

The War on Veterans: When Their Diplomacy was Met with Tear Gas

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Historical Paper

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Four million veterans were rewarded by the government, for their heroic service in the First World War, with a thank you and a sixty-dollar pat on the back. Non-disabled American World War I veterans received barely anything for their sacrifice; it would take over five years for Congress to even pass the bonus in the first place. When they dared protest against this injustice in 1932, the government sent in the military as if they were communist revolutionaries—which many people genuinely believed they were. I chose this topic because I found it tragically disturbing that the men who had watched their comrades lose their lives and risked their very own during the Great War found themselves attacked by the very institution they had not fifteen years ago fought for.

To develop my project, I first took notes on two secondary books (*The Bonus Army: An American Epic* and *Beyond the Bonus March and the GI Bill*). After getting the baseline knowledge of my topic, I drafted my thesis and began my search for primary sources. I'm grateful for the access to many sources provided to me through the Alexandria Public Library and my mom's *The New York Times* account. I also benefited from my proximity to Washington, D.C., as I could take the metro to the Kiplinger Research Library on Lafayette Square (and miss school in the process!). There, the authors of *The Bonus Army: An American Epic* have compiled a thirteen-box "Bonus Army Research Collection," containing many primary and secondary sources. After gathering a variety of sources, I wrote my outline. I then drafted my paper, one "bullet point" at a time, analyzing each source as I wrote its associated paragraph. Finally, I and others reviewed it and cut the approximately four hundred excess words.

The Bonus March, a product of the Great Depression, was initially diplomatic. Once the Senate tabled the bill, however, it gradually lost its diplomacy as the veterans refused to leave. The veterans' diplomacy is in contrast to the undiplomatic actions of Hoover and MacArthur,

which ultimately led to the burning of the Anacostia encampment. The events of July 28 displayed Hoover in a negative light, contributing to his 1932 electoral defeat. Lastly, when FDR was faced with another bonus march in 1933, he treated the veterans with diplomacy, in sharp contrast to Hoover's handling of the 1932 march.

The BEF didn't accomplish its mission during its lifetime because the debate at that time wasn't in its favor; the government simply could not afford payment in the current economic conditions. Ironically, they could have just paid the bonus in the 1920s, but they didn't as Coolidge and Harding opposed it. Despite these economic conditions, Congress finally passed immediate payment in 1936. Lastly, the Bonus March had two long-term impacts. First, its legacy contributed to the passing of the GI Bill of Rights—a significant change from the amount of benefits, or lack thereof, given to World War I veterans. Second, it normalized protest marches on Washington, D.C.

“Congress shall make no law respecting... the right of the people peacefully to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”¹

~ First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States

A product of the Great Depression, tens of thousands of World War I veterans converged on Washington, D.C., in the summer of 1932 as the Bonus Expeditionary Force (BEF), diplomatically lobbying for immediate payment of a wartime compensation bonus that the government had, after much debate, deferred until 1945. After immediate payment legislation was tabled, most people assumed they would leave; they did not. This standoff culminated on July 28 when President Hoover ordered the military to evict them from some buildings on Pennsylvania Avenue. However, General Douglas MacArthur, the commander of the military force, undiplomatically exceeded presidential orders by proceeding to burn the veterans' encampment, dispersing the BEF, shocking America, and contributing to Hoover's defeat in the 1932 election.

Although it did not achieve its objective, the Bonus March helped advance veterans' benefits in the coming years. In 1936, after seventeen years of debate, Congress passed immediate payment despite President Roosevelt's strong anti-veteran stance—although Roosevelt treated veterans with more diplomacy than Hoover. The monumental GI Bill of Rights also passed in 1944, granting veterans an “exceptionally generous” amount of benefits.² Lastly, the Bonus March normalized what is now a custom in our democracy: the march on Washington.

¹ U.S. Const. amend. I. Accessed May 3, 2022.
https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/United_States_of_America_1992.

² Stephen R. Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill: How Veteran Politics Shaped the New Deal Era* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2010), 199, digital file.

The Bonus

America's World War I veterans received hardly any benefits for their service. Until 1914, each veteran received a pension. Upon seeing the cost of paying the 4.7 million returning "doughboys," however, Congress stopped pensioning all able-bodied veterans.³ The federal government gave each non-disabled Great War veteran \$60 upon discharge, life insurance, minor vocational assistance, and a message to "behave [himself]" (Appendix A) if he wanted to make it in society.⁴ Many veterans found their jobs filled by other men. "The mustering out pay, the 52–20 club, I know [World War II veterans] got unemployment, and they got educational benefits, they got loans, we got none of that in World War I," one veteran emphasized. "We got a sixty-dollar bonus."⁵

After a cut in pay during the war, many veterans sought compensation via a "bonus" cash payment. Presidents Harding and Coolidge, though, had conservative economic policies, so they refused to support any bonus legislation. Additionally, they argued that every citizen "loaned and sacrificed, precisely in the same spirit" as the veterans.⁶ However, demand for a bonus gained momentum over time as veterans' political voices became more pronounced and the American Legion made public its support for the bonus. In 1924, after five years and "full debate" on the matter,⁷ Congress passed the World War Adjusted Compensation Act by a margin of two votes to

³ Stephen R. Ortiz, videoconference interview by the author, January 9, 2022.

⁴ David Chrisinger, "The Army's Message to Returning World War I Troops? Behave Yourselves," *The New York Times Magazine*, last modified July 31, 2019, accessed November 20, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/31/magazine/world-war-i-veterans-treatment.html>.

⁵ Leonard Weisensel, "Oral history interview with Leonard Weisensel / interviewed by Howard Fredricks (4 of 5)," by Howard Fredricks, audio, 61:53, December 1, 1975, accessed November 29, 2021, https://digitalcollections.uwlax.edu:443/jsp/RcWebAudioPlayer.jsp?doc_id=aa172543-df64-469f-9585-15a8bb4e56e4/wlacu000/00000018/00000181.

⁶ Warren G. Harding, "Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval a Bill to Provide Adjusted Compensation for World War Veterans.," speech, September 19, 1922, The American Presidency Project, accessed March 23, 2022, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/329335>.

⁷ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Veto of the Bonus Bill.," speech, May 22, 1935, The American Presidency Project, accessed January 11, 2022, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/208000>.

override Coolidge's veto.⁸ It arguably passed only because of the outrage over Coolidge's argument, "patriotism which is bought and paid for is not patriotism."⁹ Coolidge had never served in the military himself, so his remark seemed especially vacuous.

This legislation compensated all Great War veterans with \$1.00 per day of home service and \$1.25 per day of overseas service.¹⁰ However, as a compromise to secure the two-thirds Senate majority, the payment would take the form of a certificate, redeemable in twenty years with interest (Appendix B). That way, the government would allocate \$112 million annually into a fund paid in 1945 instead of paying \$1.4 billion immediately.¹¹

During the early 1930s, the nation plunged into the worst depression in its history, causing veterans to intensify their efforts for immediate payment. By 1932, one out of every thirty-one men was homeless¹²—a statistic even higher for veterans, who had a fifty percent higher unemployment rate than average.¹³ Their only asset for many, the bonus became "a substitute or a symbol for that long dreamt of new start, a job."¹⁴ Consequently, an increasing number began to demand immediate payment. For example, because the Veterans of Foreign Wars lobbied for it, the organization's membership increased 245 percent from 1929 to 1932.¹⁵

⁸ Paul Dickson and Thomas B. Allen, *The Bonus Army: An American Epic* (n.p.: Walker Publishing Company, 2004), 29.

⁹ Calvin Coolidge, "Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval a Bill Providing for Adjusted Compensation for War Veterans," speech, May 15, 1924, The American Presidency Project, accessed March 23, 2022, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/329322>.

¹⁰ Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus*, 27.

¹¹ Buel Patch, "The Bonus After the 1932 Elections," Editorial Research Reports II (September 27, 1932): <https://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/document.php?id=cqresrr1932092700>; *The New York Times* (New York, NY), January 1, 1935, 21, accessed January 11, 2022, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1935/01/01/issue.html>.

¹² Kevin McGoff, "The Bonus Army," in *American History Illustrated* (n.p., 1978), 29, Container 5, MS 0738 Bonus Army Research Collection, 1919–1947 (bulk, 1919-1932), Kiplinger Research Library, DC History Center, Washington, D.C.

¹³ Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus*, 33.

¹⁴ Walter W. Waters and William Carter White, B. E. F.; the whole story of the bonus army, by W. W. Waters as told to William C. White. (New York: John Day Company, 1933), 9, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001874081>.

¹⁵ Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus*, 62.

The Army

One dissatisfied veteran was an unemployed ex-sergeant named Walter Waters. He had an idea: to lead a few hundred veterans to Washington, D.C., and diplomatically lobby for immediate payment. On May 11, 1932, Waters and three hundred men, with not \$30 among them, set out from Portland, Oregon.¹⁶ They called themselves the Bonus Expeditionary Force, a play on “American Expeditionary Force,” the collective name for all American soldiers sent to France. The media would call them the “Bonus Army.” During their journey they gained publicity, and by their arrival on May 29, 20,000 veterans were traveling to Washington to join them.¹⁷ Some took up residence in half-demolished, government-owned buildings on Pennsylvania Avenue; most lived in a shantytown in what is now Anacostia Park.

Within two weeks, the House of Representatives passed an immediate payment bill. Two days later, as the Senate debated the bill, “an army” of eight thousand veterans filled the gallery and crowded the steps to the Senate wing and Capitol Plaza.¹⁸ The senators would occasionally hear them sing.¹⁹ By 1932, there had been a few marches on Washington: Jacob Coxey led the first-ever trek to the nation’s capital in 1894, and Alice Paul followed his example in 1913 advocating for women’s suffrage. But the methods employed by the BEF—living in Washington indefinitely and making daily trips to the Capitol—were entirely unprecedented:

The Senators were experiencing a new type of lobbying, not that of being entertained in some swank hotel where the business at hand is nonchalantly mentioned after a few drinks have been served, but that of being shown something of the poverty that had prompted the demand for the immediate payment of the bonus.²⁰

¹⁶ Waters and White, *B. E. F.; the whole*, 20.

¹⁷ McGoff, “The Bonus,” 30.

¹⁸ *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), June 18, 1932, 3, <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/america-sung-veterans-at-news-defeat/docview/150210384/se-2?accountid=31191>.

¹⁹ Waters and White, *B. E. F.; the whole*, 146.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 146–47.

One veteran summarized his side of the debate as “we helped you; now you help us.”²¹ Even apart from the delay in payment, the bonus itself was compensation for lower pay than that of the average civilian. Now unemployment was at twenty-five percent, and the veterans were absolutely desperate for money. But payment would not be easy for the government. In 1932, it would have cost \$2.4 billion; for context, that year’s federal budget was \$3.9 billion.²² Arguing that it was economically infeasible, President Hoover claimed that “a cost at once arises to the people when... the government is forced to secure a huge sum by borrowing or otherwise, especially in the circumstances of today when we are compelled in the midst of depression to make other large borrowings.”²³ For this reason, on the evening of June 17, 1932, the Senate terminated the bill, sixty-two votes to eighteen.²⁴

With this defeat, most assumed the veterans would leave. *The Washington Post* editorialized, “nothing but suffering, disease, hardship and a waste of energy can result from [staying in Washington].”²⁵ Even Police Chief Pelham Glassford, who had until this point supported the BEF, admitted the police department “has not the means to continue much longer to provide for” the veterans, and advised them to “initiate some plan of withdrawal.”²⁶ Waters, however, viewed it as only a “temporary setback,” and undiplomatically vowed to stay until the bonus was paid—even if it meant staying until 1945.²⁷

²¹ Payment of Soldiers' Adjusted Compensation Certificates: Hearings Before the Committee on Ways and Means, 71st Cong., 3d Sess. T.-Angelo (1931) (statement of Joseph).

²² *The Washington Post*, June 18, 1932, 1.

²³ Herbert Hoover, "Veto of the Emergency Adjusted Compensation Bill.," speech, February 26, 1931, The American Presidency Project, accessed December 6, 2021, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/207374>.

²⁴ *The Washington Post*, June 18, 1932, 1.

²⁵ "Time to Go Home," *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), June 16, 1932, 6, <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/time-go-home/docview/150222415/se-2?accountid=31191>.

²⁶ Waters and White, *B. E. F.; the whole*, 159.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 151.

The Rout

Hoover, believing the BEF was a Democrat-sponsored ploy, wanted the veterans gone. Waters, realizing it would be impossible to stay until 1945, had agreed with district authorities on a plan to evacuate Pennsylvania Avenue by August 1.²⁸ But on July 28, in an extremely undiplomatic move, Hoover ordered the evacuation of one of the buildings by 10:00 a.m. that day—ten minutes after Waters received the message.²⁹ Inevitably, some veterans rioted, prompting a request for military aid. Hoover complied, ordering General MacArthur to “proceed immediately to the scene of disorder... Surround the affected area and clear it without delay.”³⁰

Hours later, 200 cavalry, 5 tanks, and 400 infantry advanced down Pennsylvania Avenue, “like a giant, well-oiled machine.”³¹ As each building was cleared, thousands of spectators on the street watched “tear gas bombs... thrown into the stubborn ranks of the veterans as they refused to budge, while infantrymen, with fixed bayonets, moved into the disputed area”³² (Appendix C). Despite this, the task was completed without any casualties or shots fired. As stated by MacArthur, “the show of force, the excellent discipline of the troops, and the proper use of tear gas had turned the trick without serious bloodshed.”³³

After clearing Pennsylvania Avenue, MacArthur ordered his troops to approach the 11th St. Bridge, across which lay the shantytown housing most of the BEF. MacArthur’s aide, Colonel Dwight D. Eisenhower, suggested that proceeding to the encampment was “inadvisable.”³⁴

²⁸ Ibid, 204.

²⁹ Ibid, 209.

³⁰ Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (n.p.: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), 94.

³¹ *The Waterbury Democrat* (Waterbury, CT), July 29, 1932, 1, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82014085/1932-07-29/ed-1/seq-1/>.

³² *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), July 29, 1932, 4, <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/one-slain-60-hurt-as-troops-rout-b-e-f-with-gas/docview/150213016/se-2?accountid=31191>.

³³ MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 95.

³⁴ Dwight D. Eisenhower, interview by Raymond Henle, Gettysburg, PA, July 13, 1967. Container 5, MS 0738 Bonus Army Research Collection, 1919–1947 (bulk, 1919-1932), Kiplinger Research Library, DC History Center, Washington, D.C.

Hoover sent a messenger reminding MacArthur that his orders did not include doing so.

MacArthur, according to the messenger, “was very much annoyed in having his plans interfered with in any way until they were executed completely.”³⁵ When Hoover sent a second messenger, it was too late: The troops were advancing on the bridge.

For weeks, MacArthur had believed that, as had happened in Russia a decade ago, revolution was close at hand for the “sullen, riotous mob,” of which he believed actual veterans constituted under ten percent.³⁶ While it is true that communists had tried to infiltrate the BEF, they did not have much success. Regardless, with visions of being “publicly hanged on the steps of the Capitol,”³⁷ MacArthur undiplomatically and deliberately disobeyed presidential orders by crossing the Anacostia River, set on ridding Washington of its revolutionaries.

The encampment was set on fire (Appendix D). Described as “a blast furnace” by one source,³⁸ flames could even be seen from the White House.³⁹ The question of who set the fire was widely disputed, but historians believe that both armies, the federal one and the bonus one, took part. That night, the veterans “walked out of their home of the past two months, going they knew not where”⁴⁰ as the Bonus March was finally concluded.

Aftermath

Headlines the following day ran: “ONE SLAIN, 60 HURT AS TROOPS ROUT B.E.F. WITH GAS BOMBS AND FLAMES”;⁴¹ “HOOVER’S CAVALRY, TANKS, INFANTRY

³⁵ James F. Vivian and Jean H. Vivian, "The Bonus March of 1932: The Role of General George Van Horn Moseley," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 51, no. 1 (1967): 34, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4634285>.

³⁶ MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 92.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 97.

³⁸ *The Waterbury Democrat*, July 29, 1932, 10.

³⁹ Waters and White, *B. E. F.; the whole*, 235.

⁴⁰ *The New York Times* (New York, NY), July 29, 1932, 1, accessed December 3, 2021, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1932/07/29/issue.html>.

⁴¹ *The Washington Post*, July 29, 1932, 1.

MAKE WAR ON BONUS MARCHERS AFTER POLICE KILL TWO”;⁴² and inevitably, “HOOVER BLAMED FOR BLOODSHED.”⁴³ Hoover was already unpopular due to his mishandling of the Depression and refusal to repeal Prohibition, but the events of July 28 completely ended any chance he had at reelection. “The day of all days in the history of the United States finally arrived yesterday,” one BEF leader declared, “when the President of the United States ordered our soldiers to attack the flag of our country, the symbol of our freedom—the freedom our forefathers gave up their lives to give us.”⁴⁴

In Hoover’s defense, he had only resorted to force after two failed attempts at diplomacy by funding the veterans’ transportation home and as well as an eviction order that had not been carried out. Moreover, he was arguably not responsible for many of the events of July 28; all he did was comply with the district authorities’ “urgent request for troops to clear the riot area,” and the situation soon developed too quickly for him to retain control.⁴⁵ However, he did not mention any of this to the public. Instead, he defended himself by, just like MacArthur, falsely claiming the BEF was infiltrated by communists.⁴⁶ That November, he won only 59 out of 531 electoral votes.

Franklin D. Roosevelt had criticized Hoover for not inviting some veterans in for negotiations. In 1933, his words were put to the test as 8,700 veterans staged another “bonus march” demanding, among other things, immediate payment.⁴⁷ Roosevelt, in stark contrast to his predecessor, supplied the veterans with food and shelter, invited in a delegation, and had Mrs.

⁴² *The Daily Worker* (Chicago, IL), July 29, 1932, 1, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84020097/1932-07-29/ed-1/seq-1/>.

⁴³ *The Waterbury Democrat*, July 29, 1932, 1.

⁴⁴ “Letter from Bonus Army leader to President Hoover,” Teaching American History, accessed December 9, 2021, <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/letter-from-bonus-army-leader-to-president-hoover/>.

⁴⁵ Donald J. Lisio, “A Blunder Becomes Catastrophe: Hoover, the Legion, and the Bonus Army,” *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 51, no. 1 (1967): 39, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4634286>.

⁴⁶ Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1951), 225.

⁴⁷ Dickson and Allen, *The Bonus*, 212; “The Veterans March Again!,” *The Daily Worker* (Chicago, IL), April 29, 1933, 1, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84020097/1933-04-29/ed-1/seq-1/>.

Roosevelt visit their camp. Eleanor “waded through mud ankle deep” to give a speech or two, chat with the veterans, and lead them in various songs.⁴⁸ “Hoover sent the army,” one veteran proclaimed. “Roosevelt sent his wife.”⁴⁹ While Roosevelt did not meet any of the veterans’ demands, his diplomacy peacefully resolved the situation at hand.

In 1934, veterans held another bonus march for the third year in a row; the bonus was as hotly debated as ever. Those for immediate payment claimed it would hasten economic recovery, and that the veterans were in dire need, referencing how seventy-three percent of certificate holders borrowed money (the loan would be deducted from their certificates) for “absolute necessities.”⁵⁰ However, Roosevelt simply could not, “as a matter of practical sense,” afford it⁵¹—a recurring theme argued by every president since Harding. His rebuttal was that all Americans were in need and that veterans “can best be aided by the rehabilitation of the country as a whole.”⁵² He also did not believe in spending so much on a group that constituted only one percent of the population. Nevertheless, on January 27, 1936, Congress passed the Adjusted Compensation Payment Act, overriding Roosevelt’s veto and paying the bonus later that year.

Legacy

On June 22, 1944, during the peak of the Second World War, Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act, more popularly known as the GI Bill of Rights. One of the “most successful and popular federal programs in the nation’s history,”⁵³ it funded veterans’ education, offered them vocational assistance and unemployment pay, subsidized loans

⁴⁸ “Bonus Camp Viewed by Mrs. Roosevelt,” *The New York Times* (New York, NY), May 17, 1933, 10, accessed December 7, 2021, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1933/05/17/issue.html?>

⁴⁹ Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus*, 100.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 119.

⁵¹ Patch, “The Bonus.”

⁵² Roosevelt, “Veto of the Bonus,” speech, The American Presidency Project.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 201.

for veterans, and more.⁵⁴ Yet Congress passed it in part because of the fear of unrest and potential revolution, reminiscent of the violence of 1932 (Appendix E). The sixteen million World War II veterans—3.4 times more than World War I—would be a “potent force for good or evil in the years to come.”⁵⁵ One representative simply pledged, “history shall not repeat itself.”⁵⁶

The Bonus March also established the precedent of diplomatically traveling to Washington, D.C., to lobby. While it was not the first of its kind, it *was* the largest to date, and by far the most famous. An “increase in federal tolerance and even assistance to [marches],” first appearing in the 1933 march, also became evident.⁵⁷ Since then, millions of Americans have made this pilgrimage,⁵⁸ for causes ranging from racial equality to withdrawal from Vietnam to LGBT+ rights. Today, they “are part of the landscape” of the city: a routine occurrence.⁵⁹ But what is tradition now was highly unprecedented a century ago—a transformation that started in 1932.

Tens of thousands of desperate veterans converged on their nation’s capital in 1932, trying to sway the political debate in their favor so that they would not have to wait thirteen years to receive money that was rightfully theirs. Within two months, however, Hoover’s and MacArthur’s undiplomatic actions brought their diplomatic lobbying to a fiery end. Immediate payment passed four years later, and additional benefits were attained with the GI Bill, but the Bonus March’s ultimate legacy reaches far beyond 1944. It taught an “American lesson” to all future advocates: “If you have a grievance, take it to Washington, and if you want to be heard, bring a lot of people with you.”⁶⁰

⁵⁴ “G.I. Bill of Rights,” *Time*, April 3, 1944, accessed December 15, 2021, <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,850388,00.html>.

⁵⁵ Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus*, 198.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 199.

⁵⁷ Barber, *Marching on Washington*, 105.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 2.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 219.

⁶⁰ Dickson and Allen, *The Bonus*, 277.

Appendix A



The government printed and displayed posters like this one to returning Great War veterans.

Source: Chrisinger, David. "The Army's Message to Returning World War I Troops? Behave Yourselves." The New York Times Magazine. Last modified July 31, 2019.

Accessed November 20, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/31/magazine/world-war-i-veterans-treatment.html>.

[illegible]

Source: United States Veterans Bureau. "Adjusted Service Certificate." March 1, 1931.

Appendix C



Troops escort some veterans away from Pennsylvania Avenue.

Source: Photograph. Container 13. MS 0738 Bonus Army Research Collection, 1919–1947

(bulk, 1919-1932). Kiplinger Research Library, DC History Center, Washington, DC.

Appendix D



The Anacostia encampment on fire.

Source: *Fire, set by U.S. Army, consuming camp of Bonus Expeditionary Forces; Washington Monument in background.* 1932. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/96500469/>.

Appendix E



IS *THIS* HIS REWARD?

Hail the conquering hero... But don't forget him! When the shouting and the tumult dies... when his bonus is spent and his sacrifices are forgotten... what then?

Will he be back in useful civilian life... or, with no money, no job and discouraged, will he be a grim reminder of the trust that we betrayed?

Let's learn a lesson from World War I!

This time, let's have no more "Soldier Boy" apple vendors... no more veterans' bread lines... no more bonus armies. Let's not abandon the seriously, maimed or mentally ill to live out hopeless lives as public or private charges.

No man or woman who has risked death or sacrificed health to fight for this country should be denied the best we can offer in medical treatment, rehabilitation and the right to earn a decent livelihood!

AMERICA FACES A CHALLENGE!

Already the wounded are coming back from the battlefields in growing numbers. They're a brave lot who have paid with broken bodies and shattered nerves for the democracy we enjoy and the victory we must win. Thanks to the miracles of modern medicine, far more of the casualties will be saved to live than in the last war — but many more of the living will come home crippled.

Their rehabilitation is our paramount obligation—not in the dreamy future, but now—*today*. How can this be accomplished? (1) Unify existing veterans' laws; (2) Simplify procedure for prompt attention and proper care for all cases; (3) Provide adequate rehabilitation facilities and centralized direction through comprehensive legislation so that no serviceman is neglected.

The power to act lies in Washington. It is up to you and your neighbors to create in your community a demand for action.

WHAT THEY SAY...

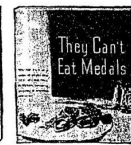
"We must, this time, have plans ready for the return to civilian life of our gallant men and women in the armed service—instead of waiting to do a hasty, inefficient and ill considered job at the last moment."
President Franklin D. Roosevelt, July 28, 1943

"...a matter which I think deserves the greatest attention in order that our injured boys may receive the consideration that they so justly deserve... Dis-abilities, no matter how honorably gained, remain present, but the cause is soon forgotten."
Hon. Charles S. Dewey, United States Representative from Illinois

"Proper care and rehabilitation of our war casualties is a sacred obligation of the nation. Thanks to efforts like these we may hope that never again, with respect to such casualties, will it be said that this democracy is lacking in gratitude."
Leo T. Crowley, Director, Office Economic Warfare

READ THESE BOOKLETS...

"Wounded Soldiers Come Home" and "They Can't Eat Medals" contain 32 articles on veterans' rehabilitation problems which were published by The Milwaukee Journal, as part of its continuing study on this subject. A limited number of copies are available free.



Published in the Interests of America's 11,000,000 Servicemen by THE MILWAUKEE JOURNAL

Many newspapers printed this ad supporting the GI Bill.

Source: The Washington Post (Washington, D.C.), November 24, 1943.

<https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/display-ad-12-no-title/docview/151589906/se-2>

?accountid=31191.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources:

The B.E.F. News (Washington, D.C.), July 30, 1932. Container 12. MS 0738 Bonus Army Research Collection, 1919–1947 (bulk, 1919-1932). Kiplinger Research Library, DC History Center, Washington, D.C.

On the front page of each issue of *The B.E.F. News*, the official newspaper of the BEF starting on June 25, there is a political cartoon. On the issue written two days after the expulsion, the cartoon depicts Herbert Hoover as the “enemy,” comparing him to a German soldier in World War I. This source helped me understand the BEF’s reaction to the expulsion and its attitude towards Hoover following July 28.

Coolidge, Calvin. "Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval a Bill Providing for Adjusted Compensation for War Veterans." Speech, May 15, 1924. The American Presidency Project. Accessed March 23, 2022.
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/329322>.

This is Calvin Coolidge's speech upon vetoing the World War Adjusted Compensation Act. It provided me with the arguments against the bonus before 1924, and I quoted Coolidge to show another argument that he made.

The Daily Worker (Chicago, IL), July 29, 1932.
<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84020097/1932-07-29/ed-1/seq-1/>.

Written the day after the expulsion, this issue of *The Daily Worker* has a headline that I quoted to support my argument that the expulsion "shocked America."

The Daily Worker (Chicago, IL). "The Veterans March Again!" April 29, 1933.
<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84020097/1933-04-29/ed-1/seq-1/>.

One of the articles in this newspaper issue talks about the 1933 Bonus March, encourages veterans to stand up and demand immediate payment, criticizes the government's actions on the matter, and lists the marchers' demands. I found it useful in understanding the politics and context of the 1933 march, and it told exactly what the marchers’ demands were.

Eisenhower, Dwight D. Interview by Raymond Henle. Gettysburg, PA. July 13, 1967. Container 5. MS 0738 Bonus Army Research Collection, 1919–1947 (bulk, 1919-1932). Kiplinger Research Library, DC History Center, Washington, D.C.

This is a transcript of an interview with Eisenhower about the events of July 28. It includes Eisenhower’s thoughts on MacArthur crossing the 11th Street Bridge, what he did to try to convince MacArthur otherwise, and what MacArthur’s response was.

Fire, set by U.S. Army, consuming camp of Bonus Expeditionary Forces; Washington Monument in background. 1932. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/96500469/>.

I used this photograph as Appendix D.

"G.I. Bill of Rights." *Time*, April 3, 1944. Accessed December 15, 2021.
<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,850388,00.html>.

This is a reprint describing the then-proposed GI Bill of Rights, and one of the only sources I could find listing every specific benefit back-to-back. It also helped me realize people's opinions on the GI Bill before it was passed.

Harding, Warren G. "Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval a Bill to Provide Adjusted Compensation for World War Veterans." Speech, September 19, 1922. The American Presidency Project. Accessed March 23, 2022.
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/329335>.

This is Warren G. Harding's 1922 speech upon vetoing a bonus bill almost identical to the World War Adjusted Compensation Act but without the delay in payment. It helped me understand Harding's stance on the bonus, which, while similar to Coolidge's, was more economic and less moral.

Hoover, Herbert. 1951. *The memoirs of Herbert Hoover*. New York: MacMillan Co.

In the section of Hoover's memoirs dedicated to the Bonus March, Hoover defends his actions in response to accusations of inhumanity and lack of morals through two arguments: that the BEF was mostly made up of communists and criminals, and that he should not receive the blame for the disgraceful events of July 28. I used this source to understand Hoover's perspective on the expulsion.

Hoover, Herbert. "Veto of the Emergency Adjusted Compensation Bill." Speech, February 26, 1931. The American Presidency Project. Accessed December 6, 2021.
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/207374>.

When passed over Hoover's veto in hopes of stimulating economic recovery, the Emergency Adjusted Compensation Bill increased the amount that could be taken out on a loan from an adjusted service certificate. While this legislation was not about immediate payment of the bonus, the arguments Hoover made in this veto speech were equally applicable to immediate payment. Therefore, it informed me of some of the arguments against immediate payment, and I used a quote from the speech to elaborate on specifically the fiscal argument.

"Letter from Bonus Army leader to President Hoover." Teaching American History. Accessed December 9, 2021.
<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/letter-from-bonus-army-leader-to-president-hoover/>.

This is a publicized letter to Herbert Hoover condemning him for calling in the military. It supports my argument that the expulsion “shocked America,” as well as another argument that it contributed to Hoover’s defeat in the 1932 election.

MacArthur, Douglas. *Reminiscences*. N.p.: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964.

MacArthur dedicates six of the 426 pages of his book to the Bonus March. In these pages, he talks about his opinions on the "quality" of the later BEF (infiltrated by criminals and communists) and his perspective on the events of July 28. I used this source to understand MacArthur's reasons for crossing the Anacostia River that night, as well as his thoughts on both the military's push that afternoon and the Bonus March as a whole.

The New York Times (New York, NY), July 29, 1932. Accessed December 3, 2021.
<https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1932/07/29/issue.html>.

I looked at the July 29 issues of three newspapers: *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *The Waterbury Democrat*. These sources gave me primary source insight on the events of July 28. I analyzed them all to get the opinions and stories of various newspapers with diversity in opinion on veterans' rights, the Bonus March, and the bonus itself.

The New York Times (New York, NY), January 1, 1935. Accessed January 11, 2022.
<https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1935/01/01/issue.html>.

This source contains two articles I found useful: a message from Franklin D. Roosevelt arguing against immediate payment, and an anti-bonus editorial including Roosevelt's rebuttals to all of the principal arguments for it. I found them helpful in understanding Roosevelt's stance on immediate payment, and why he was against it.

The New York Times (New York, NY). "Bonus Camp Viewed by Mrs. Roosevelt." May 17, 1933. Accessed December 7, 2021.
<https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1933/05/17/issue.html?>

This issue of *The New York Times* has an article on Roosevelt's handling of the 1933 Bonus March. I used it to get information relating to the marchers, a description of Eleanor Roosevelt’s visit, the veterans’ feelings toward Roosevelt afterward, and more.

Patch, Buel. "The Bonus After the 1932 Elections." *Editorial Research Reports II* (September 27, 1932): 205-24.
<https://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/document.php?id=cqresrre1932092700>.

This article is about the cost, necessity, politics, and economic impacts of the bonus and immediate payment as of 1932, or when the article was written. While I already knew most of its information, it had many new statistics, some of which I included in my paper to justify some of the arguments for and against immediate payment.

Payment of Soldiers' Adjusted Compensation Certificates: Hearings Before the Committee on Ways and Means, 71st Cong., 3d Sess. 382-88 (1931) (statement of Joseph T. Angelo). Container 5. MS 0738 Bonus Army Research Collection, 1919–1947 (bulk, 1919-1932). Kiplinger Research Library, DC History Center, Washington, D.C.

Joe Angelo was a World War I veteran with a Distinguished Service Cross for saving the life of Major George Patton in the Battle of Saint-Mihiel. In his testimony, he describes how he saved Patton, trying to find a job, his experience of unemployment, his need for the bonus, and more. This source helped me understand my historical context, i.e. the lives of Great War veterans during the Depression.

Roosevelt, Franklin D. "Veto of the Bonus Bill." Speech, May 22, 1935. The American Presidency Project. Accessed January 11, 2022.
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/208000>.

This is Roosevelt's veto speech for a 1935 immediate payment bill. In the speech, he states almost all of the (then-current) arguments against immediate payment. I found this source helpful in understanding these arguments, which were the basis for Roosevelt's repeated veto of all bonus bills.

———. "Message to Veterans." Speech, April 1, 1933. The American Presidency Project. Accessed May 3, 2022. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/208686>.

This is a message to the public twelve days after Roosevelt signed the 1933 Economy Act, which cut federal expenditures on veterans by almost 50 percent. (I removed the Economy Act from my historical argument after the state competition in order to meet the word limit.) This source helped me understand Roosevelt's perspective on the Economy Act and why he was in favor of it.

Troops Escort Veterans Out of Pennsylvania Avenue. 1932. Photograph. Container 13. MS 0738 Bonus Army Research Collection, 1919–1947 (bulk, 1919-1932). Kiplinger Research Library, DC History Center, Washington, D.C.

I used this photograph as Appendix C.

United States Veterans Bureau. "Adjusted Service Certificate." March 1, 1931. Container 14. MS 0738 Bonus Army Research Collection, 1919–1947 (bulk, 1919-1932). Kiplinger Research Library, DC History Center, Washington, D.C.

I took a photo of the Adjusted Service Certificate at the research library and used it as Appendix B.

U.S. Const. amend. I. Accessed May 3, 2022.
<https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/constitution.pdf>.

The quote at the beginning of my paper is from the First Amendment to the Constitution.

The Washington Post (Washington, D.C.), July 29, 1932.

<https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/one-slain-60-hurt-as-troops-rout-b-e-f-with-gas/docview/150213016/se-2?accountid=31191>.

See my annotation for the July 29 issue of *The New York Times*.

The Washington Post (Washington, D.C.), November 24, 1943.

<https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/display-ad-12-no-title/docview/151589906/se-2?accountid=31191>.

There is an ad on page 13 of this issue of *The Washington Post* that I used as Appendix E. It argues that the veterans of World War II need to be taken care of to not have a repeat of the 1932 Bonus March, and calls on the reader to support the proposed compensation bills for them. This source helped me understand the public attitude toward veterans' benefits during World War II, and how the Bonus March over a decade earlier fostered the support of the GI Bill.

The Washington Post (Washington, D.C.), June 18, 1932.

<https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/america-sung-veterans-at-news-defeat/docview/150210384/se-2?accountid=31191>.

This newspaper issue contains an account of the events at the Capitol on the evening of June 17 both inside and outside the Capitol building, as well as Waters's reaction to the defeat of the Bonus Bill by urging his men to stay in Washington until it is passed. It gave me more insight on that evening so I could improve its description and imagery in my paper.

The Washington Post (Washington, D.C.). "Time to Go Home." June 16, 1932, 6.

<https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/time-go-home/docview/150222415/se-2?accountid=31191>.

This is an editorial after the House of Representatives voted on the Bonus Bill claiming that all hopes of getting Congress to pass immediate payment until its next session would be futile and that the bonus marchers, therefore, should now return home. (While the House did pass the bill, not enough representatives voted for it to override Hoover's promised veto.) This source helped me understand how most people wanted the bonus marchers to leave after the Senate defeated the bill.

The Waterbury Democrat (Waterbury, CT), July 29, 1932.

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82014085/1932-07-29/ed-1/seq-1/>.

See my annotation for the July 29 issue of *The New York Times*.

Waters, Walter W., and William Carter White. *B. E. F.; the whole story of the bonus army, by W. W. Waters as told to William C. White*. New York: John Day Company, 1933.

<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001874081>.

Waters's book on the Bonus March, published in 1933, gave me Waters's detailed account of every major event for the duration of the march, what his thoughts were, and his opinions about everything that happened involving the BEF. He also talks about the desperation that caused the march, which I found extremely helpful for developing my understanding of the historical context. Lastly, I used many quotes from the book to prove various arguments and provide imagery.

Weisensel, Leonard. "Oral history interview with Leonard Weisensel / interviewed by Howard Fredricks (4 of 5)." By Howard Fredricks. Audio, 61:53. December 1, 1975. Accessed November 29, 2021.
https://digitalcollections.uwlax.edu:443/jsp/RcWebAudioPlayer.jsp?doc_id=aa172543-df64-469f-9585-15a8bb4e56e4/wlacu000/00000018/00000181.

This is an audio recording of the interview of Leonard Weisensel, a World War I veteran and member of the American Legion. In the interview, he talks about life as a Great War veteran, including his thoughts on the Bonus March (although he did not participate in it), the activities of the American Legion during the time, his thoughts on the Roosevelt administration, and his life during the early 1930s, including how he managed to pay off his last bill. This source shaped my knowledge of how World War I veterans were initially treated (I quoted Weisensel in my third paragraph to emphasize their lack of benefits), and how their circumstances led to the Bonus March.

Secondary Sources:

Barber, Lucy G. *Marching on Washington: the forging of an American political tradition*. N.p.: University of California Press, 2002.

This book chronicles the history and development of the practice of marching on Washington, D.C., through six marches, one of them being the Bonus March. The Bonus March's chapter tells the story of the march in the context of the development of the practice, and only includes information that is either critical to the story of the Bonus March itself or related to the concept of marching on Washington. As this was one of the last sources I looked at, most of the information gained from it was about the Bonus March's significance to the development of marching on Washington, displayed in the penultimate paragraph of my paper.

Chrisinger, David. "The Army's Message to Returning World War I Troops? Behave Yourselves." *The New York Times Magazine*. Last modified July 31, 2019. Accessed November 20, 2021.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/31/magazine/world-war-i-veterans-treatment.html>

This secondary article told me about the government's treatment of returning World War I veterans from the veterans' point of view in the couple of years after Armistice Day. It also talks about the government's negligence towards returning veterans, and includes various posters created by the government telling veterans to, as the headline says, "Behave Yourselves." This source helped shape my understanding that Great War

veterans received barely any benefits upon returning home and that the World War Adjusted Compensation Act was essentially the first significant benefit given to them.

Dickson, Paul, and Thomas B. Allen. *The Bonus Army: An American Epic*. N.p.: Walker Publishing Company, 2004.

This is a 270-page (not including appendices, endnotes, and citations) comprehensive book on the complete story of the Bonus March. Because it is a popular history book, it goes in depth specifically into the context of the march, the 1933 march, Coxey's Army (the first-ever march on Washington in 1894), and the Labor Day Hurricane, which in 1935 killed hundreds of veterans in the Florida Keys. This was one of the first sources I looked at, so it gave me a baseline knowledge of my topic and helped me write my thesis.

Lisio, Donald J. "A Blunder Becomes Catastrophe: Hoover, the Legion, and the Bonus Army." *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 51, no. 1 (1967): 37–50.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4634286>.

This secondary article talks about the politics following July 28 up until Hoover's defeat against FDR on November 8. It includes the public's initial reaction to the expulsion, what arguments Hoover made to defend himself, how people responded to them, and it goes into detail about the American Legion and its national convention in September.

McGoff, Kevin. "The Bonus Army." In *American History Illustrated*, 29-37. N.p., 1978.
Container 5. MS 0738 Bonus Army Research Collection, 1919–1947 (bulk, 1919-1932).
Kiplinger Research Library, DC History Center, Washington, D.C.

This book has an eight-page chapter on the Bonus March which, other than the general story of the march that I knew already, told a lot about the context of the march, as well as the aftermath of the expulsion and who exactly was blamed for it. Additionally, it is the source for two of the statistics in my paper.

Ortiz, Stephen R. *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill: How Veteran Politics Shaped the New Deal Era*. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2010. Digital file.

This is a book mostly on "veteran politics" (namely the activities and lobbying of the two major veteran organizations at the time, the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars), and how it influenced the politics and legislation of the early Depression and First New Deal. It talks about the context for the major pieces of legislation concerning veterans during the interwar period, such as the World War Adjusted Compensation Act, the Economy Act, the Adjusted Compensation Payment Act, and the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, as well as the "fight for the bonus" from 1932–36. Just like the other secondary book I read (*The Bonus Army: An American Epic*), it deepened my knowledge on my topic, mostly for the events/legislation that occurred after the Bonus March itself.

———. Videoconference interview by the author. January 9, 2022.

Stephen Ortiz is an associate professor of history at Binghamton University and the author of *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill*. Going into this interview, most of my questions concerned simple facts that I wanted to clarify, such as what exact benefits able-bodied World War I veterans received. By the end, however, the most useful information I got concerned the arguments for and against the bonus, as well as how the debate over the bonus changed over time between 1919–36.

Vivian, James F., and Jean H. Vivian. "The Bonus March of 1932: The Role of General George Van Horn Moseley." *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 51, no. 1 (1967): 26–36.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4634285>.

This article includes George van Horn Mosely's (the first messenger that Hoover sent to tell MacArthur not to cross the 11th Street Bridge) recount of his involvement in and experience of the events of July 28, which I found very helpful in understanding MacArthur's attitude that day and what happened before he crossed the bridge. In addition to this role, Mosely strongly felt for the duration of the BEF's existence that the presence of tens of thousands of protesting veterans in Washington, D.C., was a recipe for revolution, and urged Hoover to take measures to expel them earlier. Therefore, this source also helped me understand the military's attitude toward the Bonus Army, both during and before the expulsion.

Wallerstein, Mitchel B. "Terminating Entitlements: Veterans' Disability Benefits in the Depression." *Policy Sciences* 7, no. 2 (1976): 173–82.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4531638>.

This secondary article focuses on the idea of political entitlement and talks about the termination and revival of "entitlement" benefits to veterans in the United States during the Great Depression, i.e. the passing and gradual repeal of the Economy Act. It also gave me the arguments in favor of the act, which I found useful as this perspective is not nearly talked about as much as the veterans' perspective.