The Bonus March of 1932

By MAURICE P. SNELLER*

THE hurried fall of soldiers' boots sounded along Pennsylvania Avenue. Sparks flew from horses' hooves as cavalry moved into action. The scene was Washington, D. C., on a hot summer afternoon in July, 1932. The United States Government was using troops instead of reason and understanding to combat a symptom of the unemployment and economic stagnation gripping the nation. The Bonus Army was being expelled from the capital.

Only in considering the background of these years of economic decline, stagnation, and distress can an understanding be made of the assembly of thousands of unemployed men—the Bonus Army—in Washington in the summer of 1932. There was never at the beginning any central, organized heart of the Bonus Movement which could preach its objectives throughout the country. The movement grew spontaneously after the first news appeared in the papers of a few people going to the capital to petition Congress for the passage of a veterans' bill. The country was full of unemployed men desperately moving over the land guided by rumors and their own hopes of work. In the drift from one area to another looking for a job many of these victims of the depression moved toward Washington. It was this unfortunate economic waste of the early 1930's that spawned the Bonus March.

A few statistics will illustrate what was happening in the economic picture. For one thing, it was estimated that in the depths of the depression fifty percent of the productive capacity of the country was lying unused.[1] In March, 1932, the steel industry was operating at 24.68% of theoretical capacity. In April production was only 22.52% of capacity and the trend was toward the 15% mark in the fall of 1532.[2]

These pitiful, tragic figures were not long in casting their shadows over the lives of individual citizens with distressing results. Unemployment, which stood in January, 1930, at 4,000,000 men, increased allarmingly to 8,000,000 in the spring of 1931, and

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it was headed toward the figure of between 13 and 15,000,000 people in the spring of 1933.[3] Not only were these appalling numbers of idle people a waste to society, but as individuals they were undergoing the corrosive frustration of unemployment and suffering actual physical distress of inadequate food, clothing, and shelter. It was estimated that for three years alone, 1930-31-32, the loss to society from idle men and machines was in the region of 73 billion dollars.[4] This is the world that furnished the men of the Bonus March. This also is the world to which President Hoover preached with blind persistence that the American economy was basically sound, and prosperity was just around the corner. Many people who were actually feeling the brunt of not having work were not so sure.

One of these people who had experienced the long months of unemployment and the financial improverishment of the depression was Walter W. Waters, the future commander of the Bonus March. He can serve as an example of the type of person who took part in the trek to Washington.

Walter W. Waters, or "Hot" Waters as he was sometimes called, was born in 1898 and reared in Idaho. In 1916 he joined the National Guard and went to the Mexican border as a private. The regiment was later divided, and one section was assigned to the 146th Field Artillery, and it was sent overseas in the winter of 1917. This was the section to which Walters belonged. He served at the front after July 1918, and in 1919 he was discharged from the Army with the rank of sergeant.

Waters tried numerous jobs when he returned to civilian life—garage mechanic, automobile salesman, farmhand, and bakery helper. In 1925 he felt his home in Idaho and hitch-hiked to Washington state. There he got a job in the harvest fields. In Washington under the assumed named of Bill Kincaid he met and married his wife. Near Portland, Oregon, Waters found a job in a cannery, and he worked his way up to the position of assistant superintendent, but in December 1930, the depression cost him his job. By that time he had two small daughters besides a wife to support. The thousand dollars in savings disappeared in the winter of 1931-32, and in March, 1932, he was penniless.[5]

Waters looked for work everywhere, but there was none. It was in that condition that he turned to the one possible source of funds which might be available to him. This source was the compensation certificates which had been given to him after the World War. Other men all over the country were in a similar condition as

Waters, and the interest in these certificates once planted in the minds of these men readily found fertile ground for producing action.

What were these certificates that came to be more popularly known as the bonus?

Shortly after the war there was a demand for some sort of settlement to equalize the differences in pay enjoyed by civilians and servicemen during 1917-19. The first action concerning compensation to equalize such war-time differences was taken in Congress in 1924 when in May of that year Congress passed a compensation bill over President Coolidge's veto. The bill provided for cash payments. It did authorize paid-up twenty-year endowment policies for all enlisted men and officers up to and including Army and Marine Corps Captains and Naval lieutenants. The face value of the policies varied according to the length of service, and they were figured at the rate of $1.25 for each day of overseas service and $1.00 per day for each day of service at home. These policies beginning January 1, 1925, were to mature in 1945, at which time the sum of the face value of the average certificates was about $1,012 and the maximum was $1,595.[6]

In the dark depression days of 1931 pressure was placed on Congress to pass legislation authorizing veterans to borrow up to 50% of the face value of these adjustment compensation certificates. The measure passed through Congress in February of 1931 only to be met with a presidential veto from Hoover. In the message accompanying the veto the President with iron rectitude said, "We cannot further the restoration of prosperity by borrowing from some of our people, pledging the credit of all the people, to loan to some of our people who are not in need of the money . . ."[7] Seven million people were unemployed at the time, and among that number many were veterans.

In the fall of this same year, 1931, Congressman Wright Patman, Democrat of Texas, led some members of the American Legion at their annual meeting in Detroit to propose a cash payment. He boarded a special train, and he went to Detroit to address the meeting and explain why a bonus measure would be an unfortunate piece of legislation. He also reiterated his belief about the causes of the depression when he said, "This depression flows largely from Europe through fundamental dislocations of economic and political forces caused by the war. . ."[8] The Legion voted down the bonus proposal, but the issue was not dead.

In Congress Patman introduced a bill favoring immediate payment of the bonus through the issuing of more than $2,000,000,000 in currency, but by the spring of 1932 the opponents of the bill thought that it was safely ensnarled in red tape in the House Ways and Means Committee.[9] No one knew that what was happening at the same time in another section of the nation would have great influence on the bill.

In March of 1932 on the other side of the country Waters obtained permission to address the Portland assembly of the National Veterans Association, and before this assembly he suggested the idea of a march on Washington to obtain passage of the bonus bill. There were other meetings, and by May a volunteer force had gathered, chosen officers, and organized themselves. On a May afternoon a column of men marched through the business section of Portland behind an American flag and a banner reading, "Portland Bonus March—On to Washington." Two hundred and fifty men served as a nucleus of this group that was one of the first contingens of the Bonus Army.

The men traveled first on the Union Pacific. Accommodations were in stock cars. The cars were dirty, but the group at least was exchanging a purposeless life of idleness for action and the goal of making a personal appeal to Congress. They were again doing something with a group with an aim, and they felt that they belonged. The miles were long; comforts were lacking, but with the passing days they left the Rockies behind and found themselves in the wide expanses of the Great Plains.

On May 21st Eastern newspapers carrier the first news of a possible mass demonstration by the marchers. A freight train of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad was siezed in East St. Louis. The railroad refused to move the train, and for a day and night all eastward freight traffic from its yards was suspended. Trucks were eventually procured to take the marchers to Indiana. At the border, Indiana National Guard trucks carried the marchers across the state to the Ohio line. There the men were met by Ohio State highway trucks which transported them to Pennsylvania. State vehicles of Pennsylvania and Maryland forwarded the group to Washington where they arrived on May 29.[10]

The trip was long, but it had shown that groups of men could travel across the country without resources of their own. People along the way had given food and help. Local veterans organizations cooperated, and in some localities the city governments show-

ed great sympathy for the men. In the days to come other sections of the country were represented by bands of men steadily moving toward Washington, some hitch-hiked, some traveling by truck, and some moving by train. Any means of transportation available was used.

This contingent from Portland was not the first group to arrive in Washington. After the publicity of the train seizure in East St. Louis, unemployed veterans from states near Washington began moving to the capital. A problem was immediately posed to the municipal authorities by the thousands of men converging on the city. Housing and food were going to be necessary, and how were these items going to be furnished? The answers were to be provided by the men themselves, by the kindness of their fellow citizens, but not by the United States Government.

It was through one man especially that contact between the city government and the Bonus Marchers was to be made. That man was Pelham Glassford, Superintendent of Police for the city of Washington. He played a strategic role in the story of the Bonus March.

Glassford was born in New Mexico. His youth was spent between Western army posts and Washington, where he went to art school. He entered West Point at seventeen, and graduated in 1904, after which he served as instructor and assistant professor at West Point. There followed service in the Philippines, Hawaii, the Mexican border, and France. He was the youngest general of the lines in the First World War. Glassford was wounded, decorated for gallantry in action, and came home wearing the Distinguished Service medal. He was stationed in Washington on the General Staff, and he preceeded to engage in his hobby of painting. He lived in Georgetown in a house his friends called the "Borneo Embassy." At 47, eligible for retirement from the Army, he retired and planed to go west and help his father manage an Arizona ranch. His father died, and Glassford came east again. He was in Washington managing the Armistice Day jubilee when his friend and superior, General Crosby, the Commissioner in charge of police affairs, offered Glassford the job of Superintendent of Police. Glassford accepted the job, and he was on hand when the first of the bonus marchers reached Washington.[12]

Glassford directed his first efforts in a campaign of discouraging other marchers from coming to Washington. He sent wires to all State governors and many railroad presidents asking their

cooperation. Letters were sent to American Legion Posts, and, as a final measure, he talked to Senator Watson, Representative Rainey, and Mr. Walter Newton, secretary of President Hoover, in an effort to get the bonus bill voted on immediately. He felt that if some positive decision were taken, then there would be no further reason for thousands of unemployed men to assemble in the city.[12] His advice was not followed, and as the bill lay in committee, hundreds of men arrived from all parts of the country. As their numbers grew larger, so too grew their potential power to influence Congress. Police duties also increased proportionally, and Glassford made efforts to find out what the Commissioners of the District of Columbia wanted done in the circumstances. The Commissioners themselves apparently did not realize the significance or the size of the movement which was assembling around them.

Glassford related what happened in his contact with the Commissioners: ". . . I told the Commissioners that the few hundred men already in Washington were only the advance guard of what might turn out to be a huge army, and I wanted to be told how they wanted it handled. Imagine my surprise when it was suggested to me that I treat these men as indigents, pass them along to the Salvation Army or any other charity organization that would feed them, and then make them move on as rapidly as possible."[13] This view of the municipal authorities was probably representative of general thinking in Washington circles.

Nevertheless, Glassford knew that something would have to be done to provide food and shelter for the arriving men. Although he disapproved of their reasons for having come to Washington, he assumed responsibility for the men, and he tried to help them as much as possible. Some of the men were lodged in vacant buildings where the only bed was the floor. Others found lodging in partly demolished buildings or in self-constructed shacks made of any materials that could be found. As rumors circulated of large numbers of other veterans descending on Washington, efforts were made to find suitable spots where camps might be established. One campsite was chosen on some low-lying mud flats at Anacostia where Camp Marks was founded. This camp was named after Captain Marks of a nearby police station who had helped the veterans, and it became the largest billeting place of the Bonus Expeditionary Force. Over 5,000 men, women, and children congregated there.

Streets were laid out in military fashion, and along these streets shanties made of a wide variety of styles and materials

grew up. A limited number of men were lodged in tents which the National Guard had lent to General Glassford personally.

An effort was made to organize an effective community life. Even a rudimentary hospital was established. The Washington health department still showed great unhappiness over the sanitary conditions in the camp. Latrines were built, but the problem of sewage defeated the men. Either because of the stamina of the inhabitants or good fortune no epidemics broke out.

Food for this large group of men, which was estimated to number as high as 15,000 at one time, was a serious problem. The Federal Government did nothing, but friends, families left behind, and Washingtonians contributed both money and supplies, and two meals a day was provided. The people of Washington were particularly generous in their gifts to the veterans, and, in general, they showed a sympathetic attitude toward the men, which was in marked contrast to the government. People outside Washington also sent money and supplies. One specially large contribution came at a critical time from Father Coughlin of Detroit who praised the army over the radio and sent a check for $5,000.[14]

As the days passed the thousands of men spread over Washington came to be better known in the city. They were not well dressed, and some were not overly clean, but they preserved a certain air of faded respectability in spite of their reduced circumstances. Forces beyond their control or comprehension had destroyed much of their lives and left a feeling of dull fatalism. One reporter in looking at the thousands of unemployed veterans had this to say about them: "It is obvious that this strange social phenomena is something that transcends the individuals. But nearly all have one thing in common—a curious melancholy, a sense of the futility of individual struggle, a consciousness of being in the grip of cruel incomprehensible forces.[15]

Every day marchers could be seen sitting in the offices of their Senators and Representatives. The Seventy-second Congress neared its end, and no action had been taken on the bonus bill. In the last week of the session a picturesque leader of a group of veterans from the west coast, Royal Robertson, led his men of about 400 strong to the Capitol grounds with the intention of camping there till Congress adjourned. On Wednesday night, July 13th, Glassford informed the men that they could not sleep on the grounds, but that they could walk on the grounds as citizens. Thus began what was called the "Death March." Day and night a group of these

men walked back and forth before the Capitol till the last day of the session. "They presented a motley sight today, walking slowly from one wing to the other and back again, some with tin pans and tin cups dangling from their belts, others carrying small banners—all trudging along in the sweltering heat behind three American flags."[16] This was the appearance of the bonus marchers.

One of the things which stood out about these men was their self-dicipline which extended from their own elected officers to the rank and file. Panhandling and other nuisances were discouraged, and according to police reports crime in the District of Columbia was lower while the marchers were in the city during June and July than after they left.[17]

Attorney General William D. Mitchell laid great stress on the criminal element represented in the assembled veterans. The Attorney General in his report of the Bonus March also attempted to prove that a large proportion of the people engaged in it were Communists. The radicals, he asserted had a big hand in instigating trouble.[18] This contention is not born out by facts completely. For one thing, the veterans themselves kept the extreme radical groups separated in special billets. In the area assigned to the Communists by the Attorney General only one hundred and fifty men by police count were associated with the Soldiers' Ex-Service Men's League, a radical organization.[19] Glassford said himself that, in all, not over three hundred Communists were ever in the city, and that they never constituted a menace. One reporter went so far as to say that the whole temper of the Bonus Army was that of a Baptist camp meeting.[20] The reporter's views were not shared by all of the members of the national government though.

On Thursday, July 14, two companies of Marines suddenly appeared at the Capitol where the "Death March" was taking place. Rumors circulated that Vice-President Curtis had called them. Glassford hurriedly intervened, and after a conference in the Capitol the Marines returned to the Navy Yard. Vice-President Curtis said that he had not called the Marines and that he only wanted them held in readiness for an emergency. David Lynn, the Capitol Architect, said that Admiral Butler, who was in charge of the Marines, must have misunderstood his instructions and sent the Marines to the Capitol instead of holding them in readiness. Admiral Butler said, "I sent the Marines at the request of the Vice-President I have no further statement to make."[21]

What was really happening here? Had Admiral Butler really made a mistake or had the Vice-President been afraid for some

reason and actually called the Marines? The sending of troops on this Thursday was a preview of the use of soldiers later. The action of this day might have been an indication of a general uneasiness among officials of the Federal government over the potential danger to law and order from the Bonus Army.

Friday was quiet, but on Saturday morning, July 26, the day on which Congress was to adjourn, 6,500 men of the Bonus Army assembled at the Capitol.[22] The previous day the House had passed the bonus bill, and the Senate was scheduled to act on the last day of the session. The barriers erected by the police were not sufficient to hold the massed assembly which pressed forward to the Capitol steps. A certain tension was in the air, and even Glassford, whom the men had idolized, was booed when he tried to restrain them. Possible trouble was averted when a "buxom golden-haired nurse" by the name of Miss Marotta Arsonis mounted a stand and led the men in songs for an hour.[23] While the demonstrators sang "My Country 'tis of Thee," the Senate proceeded to defeat the bonus by a vote of 62 to 18.

Early in the evening of the same day, Saturday, after the vote in the Senate became known, a small group of about thirty men under the odd leadership of Urbain Ledoux, otherwise known as "Mr. Zero", philanthropist and friend of all unemployed, assembled in the street near the White House with the object of picketing the Presidential residence. They were ordered not to walk in a group. A protest was made, and Ledoux and two others were arrested and the group dispersed. The White House gates were locked, and Glassford was ordered to clear the streets for two blocks around the White House of all pedestrian and vehicular traffic.[2]

This was twice in two days that extreme security measures had been taken, first, with the Marines, and, secondly, in the present situation. Perhaps a feeling of apprehension and fear underlay even the men surrounding the President. Perhaps when the later disturbances broke out the tension had grown to the point where calling of the Army was the immediate, natural response, and need and wisdom of the move were not questioned. It is true that the regular guard at the White House had been materially strengthened. In addition to the guard a supplementary force of three hundred armed troopers had secretly been assembled in the Munitions Building to be used in the event of any disorder at the Capitol or the White House.[25]

The Federal government would not vote a bonus, but it attempted in another way to get rid of the army of unemployed in its

midst. On July 7 upon the recommendation of President Hoover a measure was rushed through Congress providing a fund of $100,000 from which could be advanced the money for rail fares and 75 cents a day subsistence for the veteran's journey home. The amounts of money given to the veterans were to be deducted from the sum due on the bonus certificates. The offer was available only until July 14, but was later extended. Six thousand veterans left Washington, but five thousand or more stayed on. Many had no other place to go.[26]

There were now twelve days between the adjournment of Congress and the flight of the Bonus Army on July 28th. On Thursday, July 21st, Glassford received orders to evacuate the Bonus Army. All billets in the city proper were to be evacuated by midnight of the 24th, and all park areas including Anacostia were to be emptied by August 4th. The first section to be evacuated was a group of partly-demolished buildings on Pennsylvania Avenue belonging to the Treasury Department. The Treasury Department indicated that it wanted to proceed with the demolition, and it contended that the men were obstructing the work. However, as late as November 1, 1932, well after the Bonus Army had been expelled from Washington, nothing of consequence had been done on the site which was not even cleared.[27]

On Friday afternoon of the next day the Commissioners of the District of Columbia announced the indefinite postponement of the evacuation order pending the straightening out of some legal phase of the situation. During the succeeding days Waters, was then Commander-in-Chief of the Bonus Army, in return for evacuating the men, tried to get tentage and other supplies from the Treasury Department which had no authority to grant such a request. The men in the disputed buildings objected to being moved out into what they called the "jungle." As the fateful day approached though Waters seemed willing to move part of his men to other quarters. But both time and patience were running out.

Thursday, July 28th, started as a normal, hot summer day in Washington. Orders were issued in the morning for Treasury Department agents to clear the half-demolished buildings on Pennsylvania Avenue, these agents to be under police protection. At 10:00 A.M. the agents arrived at the site where the veterans had been living. Waters was on the scene, and he attempted to persuade the men to leave. He was accused of selling out to Hoover and Glassford, but many of the men returned to the building and got their belongings. By 11:10 the evacuation had begun, and by 11:50 the

last veterans had been removed, a few being ejected forcibly and placed under arrest.[28]

In the meantime groups of men from other billeting areas in the city and from Anacostia had collected in the Pennsylvania Avenue area near the Capitol until around noon between two and three thousand men of the B.E.F. were on hand.[29] A brief fight broke out between the veterans and the police near one of the evacuated buildings. Bricks flew through the air. Then as quickly as the action had started, it stopped. The encounter had lasted five minutes.

At 1:45 P.M., more than an hour and a half after the brick battle, a short spontaneous affair broke out. There was a disturbance on the sidewalk in front of an old skeleton building still occupied. Glassford rushed up the outside stairs to the second floor for a vantage point. Bricks were again hurled; a garbage can fell near two policemen on the stairway. The policemen became panicky. Shots were fired, and two veterans fell, one dead and the other mortally wounded. Again the fighting stopped as quickly as it had started. According to Glassford, "this was a spontaneous affair involving less than two dozen participants on both sides.[30]

It was during these two outbreaks of violence that the decision to use Army troops was taken. After the brick battle of noon Glassford went to the District Building and reported the disorder to the Commissioners. It was during this conference that the Commissioners asserted that Glassford stated that the situation was out of his control, that the police could no longer hold the Bonus Army in check, and that he thought that it was necessary to secure the assistance of Federal troops. Therefore, on Glassford's recommendation the Commissioners asked President Hoover to authorize the sending of troops.[31]

There is much dispute over who was responsible for sending United States Army troops into Washington. As far as President Hoover was concerned, he maintained that he was only acting on the recommendation of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia. As evidence, he presented the letter of July 28 from the Commissioners asking for assistance. The letter runs in part:

> "The Commissioners of the District of Columbia, therefore request that they be given assistance of Federal troops, in maintaining law and order in the District of Columbia."
>
> Very truly yours,
> L. J. Reichelderfer, President,
> Board of Commissioners of
> the District of Columbia.[32]

The Attorney General made a report on the Bonus Army to President Hoover in the fall of 1932. In the report the Attorney General again emphasized that Glassford asked for the use of Federal troops:

> "In response to questions by the District Commissioners he [Glassford] stated that the situation was out of his control and that the police could no longer hold the bonus marchers in check. He was asked the direct question whether he thought it was necessary to secure the assistance of Federal troops, to which he replied in the affirmative."[33]

But Glassford had a different interpretation of who was responsible for calling the Army. He defined his position clearly at the conference with the Commissioners of the District of Columbia by saying:

> "I stated that if further efforts toward evicting the veterans by the police were insisted upon that afternoon there would be more rioting and possible bloodshed. I recommended that should further evicting be required that day the Federal troops should be called upon to do it. Nothing was said by the Commissioners at this conference to indicate they had reached a decision to call Federal aid."[34]

He further stated that the news of the decision to use troops came to him from a newspaper reporter.

Contradictory charges were made in the attempt to establish who was responsible for the calling of Federal troops. Probably it will be impossible to determine who was telling the truth, and, in fact, it is quite possible that all of the parties involved thought that they were telling exactly what they considered to have happened. The mind is frequently cloudy in viewing past events and recalling past events and recalling specific statements. Especially is this true in periods of stress. But of the people involved Glassford's version deserves as much or perhaps more consideration than the statements of the others.

Glassford was the one person in Washington who was both an official charged with maintaining law and order, and at the same time Glassford had intimate contact with the men of the Bonus Army. He had been closely enough associated with the men to know the temper and feeling that surrounded them. He believed firmly that there was no danger of extensive mob violence, and under the circumstances it is hardly likely that he would have recommended calling Federal troops for assistance. The other

government officials in the drama were not personally in contact with the individual veterans, and without that close association they quite possibly could have imagined a danger that did not actually exist.

In any case the U.S. Army was ordered into action. General MacArthur received this instruction:

> Washington D.C., July 28, 1932
> 2:55 P.M.
>
> To: General Douglas Mac Arthur, Chief of Staff, U. S. Army.
>
> The President has just informed me that the civil government of the District of Columbia has reported to him that it is unable to maintain law and order in the District.
>
> You will have the United States troops proceed immediately to the scene of disorder. Cooperate fully with the District of Columbia police force which is now in charge. Surround the affected area and clear it without delay.
>
> Turn over all prisoners to the civil authorities.
>
> In your orders insist that any women and children who may be in the affected area be accorded every consideration and kindness. Use all humanity consistent with the execution of this order.
>
> Patrick J. Hurley
> Secretary of War.[35]

The troops selected for immediate use were:

1 Battalion 12th Infantry, stationed at Ft. Washington, Md.
1 Squadron 3rd Cavalry, stationed at Ft. Myer, Va.
1 Platoon Tanks, temporarily stationed at Ft. Myer, Va.
Headquarters Company, 16th Brigade, stationed at Washington, D.C.

Simultaneous orders were issued for the concentration of a reserve at Ft. Myer to comprise troops from Ft. George G. Meade, Md., Ft. Howard, Md., and Ft. Humphrey, Va.[36] There were approximately seven hundred troops making up the force which actually carried out the eviction.

By 4:20 P.M. the tanks, cavalry, and infantry were deployed at the Ellipse. General Miles who was indirect charge of the soldiers issued his orders particularly cautioning subordinate commanders to avoid rushing tactics and undue haste as likely to provoke useless conflict with the veterans. The theory was that a demonstration of overpowering force brought slowly to bear against the bonus marchers would produce the most effective results. At 4:30 the troops began moving east on Pennsylvania Avenue, and without incident they reached the Capitol area. By this time thousands of bystanders had collected in the region to see the possible clash

between the soldiers and the bonus marchers.[37] These curious spectators hindered Mac Arthur in his cleanup.

On the sidewalk and adjacent areas south of Pennsylvania Avenue the veterans lined up as many as twelve deep, standing on piles of rubble from the partly-demolished buildings. The bricks from the rubble served them as ammunition.

The veterans showed no inclination to evacuate the area south of the avenue, and at 5:30 the troops began to move forward.[38] A few bricks were no match for cavalry sabers and infantry bayonets, and when tear gas bombs began to fall freely, the ranks of the bonus marchers broke and they retreated.

The troops had been stationed so as to push the veterans away from the business sections of the city and toward the camp at Anacostia. Within an hour the billeting areas which had been the scene of the disturbances earlier in the day were cleared, and approximately two thousand additional people had gone to Anacostia adding to the five thousand who were already there.

After this first phase of the military operation the soldiers halted and were fed. There is a curious timing in the way in which the soldiers carried out their operation, and a question is raised about the original intent of the people who instigated the use of troops.

Patrick Hurley's orders to General Mac Arthur clearly stated that the troops were to be used to clear the affected area where the disturbances were located. This was the area near the Capitol, but Mac Arthur cleared the whole central part of the city of all of the veterans. After this area had been cleared there was a two and one-half hour interval before the second phase of the operation began against Anacostia. What was happening during this time? Were there telephone calls made between government officials to decide on whether to evict the veterans from Anacostia as well? Perhaps there was a conference, and Mac Arthur was told to continue the eviction. On the other hand it is quite possible that Mac Arthur on his own initiative decided to carry out the second phase and march against Anacostia.

President Hoover, writing years later in his *Memoirs,* said that he disapproved of the action taken. He stated, "I did not wish them driven from their camps, as I proposed that the following day we would surround the camps and determine more accurately the number of Communists and ex-convicts among the marchers. Our military officers, however, having them on the move, pushed them outside the District of Columbia."[39]

At 9:10 P. M. the march toward Anacostia was resumed, and about a half-hour later the troops descended onto the flats by way of a steep, ill-kept road. Mac Arthur admitted that the troops fired some of the veterans' shacks in the vicinity of the Bridge to illuminate the surroundings and permit, as he said, ". . . orderly disposition of the troops."[40] In the age of electricity a person can speculate on whether burning shanties furnished the best illumination to aid in the deploying of troops or whether the fires were more of a hindrance than a help in the operation. There was controversy over who started the fires which destroyed the camp, and allegations were made that the soldiers deliberately fired the veterans' shelters and destroyed their property, small as it might have been.

After a delay in the eastern end of Camp Marks, the soldiers pushed forward through the shanties where flames were rapidly spreading. In a short time the area where five thousand men, women, and children had been living twenty-four hours before was a flaming sea.

On the other side of the bridges where cavalry stood guard thousands of onlookers gazed across the river at the fires eating at the night sky. By this one action seven thousand people were ruthlessly scattered into the darkness. They were without shelter; they had no food, and through an act which lacked restraint and mercy they were expelled from their miserable hovels and forced into the fields and along the roads in the middle of darkness. Hardships could have been avoided and reputations preserved if caution and moderation had been used, but caution gave way to impulsion and moderation was killed by fear.

Was this action really necessary? People argued about this point. One extreme view was held by Mac Arthur. He called the bonus marchers, "insurrectionists," a term which was needlessly exaggerated and untrue. He elaborated the theme when he said, "It is my opinion that had the President not acted today, had he permitted this thing to go for twenty-four hours more, he would have been faced with a grave situation which would have caused a real battle. Had he let it go on another week I believe that the institutions of our government would have been very severely threatened."[41] Even the New York *Times* in its editorial column righteously announced," . . . the President could do no other than call upon the Army to take the situation inhand."[42] But another view was given in *The Nation* which appeared on the day before the Army action, and the veterans are described in quite another

light. The article said, "There is about the lot of them an atmosphere of hopelessness, of utter despair, though not of despair."[43]

The choice of opinion is wide. Although no definite answer can be given as to whether or not the use of Federal troops was actually needed, certain facts seem to stand out. By Thursday afternoon of July 28 there were four to six thousand veterans assembled in Washington, and these men in turn attracted thousands of curious bystanders. There had been two short riots in the earlier part of the day, but these had involved a limited number of men. There probably was some tension, and as Glassford said, the continuation of the eviction that day would have very likely led to further disturbances. It should be kept in mind though that for three hours—from the time of the shooting till the arrival of the troops—there were no disorders or riots in any part of the city. There was thus no immediate, urgent need for the use of troops. There was though a danger of renewed disturbances if provocation had been offered, and the potential threat rather than actual threat to law and order was probably the cause why the extreme measures of the day were taken.

The climax of the Bonus March was July 28. The movement was broken in the actions of that day, and the marchers were again forced to take their places with the other millions of Americans wandering over the roads of the nation searching for work.

Did anyone gain from the Bonus March?

General Douglas Mac Arthur's warm, sensitive feeling for drama was displayed during the day when dressed in a ribbon-bedecked uniform and mounted on a white horse he actively associated himself with the soldiers. His lush, flowery display of military might against unarmed, penniless men was not an example of gallantry, and the esteem for Mac Arthur in the minds of many citizens suffered. As Chief of Staff his behavior of the day was not necessary, and it is doubtful that his actions were dictated by a desire to protect a fellow officer from adverse effects of public and Congressional opinion. General Mac Arthur certainly did not gain anything from being involved in the Bonus March.

Hoover, from the first day when the veterans came to Washington until the end, never once made a gesture of meeting the leaders of the movement. He had shown a distinct coolness and lack of sympathy toward the men. To the President the bonus marchers were a mob whose existence was a threat to the government itself. In using the Army against the men he was using a part

of the government against less fortunate members of society whose basic crime was in not being respectable and having a job. From a political point of view the use of force was a mistake, and Hoover as a man and as a politician gained nothing for his association with the Bonus March.

Glassford, who was probably the most sensible man, who was involved in the episode, only ended up loosing his job. From the arrival of the first groups at the end of May, he had shown a remarkable understanding and discretion in his handling of the problem which was laid before him. His contact with the men and their respect for him served to their mutual benefit. It was unfortunate that the other men in the government were not as well informed about the conditions in the Bonus Army as he.

Walter W. Waters, the onetime Comander-in-Chief of the Bonus Expeditionary Force, went to Pennsylvania after the July failure. His views widened past the bonus issue and included Wall Street. "The people have been betrayed by the servants of Wall Street who sit in the White House," said Waters.[44] He picked up semi-fascist ideas, and he began advocating a "khaki shirt" movement to clean out corruption in the government. He eventually retired from public view into his proper insignificance.

For the nameless mass of people who engaged in the march the rewards were equally as lacking as they had been for the leaders. The announced aim of the assembly in Washington was to procure passage of the bonus bill. The Bonus Army was using its physical presence in the capitol as pressure on Congress to pass what was special legislation for a special group. Their aims were as unworthy as their methods.

There was another side of the Bonus Army besides the issue of special veterans' legislation. That side was the representation by these men of the other millions all over the country who were feeling acute distress caused by forces of which they were not themselves personally responsible. These nameless millions were bearing the brunt of the social corrosion and depair caused by the depression, and they were appealing through the men of the Bonus Army to the only power capable of helping them, the national government. It was in this light of being simple, unemployed men who were protesting against the stagnation, want, and misery that makes the march more important than the narrow issue of a bonus payment. The veterans thus transformed themselves into actors of

pathos and tragedy presenting their parts on a stage of economic despair.

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7. W. S. Meyers and W. H. Newton, *The Hoover Administration* (N.Y., 1936), p. 68.
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11. F. C. Springer, "Glassford and the Siege of Washington," *Harpers Magazine*, CLXV (Nov., 1932), 642-643.
12. O. P. White, "General Glassford's Story," *Collier's*, XC (Oct. 29, 1932), 11.
13. Gilbert Seldes, *The Years of the Locust* (Boston, 1933), p. 182.
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16. *Ibid.*, July 15, 1932.
17. The text of Glassford's reply to Attorney General Mitchell's report is found in the N.Y.*Times*, Sept. 12, 1932.
18. The text of Attorney General Mitchell's report to President Hoover on the Bonus March is in the N.Y. *Times*, Sept. 12, 1932.
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20. *The New Republic*, August 10, 1932.
21. Springer, "Glassford and the Siege of Washington," pp. 649-650.
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24. Springer, "Glassford and the Siege of Washington, "p. 650.
25. T. G. Joslin, *Hoover off the Record* (N.Y., 1934), p. 264.
26. R. L. Wilbur and A. M. Hyde, *The Hoover Policies* (N.Y., 1937), p. 204.
27. Seldes, *The Years of the Locust*, p. 188.
28. N.Y. *Times*, July 28, 1932.
29. Mitchell's personal report in N.Y. *Times*, Sept. 12, 1932.
30. Text of Glassford's public statement in N.Y. *Times* Sept. 13, 1932.
31. Springer, "Glassford and the Siege of Washington," p. 654.
32. H. C. Hoover, *Memoirs* (N.Y., 1951), III, p. 227.
33. Text of Mitchell's personal report to President Hoover is in N.Y. *Times*, Sept. 12, 1932.
34. Glassford's public statement, text in N.Y. *Times*, Sept. 13, 1932.
35. Joslin, *Hoover off the Record*, p. 268.
36. Sections of Gen. Mac Arthur's personal report to President Hoover on the eviction of the Bonus Army are found in Joslin's *Hoover off the Record*, p. 269.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 269.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 271.
39. Hoover, *Memoirs*, III, p. 228.
40. Mac Arthur's personal report to the President in Joslin, *Hoover off the Record*, pp. 272-273.
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