

Bonus Army Removal Activity

Background:

Six years after the end of World War I Congress enacted a bill that would reward veterans of the conflict a cash bonus for their service. However, the legislation stipulated that the veterans would not collect their bonus until 1945.

This delayed gratification was acceptable to the World War I veterans during the prosperous '20s but the onslaught of the Great Depression changed their attitude. Out of work, destitute, and with families to feed, the veterans organized a march on Washington in May of 1932 to force Congress to immediately pay their bonus. An estimated 15,000 made their way to the nation's capital and dubbed themselves the "Bonus Expeditionary Force."

Using scrap wood, iron and any other loose materials they could find, the veterans set up ramshackle camps throughout the city. The largest housed an estimated 10,000 people. They waited in vain for Congress to act. On June 17 the Senate voted against the House-passed bill that would have given the Bonus Marchers immediate payment of their benefit.

Having no other place to go, the majority of the Bonus Army remained encamped in the city, despite the fact that Congress had adjourned for the summer. Finally, President Hoover ordered the Army to forcibly remove the veterans. On July 28 a force of tanks and cavalry under the command of General Douglas MacArthur stormed the camps and drove the veterans out. Their makeshift houses were then set ablaze.

Taken from: <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/pfbonusarmy.htm>

List of Characters:

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| • Herbert Hoover | President of the United States |
| • Pelham Glassford | Police Chief in Washington DC |
| • General Douglas MacArthur | Commander of United States Military |
| • Major Dwight Eisenhower | Assistant to General MacArthur |
| • Patrick Hurley | Secretary of War |
| • Walter Waters | Leader of the Bonus Marchers |
| • General George Van Horn Moseley | General MacArthur's Chief of Staff |
| • John Pace | Leader of the Communist Protesters |

“Revolution in the Air”: The Rout of the Bonus Army

Source 1: Telegram from Secretary of War to General Douglas MacArthur. July 28, 1932

Background information: This telegram was sent from the Secretary of War, based in Washington DC, reflecting the orders of the President of the United States. The telegram was sent to the military during the height of the Bonus March on the day of their forced removal.

Washington, D. C.

July 28, 1932

2:55 P.M.

TO: General Douglas MacArthur, 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 United State 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 due execution of this order.

PATRICK J. HURLEY

Secretary of War

From: <http://www.ecommcode.com/hoover/hooveronline/text/2.html>

“Revolution in the Air”: The Rout of the Bonus Army

Source 2: Press Release from President Herbert Hoover

Background information: This Presidential Press Release was issued on July 29, 1932, and was delivered the day after the Bonus Army was forcibly removed from Washington. A press release does not require the president or his press secretary to take questions from the press but to control the message to the public.

July 29, 1932

The President said:

"A challenge to the authority of the United States Government has been met, swiftly and firmly.

"After months of patient indulgence, the Government met overt lawlessness as it always must be met if the cherished processes of self-government are to be preserved. We cannot tolerate the abuse of Constitutional rights by those who would destroy all government, no matter who they may be. Government cannot be coerced by mob rule.

"The Department of Justice is pressing its investigation into the violence which forced the call for Army detachments, and it is my sincere hope that those agitators who inspired yesterday's attack upon the Federal authority may be brought speedily to trial in the civil courts. There can be no safe harbor in the United States of America for violence.

"Order and civil tranquility are the first requisites in the great task of economic reconstruction to which our whole people now are devoting their heroic and noble energies. This national effort must not be retarded in even the slightest degree by organized lawlessness. The first obligation of my office is to uphold and defend the Constitution and the authority of the law. This I propose always to do."

From: <http://www.ecommcode.com/hoover/hooveronline/text/76>.

“Revolution in the Air”: The Rout of the Bonus Army

Source 3: Dwight Eisenhower, *At Ease: Stories I Tell To Friends*. 1967.

Background Information: This memoir [personal history] was published 35 years after the removal of the Bonus Army. General Eisenhower had retired from the presidency of the United States in 1960 and published his book after General MacArthur and President Truman had died.

As quickly as the order was announced to us, General MacArthur decided that he should go into active command in the field. . . I told him that the matter could easily become a riot and I thought it highly inappropriate for the Chief of Staff of the Army to be involved in anything like a local or street-corner embroilment. (Of course, this was no "street-corner" matter -- but it still did not require the presence of the Chief of Staff in the streets)* General MacArthur disagreed, saying that it was a question of Federal authority in the District of Columbia, and because of his belief that there was "incipient revolution in the air," as he called it, he paid no attention to my dissent.

Instructions were received from the Secretary of War, who said he was speaking for the President, which forbade any troops to cross the bridge into the largest encampment of veterans, on the open ground beyond the bridge.

These instructions were brought to the troop by Colonel Wright, Secretary of the General Staff, and then by General Mosely of the Assistant Secretary's office. In neither instance did General MacArthur hear these instructions. He said he was too busy and did not want either himself or his staff bothered by people coming down and pretending to bring orders.

From: http://marchand.ucdavis.edu/lessons/bonusarmy/bonus_army.html

“Revolution in the Air”: The Rout of the Bonus Army

Source 4: Excerpt from General George Van Horn Moseley's unpublished autobiography, *One Soldier's Journey*.

Background Information: Gen. Moseley was Deputy Chief of Staff to General Douglas MacArthur in 1932. The selection below was probably written between the years 1936 and 1938.

Sometime after the troops had completed their mission on Pennsylvania Avenue, and before they crossed the Anacostia Bridge with the view of cleaning out the camp on the other side, Mr. Hurley, the Secretary of War, directed me to inform General MacArthur that the President did not wish the troops to cross the bridge that night, to force the evacuation of the Anacostia Camp. I left my office, contacted General MacArthur, and as we walked away, alone, from the others, I delivered that message to him and discussed it with him. He was very much annoyed in having his plans interfered with in any way until they were executed completely. After assuring myself that he understood the message, I left him. As I told him, I was only instructed to deliver the message to him, and having done that I returned to my office. Later I was asked from the White House if I had delivered the message, and assured that I had. Still later, I was instructed to repeat the message and assure myself that General MacArthur received it before he crossed the Anacostia Bridge. I sent Colonel Clement B. Wright, then Secretary to the General Staff, to repeat the message to MacArthur, and explain the situation as I had it from the White House. Colonel Wright contacted General MacArthur immediately, and explained the situation to him fully. As I now recall, Colonel Wright reported to me that the troops had not crossed the Anacostia Bridge, but were advancing on, the bridge. In any event, General MacArthur went on with his plan, carrying it through, compelling the complete evacuation of the large Anacostia Camp, which held most of the veterans. A mission of this kind is a very disagreeable one for the Army, but it was executed with precision and efficiency, and entirely without bloodshed.

From: http://marchand.ucdavis.edu/lessons/bonusarmy/bonus_army.html

“Revolution in the Air”: The Rout of the Bonus Army

Source 5: Douglas MacArthur's *Reminiscences*, 1964.

Background information: A Memoir published 32 years after the removal of the Bonus Army. General MacArthur had been retired from public life for 10 years when the book was published. In 1952 he was fired by President Harry Truman for disobeying orders.

For two fruitless months the (bonus marchers) lived in abject squalor making their daily marches to the Capitol, to the White House, and to all of the sacrosanct federal buildings where they hoped to loosen the purse strings of government. In the end, their frustration, combined with careful needling by the Communists, turned them in a sullen, riotous mob.

Through the month of June the tension mounted. . . . At night, morose men squatted by burning campfires listening silently to the endless speeches, always tinged with the increasing violence of Communist propaganda.

The (bonus march) was actually far deeper and more dangerous than an effort to secure funds from a nearly depleted federal treasury. The American Communist Party planned a riot of such proportions that it was hoped the United-States Army, in its efforts to maintain peace, would have to fire on the marchers. In this way, the Communists hoped to incite revolutionary action. Red organizers infiltrated the veteran groups and presently took command from their unwitting leaders.

As the violence increased, Pelham Glassford . . . twice consulted with me about calling on the Army for assistance. Both times I advised against it. But on July 28th the crisis was reached. A mob of 5,000 strong began to move up Pennsylvania Avenue toward the Treasury Building and the White House. The police were outnumbered five to one. Glassford was mauled and stripped of his police superintendent's gold badge, gunfire broke out, two men were killed, and a score or more badly injured. It was evident that the situation had gotten beyond the control of the local authorities.

Not a shot was fired, (by the federal troops). The sticks, clubs, and stones of the rioters were met only by tear gas and steady pressure. By 9:30 p.m. the area was cleared as far as the Anacostia Flats. The show of force, the excellent discipline of the troops, and the proper use of tear gas had turned the trick without serious bloodshed. At Anacostia Flats I received word from the Secretary of War, as we were in the midst of crossing the river, to suspend the operation at my discretion. I halted the command as soon as we had cleared the bridge, but at that moment the rioters set fire to their own camp. This concluded the proceedings for the night.

From: http://marchand.ucdavis.edu/lessons/bonusarmy/bonus_army.html

“Revolution in the Air”: The Rout of the Bonus Army

Source 6: *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: Volume 3: 1929-1941, The Great Depression*. Macmillan Company, 1952.

Background information: A memoir published 20 years after the Bonus Army and right after General Douglas MacArthur was fired for disobeying the orders of President Harry Truman during the Korean War.

Probably the greatest coup of all was the distortion of the story of the Bonus March on Washington in July 1932...Many Democratic speakers in the campaign of 1932 implied that I had murdered veterans on the streets of Washington.

The story was kept alive for twenty years. I, therefore, deal with it at greater length than would otherwise be warranted. As abundantly proved later on, the march was in considerable part organized and promoted by the Communists and included a large number of hoodlums and ex-convicts determined to raise a public disturbance. ...In the midst of this riot the District Commissioners, upon Glassford's urging, appealed to me. They declared that they could not preserve order in the Capital, that the police were greatly outnumbered, and were being overwhelmed. With the same right of call on me as municipalities have on the governor of any state, they asked for military assistance to restore order. At my direction to Secretary of War Hurley, General Douglas MacArthur was directed to take charge. General Eisenhower (then Colonel [actually major]) was second in command. Without firing a shot or injuring a single person, they cleaned up the situation. Certain of my directions to the Secretary of War, however, were not carried out. Those directions limited action to seeing to it that the disturbing factions returned to their camps outside the business district. I did not wish them driven from their camps, as I proposed that the next 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...

The misrepresentation of the bonus incident for political purposes surpassed any similar action in American history. Not only did Roosevelt use the incident in the 1932 campaign, but Democratic orators also continued to use it for twenty years after, despite all the refutations and proof to the contrary. I was portrayed as a murderer and an enemy of the veterans. A large part of the veterans believe to this day that men who served their country in war were shot down in the streets of Washington by the Regular Army at my orders — yet not a shot was fired or a person injured after the Federal government took charge...

Source	Who was responsible for the decision to remove the marchers? Evidence?
<p>Source 1: Telegram from Secretary of War to General Douglas MacArthur. July 28, 1932</p>	
<p>Source 2: Press Release from President Herbert Hoover</p>	
<p>Source 3: Dwight Eisenhower, <i>At Ease: Stories I Tell To Friends</i>. 1967.</p>	
<p>Source 4: Excerpt from General George Van Horn Moseley's unpublished autobiography, <i>One Soldier's Journey</i>.</p>	
<p>Source 5: Douglas MacArthur, <i>Reminiscences</i>, 1964.</p>	
<p>Source 6: <i>The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: Volume 3: 1929-1941, The Great Depression</i>. Macmillan Company, 1952.</p>	

