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The Bonus Army m

In 1922, a Hearst newspaper truck from New York City delivered a petition to the Capitol bearing more than one million signatures in support of a bonus for World War I veterans. Momentum had been building for several years for the federal government to compensate servicemen for the difference they lost between pay in the military versus their civilian jobs. The document simply read: "We respectfully petition Congress to pass the soldiers' bonus act without further delay, and also to levy a sales tax to obtain the money to pay the bonus.

After heated debate, Congress passed a bonus, but President Warren Harding vetoed it. In May 1924, Congress again passed a bonus, and this time overrode the veto of President Calvin Coolidge. The payment -- which provided veterans \$1.25 per day for service overseas and \$1 per day for domestic service -- was deferred by the law until 1945.

The issue was reopened in the early 1930s, when out-of-work veterans suffering the effects of the Great Depression marched on Washington to demand an immediate payment of their bonus. This "Bonus Army" consisted of some 15,000 to 20,000 World War I veterans from across the country. They arrived in the capital in in June 1932 and set up camp on the Mall.

Six futile weeks of lobbying Congress raised government fears of riots. On July 28, cavalry, infantry, tank troops and a mounted machine gun squadron commanded by General Douglas MacArthur and Major Dwight Eisenhower dispersed veterans and their families with bayonets and tear gas. MacArthur was convinced that the men were communists, despite his commanders' repeated reports to the contrary. According to journalist and eyewitness Joseph C. Harsch, "This was not a revolutionary situation. This was a bunch of people in great distress wanting help.... These were simply veterans from World War I who were out of luck, out of money, and wanted to get their bonus -- and they needed the money at that moment."

Public opinion denounced President Herbert Hoover for the resulting bloodshed. Audiences in movie theaters booed newsreel footage of soldiers expelling the Bonus Army from their camps. One woman wrote the editor of the Washington *Daily News*, "I voted for Herbert Hoover in 1928. God forgive me and keep me alive at least until the polls open!" Hoover, already deeply unpopular, would lose the election that fall to Franklin Roosevelt in a landslide.

 <u>1.</u> Quoted in Thomas Craughwell, "#6: Hoover's Attack on the Bonus Army (Top 10 Mistakes by U.S. Presidents)," Encyclopedia Britannica Blog

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The Bonus March (May-July, 1932) [15]

from American Experience on PBS

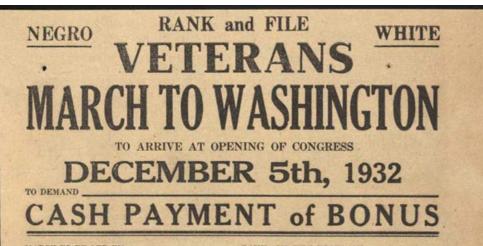
The 1932 Bonus Army [16]

from the National Park Service

Primary Sources:

Bonus Veterans Digital Photographs [17]

from Library of Congress



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 Bonnai. 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, bruil 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 ns 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 \$50 to \$60 for the great majority of the veterans entitled to the Benus. WE MUST FIGHT FOR THE BONUS NOW!

THE ENEMIES OF THE BONUS ARE UNITED AGAINST US

ARE UNITED AGAINST US ARE UNITED AGAINST US The Republican, Democratic and Socialist Parties are all mitted in the fight against the payment of the balance due the scress and the fight against the payment of the class terms is address of the R. F. Are fighting the rank and file former is laders of the B. F. Are fighting the rank and file terms is address of the B. F. Are fighting the rank and file to the Bonus. The newly elected commander Johnson has had recent orrespondence with Hoover and will not fight for the Bonus carries of the B. He are fighting the rank and recent former backence with Hoover and will not fight for the Bonus congress. The faster are all lined up with the ememies of the my table mass power to march to Washington and again de-saind the Immediate payment of the Bonus and fight against conting of the disability allowance.

RANK AND FILE VETERANS, MARCH TO WASHINGTON!

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

ELECT CITY RANK AND FILE COMMITTEES

City rank and file committees representing the various groups and organizations of vefferans should meet to carry out the program of Central Rank and Pile Committee elected by the Cleveland Conference of the Rank and File Veteraus. (Sept. 32-36.)

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 1922: "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."

about the welfare of the soldier, "the lives of our sens." Hillions went fo the billionaires who in 1917 made have profils from the way, and folday the hillions go to the same trowd. The Converse that refused to give the slarving vel-crans the bouns rerew that well the Reconstruction Finances comporation four and a shift bith the Reconstruction Finances calibrads and other big corporations. We got the builds and the gas in 1917. Many of as were mained and crippled for life. In 1817 we get the buildes and gas the police, as we did in Washington, and of the troops, which Hoover called out against us. Because we were demanding the Bouns so that we and our families could have something to east, the President of the builds states orders the army to gas and hayonet us, is form our meagre belongings and to drive our wives and children ess into the dark as the night

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The organizers of the "Bonus Army" published this broadside to explain their purpose and recruit marchers.



Bonus marchers battle with police in Washington, D.C.

3 January 2018

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