

## Document A: Fireside Chat (Excerpted from Original)

On a Sunday night a week after my Inauguration I used the radio to tell you about the banking crisis and the measures we were taking to meet it. I think that in that way I made clear to the country various facts that might otherwise have been misunderstood and in general provided a means of understanding which did much to restore confidence.

Tonight, eight weeks later, I come for the second time to give you my report; in the same spirit and by the same means to tell you about what we have been doing and what we are planning to do. . . .

First, we are giving opportunity of employment to one-quarter of a million of the unemployed, especially the young men who have dependents, to go into the forestry and flood-prevention work. This is a big task because it means feeding, clothing and caring for nearly twice as many men as we have in the regular army itself. In creating this civilian conservation corps we are killing two birds with one stone. We are clearly enhancing the value of our natural resources, and we are relieving an appreciable amount of actual distress. This great group of men has entered upon its work on a purely voluntary basis; no military training is involved and we are conserving not only our natural resources, but our human resources. One of the great values to this work is the fact that it is direct and requires the intervention of very little machinery.

Second, I have requested the Congress and have secured action upon a proposal to put the great properties owned by our Government at Muscle Shoals to work after long years of wasteful inaction, and with this a broad plan for the improvement of a vast area in the Tennessee Valley. It will add to the comfort and happiness of hundreds of thousands of people and the incident benefits will reach the entire Nation.

Next, the Congress is about to pass legislation that will greatly ease the mortgage distress among the farmers and the home owners of the Nation, by providing for the easing of the burden of debt now bearing so heavily upon millions of our people.

Our next step in seeking immediate relief is a grant of half a billion dollars to help the States, counties and municipalities in their duty to care for those who need direct and immediate relief.

The Congress also passed legislation authorizing the sale of beer in such States as desired it. This has already resulted in considerable reemployment and incidentally has provided much needed tax revenue.

We are planning to ask the Congress for legislation to enable the Government to

undertake public works, thus stimulating directly and indirectly the employment of many others in well-considered projects.

Further legislation has been taken up which goes much more fundamentally into our economic problems: The Farm Relief Bill seeks by the use of several methods, alone or together, to bring about an increased return to farmers for their major farm products, seeking at the same time to prevent in the days to come disastrous overproduction which so often in the past has kept farm commodity prices far below a reasonable return. This measure provides wide powers for emergencies. The extent of its use will depend entirely upon what the future has in store.

Well-considered and conservative measures will likewise be proposed which will attempt to give to the industrial workers of the country a more fair wage return, prevent cut-throat competition and unduly long hours for labor, and at the same time encourage each industry to prevent overproduction.

Our Railroad Bill falls into the same class because it seeks to provide and make certain definite planning by the railroads themselves, with the assistance of the Government, to eliminate the duplication and waste that is now resulting in railroad receiverships and continuing operating deficits.

I know that the people of this country will understand this and will also understand the spirit in which we are undertaking this policy. I do not deny that we may make mistakes of procedure as we carry out the policy. I have no expectation of making a hit every time I come to bat. What I seek is the highest possible batting average, not only for myself but for the team. Theodore Roosevelt once said to me: "If I can be right 75 percent of the time I shall come up to the fullest measure of my hopes."

To you, the people of this country, all of us, the members of the Congress and the members of this Administration, owe a profound debt of gratitude. Throughout the depression you have been patient. You have granted us wide powers; you have encouraged us with a widespread approval of our purposes. Every ounce of strength and every resource at our command we have devoted to the end of justifying your confidence. We are encouraged to believe that a wise and sensible beginning has been made. In the present spirit of mutual confidence and mutual encouragement we go forward.

**Source:** President Roosevelt's "Fireside Chat," May 7, 1933.

## Document B: African Americans and the New Deal (Original)

Until the New Deal, blacks had shown their traditional loyalty to the party of Abraham Lincoln by voting overwhelmingly Republican. By the end of Roosevelt's first administration, however, one of the most dramatic voter shifts in American history had occurred. In 1936, some 75 percent of black voters supported the Democrats. Blacks turned to Roosevelt, in part, because his spending programs gave them a measure of relief from the Depression and, in part, because the GOP had done little to repay their earlier support.

Still, Roosevelt's record on civil rights was modest at best. Instead of using New Deal programs to promote civil rights, the administration consistently bowed to discrimination. In order to pass major New Deal legislation, Roosevelt needed the support of southern Democrats. Time and time again, he backed away from equal rights to avoid antagonizing southern whites; although, his wife, Eleanor, did take a public stand in support of civil rights.

Most New Deal programs discriminated against blacks. The NRA, for example, not only offered whites the first crack at jobs, but authorized separate and lower pay scales for blacks. The Federal Housing Authority (FHA) refused to guarantee mortgages for blacks who tried to buy in white neighborhoods, and the CCC maintained segregated camps. Furthermore, the Social Security Act excluded those job categories blacks traditionally filled.

The story in agriculture was particularly grim. Since 40 percent of all black workers made their living as sharecroppers and tenant farmers, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) acreage reduction hit blacks hard. White landlords could make more money by leaving land untilled than by putting land back into production. As a result, the AAA's policies forced more than 100,000 blacks off the land in 1933 and 1934. Even more galling to black leaders, the president failed to support an anti-lynching bill and a bill to abolish the poll tax. Roosevelt feared that conservative southern Democrats, who had seniority in Congress and controlled many committee chairmanships, would block his bills if he tried to fight them on the race question.

Yet, the New Deal did record a few gains in civil rights. Roosevelt named Mary McLeod Bethune, a black educator, to the advisory committee of the National Youth Administration (NYA). Thanks to her efforts, blacks received a fair share of NYA funds. The WPA was colorblind, and blacks in northern cities benefited from its work relief programs. Harold Ickes, a strong supporter of civil rights who had several blacks on his staff, poured federal funds into black schools and hospitals in the South. Most blacks appointed to New Deal posts, however, served in token positions as advisors on black affairs. At best, they achieved a new visibility in government.

**Source:** *This article is from the Digital History online textbook.*

**Document C: Interview with Cotton Mill Worker (Excerpted from Original)**

I do think that Roosevelt is the biggest-hearted man we ever had in the White House. He undoubtedly is the most foresighted and can speak his thoughts the plainest of any man I ever heard speak. He's spoke very few words over the radio that I haven't listened to. It's the first time in my recollection that a president ever got up and said, 'I'm interested in and aim to do somethin' for the workin' man. Just knowin' that for once in the time of the country they was a man to stand up and speak for him, a man that could make what he felt so plain nobody could doubt he meant it, has made a lot of us feel a sight better even when they wasn't much to eat in our homes.

Roosevelt picked us up out of the mud and stood us up but whenever he turns loose I'm afraid we're goin' to fall and go deeper in the mud than we was before. That's because so many of his own party has turned against him and brought defeat to lots of this thinkin' and plannin'. The Bible says, 'A house divided against itself cannot stand, a kingdom divided against itself will end in desolation.' If they keep abuckin' against him and bigheads get in there that try to make too quick a turn back, desolation will follow in our country.

Roosevelt is the only president we ever had that thought the Constitution belonged to the poor man too. The way they've been a readin' it it seemed like they thought it said, "Him that's got money shall have the rights to life, freedom and happiness." Is they any freedom to bein' throwed out of yore home and have to watch yore children suffer just because you joined a organization you thought might better help you? Does it make you think you've got liberty to be treated like that when the you're workin' for has always had a right to join the association to multiply his own good livin'? Yessir, it took Roosevelt to read in the Constitution and find out them folks way back yonder that made it was talkin' about the pore man right along with the rich one. I am a Roosevelt man.

**Source: George Dobbin in *These Are Our Lives*, Federal Writers' Project, 1939.**

## Document D: Hot Lunches for Schoolchildren (Excerpted from Original)

One million undernourished children have benefited by the Works Progress Administration's school lunch program. In the past year and a half 80,000,000 hot well-balanced meals have been served at the rate of 500,000 daily in 10,000 schools throughout the country.

This work of rehabilitating underprivileged children is supervised in all instances by competent WPA workers, who while earning money with which to clothe and feed their own families, are given an opportunity for wider training to equip them to take their places in private employment when the opportunity arises. On March 31, 1937, the projects employed nearly 12,000 needy economic heads of families. . . .

The school lunch projects were originally intended to serve only children from relief families, but experience taught that growing children need a hot mid-day meal irrespective of their financial condition. It was found also that many children from homes where there was an adequate supply of certain kinds of food, were not receiving the proper kind of diet. It has become the policy in many communities, therefore, to serve a hot lunch to all the school children who care to partake. Parent-Teacher Associations have been largely responsible for making arrangements in many instances, whereby parents of children, who can afford it, contribute food supplies. This, however, is generally voluntary, and in no case is any distinction made in the lunch rooms between those who do and those who do not make a contribution.

Many of the children, who are fed on WPA projects, come from homes where milk is a luxury. In some instances, teachers have reported that nearly all their pupils who partake of the school lunch, have no meal during the 24 hours of the day other than that furnished on the project. For many children, who are required to leave home early in the morning and travel long distances after school hours to reach their homes, the WPA lunch constitutes the only hot meal of the day. In an even greater number of cases, children come to school with either no breakfast at all or a meager one at best.

Only those who have had occasion to witness the type of lunch that many of the children were bringing to school before the inauguration of the WPA, can fully understand or appreciate the value of those projects.

Insufficient or improper food takes not only a physical toll, but a mental toll as well. Children after all are sensitive beings. In some instances, children, from underprivileged families have been known to slip away alone to eat their lunches in some secluded spot--ashamed to have the other school children witness their meager fare.

In some of the poorer communities of Georgia, for example, many of the children brought only cold bread or baked sweet potatoes. Sometimes a child's lunch consisted of a biscuit and a piece of fried fish. If any meat at all was included, it was usually fat white meat. Prior to the inauguration of the WPA school lunch projects, a cold sweet potato or a poorly cooked biscuit spread with fat constituted the usual lunch of many

children in the rural communities of South Carolina.

Before the institution of the WPA projects, many children, in certain sections of Colorado, were reported to be bringing for lunch a piece of corn bread with molasses or a cold pancake. The common kind of meat found in the children's lunches--when there was meat--was salt pork. In many of the rural districts the lunches which were brought, were frozen or half-frozen by noon.

Even after the establishment of the WPA project, an effort was made to have each child in certain Colorado communities bring his or her own bread from home to supplement the hot dishes. This had to be discontinued because the bread that the children brought was not fit to eat. It was dirty, dry and even mouldy.

School attendance has increased and classroom work has improved in every school in South Carolina where the school lunch project operates. Satisfactory gains in weight have been noted in previously undernourished school children. In Greenville County, for example, children, who were weighed at the beginning of the project, have been weighed again at the end of each five-week period. The records showed an average gain in weight of from three to eight pounds per child for the first five-week period.

Teachers in Decatur County, Georgia, declare that the school attendance for children, who are fed on three WPA school lunch projects, has increased 80 percent as a result of the wholesome, well-balanced, nourishing noonday meals which are served daily in the schools. . . .

To further this work of overcoming malnutrition and preventing its further progress, certain public tax-supported bodies in Minnesota have sponsored allied projects for which the WPA has supplied the labor. In some instances, milk stations provide mid-morning lunches for the needy, and in several poor districts, where children are known to leave home on almost empty stomachs milk and graham crackers are served at school before the beginning of classes.

In New York City alone, one WPA project employs 2,346 persons who serve free lunches to thousands of pupils in over 1,000 schools. Health records show uniformly marked improvement in the children's physical condition, and scholastic records show a parallel upward trend. Teachers state that pupils, who once exhibited sullen unresponsiveness, have become alert, interested, and in many cases, above the average in intelligence.

Through the daily service of warm, nourishing food, prepared by qualified, needy women workers, the WPA is making it possible for many underprivileged children of the present to grow into useful, healthy citizens of the future.

**Source:** Speech by Ellen S. Woodward, Assistant Administrator, Works Progress Administration.

Document E: Unemployment Statistics

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE ESTIMATES, 1919-1941

Year	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5) (6) (7)			(8) (9) (10)		
	Meredith Givens: Minimum Nonagricultural Labor	Paul Douglas: Transportation, Coal Mining, Building, & Manufacturing	Daniel Carson: Nonfarm Wage & Salary Workers	David Weintraub	As a Percent of the Civilian Labor Force Leber-Gott-BLS Coen Darby			As a Percent of the Nonfarm Employees Leber-Gott-BLS Coen Darby		
1919	--	6.9	--	--	1.4	--	--	2.4	--	--
1920	5.1	7.2	10.1	6.0	5.2	--	--	8.6	--	--
1921	15.3	23.1	22.3	25.0	11.7	--	--	19.5	--	--
1922	12.1	18.3	16.4	22.0	6.7	7.3	--	11.4	12.3	--
1923	5.2	7.9	9.9	11.0	2.4	4.5	--	4.1	7.4	--
1924	7.7	12.0	12.7	13.0	5.0	6.0	--	8.3	10.0	--
1925	5.7	8.9	9.4	13.0	3.2	4.9	--	5.4	8.9	--
1926	5.2	7.5	6.6	11.0	1.8	4.1	--	2.9	6.7	--
1927	6.3	--	7.5	12.0	3.3	5.0	--	5.4	8.2	--
1928	--	--	8.0	13.0	4.2	5.5	--	6.9	8.9	--
1929	--	--	5.7	10.0	3.2	5.5	3.2	5.3	8.8	5.3
1930	--	--	14.3	19.0	8.7	9.1	8.7	14.2	14.5	14.1

1931	--	--	--	--	15.9	13.0	15.3	25.2	20.7	24.3
1932	--	--	--	--	23.6	18.8	22.5	36.3	29.4	34.5
1933	--	--	--	--	24.9	19.8	20.6	37.6	30.6	31.1
1934	--	--	--	--	21.7	21.3	16.0	32.6	31.8	24.0
1935	--	--	--	--	20.1	19.5	14.2	30.2	29.1	21.4
1936	--	--	--	--	16.9	16.6	9.9	25.4	24.9	14.9
1937	--	--	--	--	14.3	14.1	9.1	21.3	21.0	13.7
1938	--	--	--	--	19.0	17.8	12.5	27.9	26.2	18.3
1939	--	--	--	--	17.2	16.0	11.3	25.2	23.7	16.5
1940	--	--	--	--	14.6	14.4	9.5	21.3	21.1	13.9
1941	--	--	--	--	9.9	--	6.0	14.4	--	8.7

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**Source:** Gene Smiley, "Recent Unemployment Rate Estimates for the 1920s and 1930s," *Journal of Economic History*, June 1983.



## Document F: Song

"No Depression in Heaven"

Out here the hearts of men are failing  
For these are latter days we know  
The Great Depression now is spreading  
God's words declared it would be so

I'm going where there's no depression  
To the lovely land that's free from care  
I'll leave this world of toil and trouble  
My home's in heaven, I'm going there

In that bright land there'll be no hunger  
No orphan children crying for bread  
No weeping widows toil or struggle  
No shrouds, no coffins, and no dead

I'm going where there's no depression  
To the lovely land that's free from care  
I'll leave this world of toil and trouble  
My home's in heaven, I'm going there

This dark hour of midnight nearing  
Tribulation time will come  
The storm will hurl a midnight fierce  
And sweep lost millions to their doom

I'm going where there's no depression  
To the lovely land that's free from care  
I'll leave this world of toil and trouble  
My home's in heaven, I'm going there

**Source:** *The Carter Family, "No Depression in Heaven," 1936.*

## Document G: Whither the American Indian? (Original)

Congress is authorized to appropriate \$10 million as a revolving fund from which loans may be made to these chartered corporations for the purpose of promoting the economic development of the tribes. Repayments are credited to the revolving fund and are available for new loans. It was this fund which made possible the fresh start of the Mescalero Apache tribe. The record of collections on these loans has been very good.

About seventy-five of the tribal corporations are now functioning, with varying degrees of success, and the number continues to grow. The Jicarillas have bought their trading post and are running it; the Chippewas as run a tourist camp; the Northern Cheyennes have a very successful livestock cooperative; the Swinomish of Washington have a tribal fishing business. There are plenty of others to prove these corporations can be made to work.

So far, however, it has shown up best where a small, close-knit group is involved, but less satisfactorily on such large reservations as those of the Sioux, where distances are great and there is a certain amount of mutual distrust and jealousy between communities. Smaller cooperatives, at least for the present, may be indicated. In the case of the Blackfeet, the tribal council, when elected, proved to be predominantly Indians of mixed blood, and the full bloods of the reservation, amounting to about 22 percent of the population, complained that their interests were being subordinated and neglected wherever they conflicted with those of the mixed bloods.

Indian families are definitely in the lower third of the American population, so far as income is concerned. The average for a family of four during 1937 was \$600 or its equivalent in subsistence. Work relief and direct relief made up much too large a proportion of this. Only some of the families getting oil royalties and a very few others are in the tenth of the United States population with family incomes of more than \$2500.

### Indians at Work

About 40 PERCENT OF ALL INDIANS OVER TEN YEARS OLD ARE engaged for at least a part of the year in pursuits which bring in cash. Half of these are unskilled laborers, the other half do various types of semi-skilled and skilled work. Fishing brings in sizable amounts to some tribes in the Pacific Northwest. Lumbering is carried on in Oregon, Montana, Arizona, Wisconsin and other states. The sustained yield management of timber reserves now almost universally applied should insure an income indefinitely for the relatively small number of Indians with commercial forests. Nearly all Indians are farmers or stockbreeders, and as such raise at least a part of their own food supply. The cooperatives which are springing up all over the Indian country help with marketing and do much to improve farming methods and increase production of saleable crops.

A growing source of income has been the sale of arts and crafts. This has long brought in sizable sums to the southwest tribes, and everyone is familiar with Navajo blankets

and jewelry and with Pueblo pottery. In fact, the popularity of these products has brought out a flood of inferior factory-made imitations which has hurt the sale of authentic items. . . .

### **Homes and Health**

HOUSING HAS BEEN FOR YEARS AS SERIOUS A PROBLEM ON THE Indian reservations as in city slums. Best housed are the Pueblos of New Mexico and Arizona, who escaped the destructive effects of the allotment act and early white penetration of their traditional homeland. Since they live in a mild climate, and have plenty of building materials—stone and adobe—they have managed well, and still do. On the plains it has been a different story. Nearly land: less, penniless, with no way to make a living, and no satisfactory natural building materials at hand, such tribes as the Sioux, Winnebago, Cheyenne and Arapaho have lived through the cold winters in dirt hovels, tarpaper shacks, ancient tents and other makeshift dwellings for many years. . . .

The truth is that the New Deal Indian administration is neither as successful as its publicity says it is, nor as black and vicious a failure as the severest critics would have us believe. Many Indian problems remain unsolved, but every one has been attacked. If eddies have been stirred up, there is still a powerful current in Indian affairs, and it seems to be in a direction which gives this splendid race an opportunity to shape its own destiny.

**Source:** Alden Stevens, "Whither the American Indian?" Survey Magazine of Social Interpretation, March 1, 1940.

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