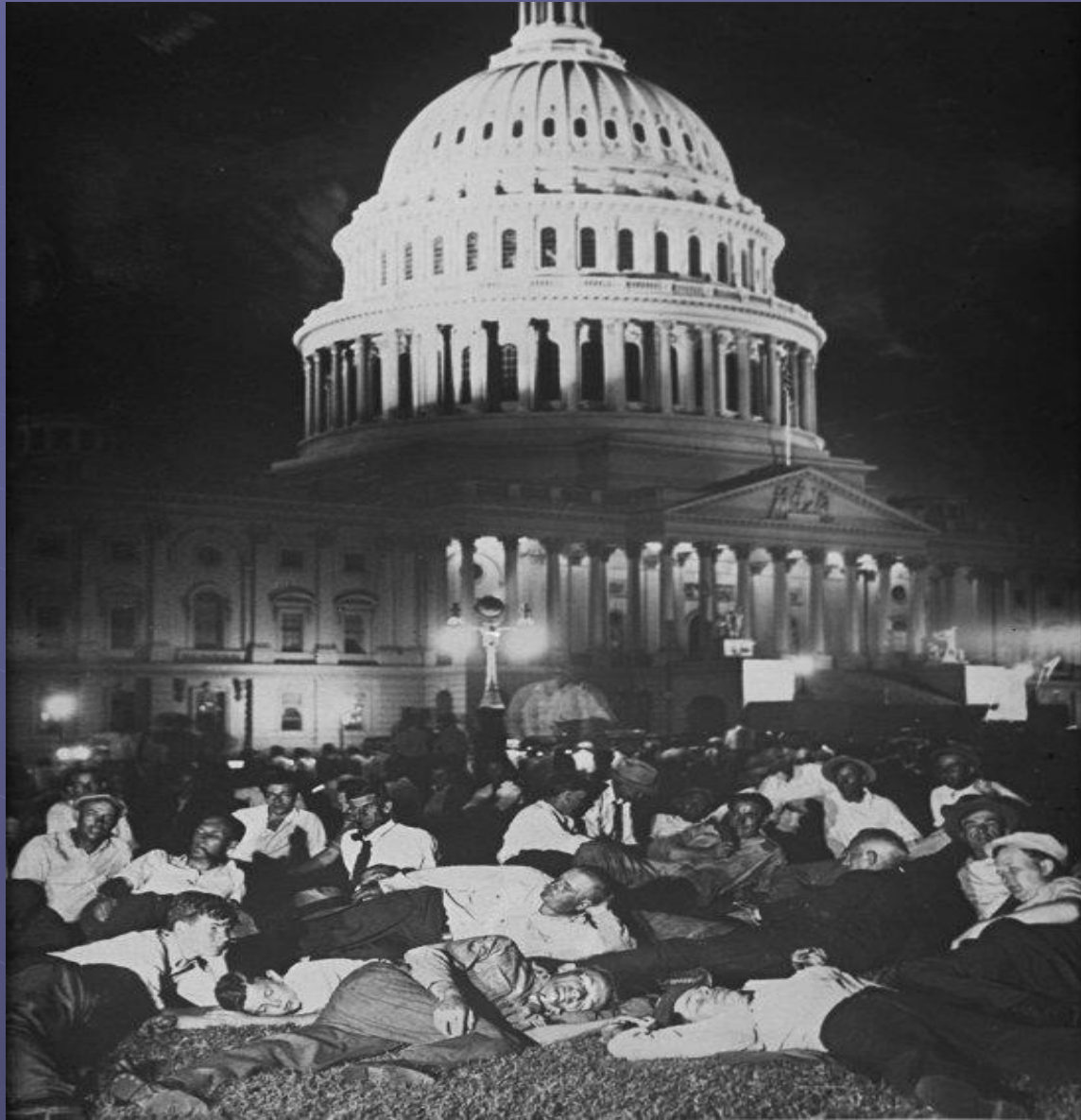
Former Skinner and Eddy Shipyard (Seattle)

# The Bonus Army

The Bonus Army was made up of more than 15,000 World War I veterans, who demonstrated in Washington, D.C. seeking immediate payment of a "bonus" they believed they had been promised.

- Hoover insisted the veterans were influenced by Communists and other agitators and called out the U.S. army to break up the Bonus Army's camps and disperse the veterans.
- News photographs showing tanks and tear gas being used against war veterans destroyed what little popularity Hoover had left.

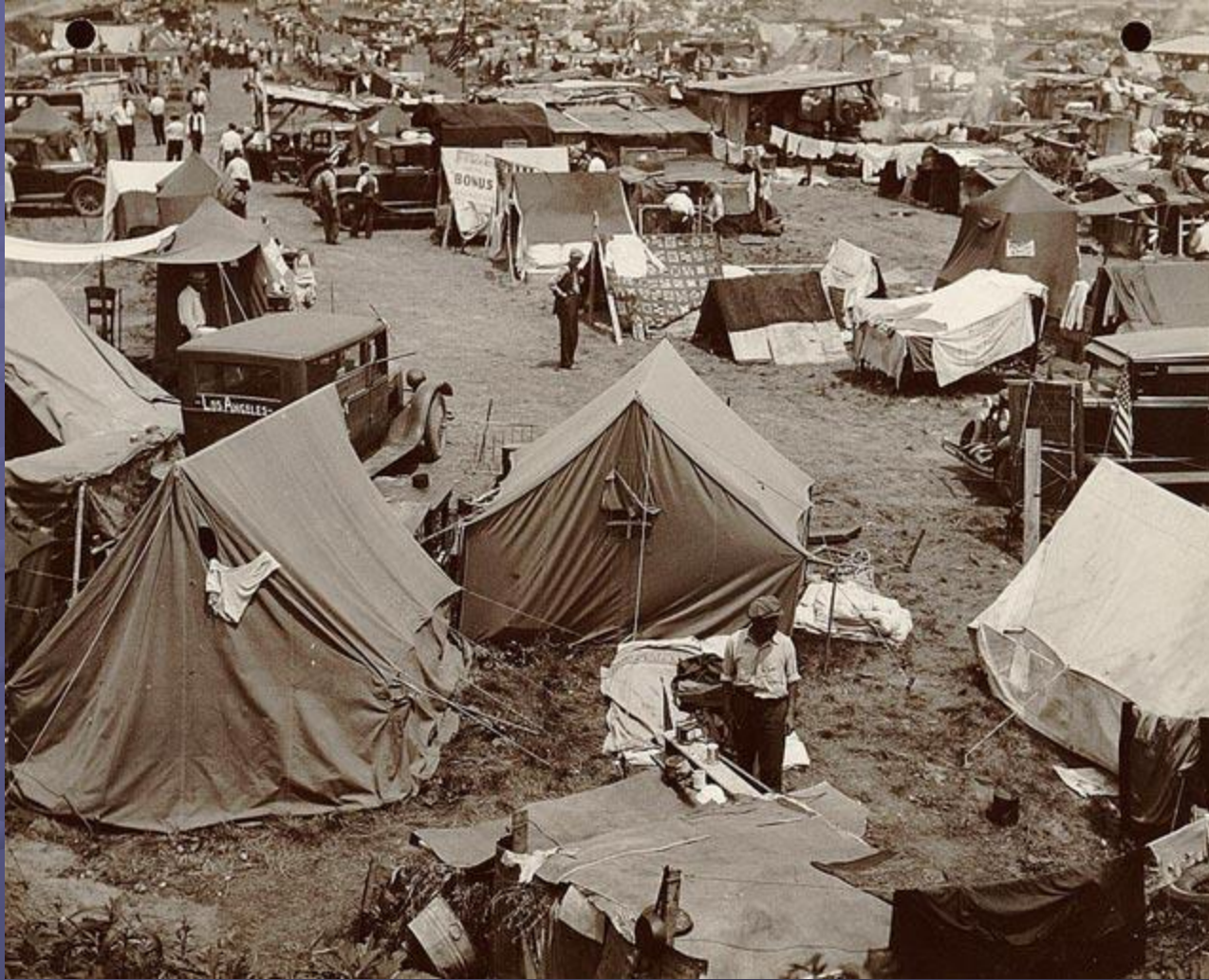
# the Bonus Army



Members of the Bonus Army at the Capitol, 1932



# the Bonus Army



[www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trm203.html](http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trm203.html)



NEGRO

RANK and FILE

WHITE

# VETERANS MARCH TO WASHINGTON

TO ARRIVE AT OPENING OF CONGRESS

## DECEMBER 5th, 1932

TO DEMAND

# CASH PAYMENT of BONUS

### MARCH TO BE LED BY RANK AND FILE VETERANS

Again the veterans are going to march to Washington, to demand immediate full cash payment of the Bonus! This time we will have fighting leadership that won't sell us out. Why are we going to march? Let's see.

### A WINTER OF HUNGER FACES THE VETERANS

Cold, brutal winter is now on us. Over a million and a half unemployed veterans are hungry; hundreds of thousands of us have no shelter. And there will be more of us in that fix by the time winter comes.

Those of us who still have some work have suffered wage cuts, and the stagger plan, and face more wage cuts.

### INTEREST CHARGES WIPE OUT BONUS BY 1945

In 1945 there will be no Bonus for the rank and file veteran. The balance is now being eaten up by the compound interest charged by the government to all who borrowed the fifty per cent of the Adjusted Service Certificate. In 1945 there will be only about \$30 to \$60 for the great majority of the veterans entitled to the Bonus. **WE MUST FIGHT FOR THE BONUS NOW!**

### THE ENEMIES OF THE BONUS ARE UNITED AGAINST US

The Republican, Democratic and Socialist Parties are all united in the fight against the payment of the balance due the veterans on the Bonus. They get the full support of the boss press, and the liberal writers, too.

Waters, the Hoke Smiths, the Deak Carters and other former leaders of the B. E. F. are fighting the rank and file veterans who are putting up a fight for the immediate payment of the Bonus.

The newly elected commander Johnson has had recent correspondence with Hoover and will not fight for the Bonus. General Glassford and the Hoover government are again preparing to prevent the veterans from making direct demands on Congress.

These fakery are all lined up with the enemies of the Bonus to prevent the rank and file of the veterans from uniting their mass power to march to Washington and again demand the immediate payment of the Bonus and fight against cutting of the disability allowance.

### RANK AND FILE VETERANS, MARCH TO WASHINGTON!

All Veterans March to Washington!  
Veterans' organizations, elect Bonus Marchers. All rank and file veterans, including employed and unemployed veterans, should elect delegated Bonus Marchers. Veterans from shops, mills, mines, factories and farms should be elected. Bonus marchers should be elected from the veteran membership in labor, fraternal and social organizations.

### ELECT CITY RANK AND FILE COMMITTEES

City rank and file committees representing the various groups and organizations of veterans should meet to carry out the program of Central Rank and File Committee elected by the Cleveland Conference of the Rank and File Veterans. (Sept. 23-26.)

### HEROES IN 1917; THEY CALL US "CRIMINALS" NOW

In 1917 the government appealed to the masses: "Shall we be more tender with our dollars than with the lives of our sons?" (Second Liberty Bond poster, 1917.)

And now, in 1932: "The bonus marchers are criminals." (Statement of President Hoover.)

Neither then nor now did the Wall Street government care about the welfare of the soldier, "the lives of our sons."

Billions went to the billionaires who in 1917 made huge profits from the war, and today the billions go to the same crowd. The Congress that refused to give the starving veterans the bonus gave through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation four and a half billion dollars for the bankers, the railroads and other big corporations.

We got the bullets and the gas in 1917. Many of us were maimed and crippled for life. In 1932 we get the bullets and gas of the police, as we did in Washington, and of the troops, which Hoover called out against us.

Because we were demanding the Bonus so that we and our families could have something to eat, the President of the United States orders the army to gas and bayonet us, to burn our meagre belongings and to drive our wives and children out into the dark at the night.

the Bonus  
Army

[www.loc.gov/exhibits/tra-sures/trm203.html](http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/tra-sures/trm203.html)





Farm Security Administration (Russell Lee) photographer

*The hard times of the Depression seemed like they would never end for Iowans like this woman and child. The photo was taken in January 1937.*





# Surviving the Depression...

*Dirty 30s!*



# Surviving the Depression

## *Drought and Dust*

- During much of the 1930s, states from Texas to the Dakotas suffered a severe drought. **Poor farming methods resulted in the loss of topsoil which was whipped around into giant dust storms that swept across the Great Plains. The Plains became known as the "Dust Bowl".**
- The Dust storms, buried farm houses and made a dark clouds. Dust blew everywhere throughout the Midwest.





# The Dust Bowl



"The land just blew away; we had to go  
somewhere."

-- Kansas preacher, June, 1936



**Dust in the eyes of a  
child on a farm, 1936**



# Dust Bowl Days

*On the fourteenth day of April of nineteen thirty five,  
There struck the worst of dust storms that ever filled the sky:*

*You could see that dust storm coming,  
the cloud looked deathlike black,*

*And through our mighty nation, it left a dreadful track...*

*This storm took place at sundown and lasted through the night,  
When we looked out this morning we saw a terrible sight:*

*We saw outside our windows where wheat fields they had grown  
Was now a rippling ocean of dust the wind had blown.*

*It covered up our fences, it covered up our barns,  
It covered up our tractors in this wild and windy storm.*

*We loaded our jalopies and piled our families in,  
We rattled down the highway to never come back again.*

— Woody Guthrie (1912-1967)  
From "Dust Storm Disaster"

# Escaping the Dust Bowl

● Devastation in the Dust Bowl created a group of migrant farmers called "Okies" who moved to California and one region to another in search of work. They were also known as "migrant workers".





**In 1932, there were two million homeless people moving around the country.**

# **Migrant Workers**



Mother and child from Oklahoma, now migrants in California 1937



Refugee families encamped Near Holtville, California 1937

## Documenting the Dustbowl

**Dorothea Lange never intended to be famous, and yet the picture she took of a worried and tired looking migrant mother and her children in 1936 became the image most associated with the decade.**

**Florence Owens Thompson huddled in a tent with seven children next to the car whose tires she had just sold to buy food. She told Lange the only thing they had to eat were small birds and frozen vegetables from the fields.**

