

THE

PENNSYLVANIA

BONUS MARCH

by
Felix Morrow

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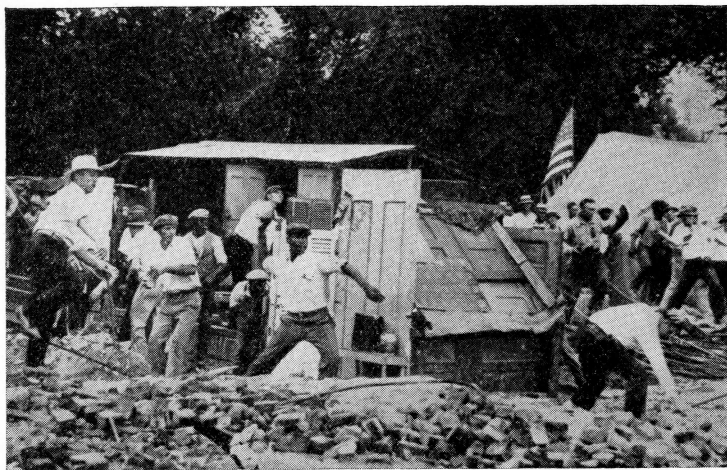


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"Acme"

The veterans defending their shacks against Major-General Glassford and his police when the Federal government ordered the evacuation of the Bonus Army from Washington

THE BONUS MARCH

BY FELIX MORROW

"400 World War veterans en route to Washington . . . ran roughshod over the pleadings and orders of railroad officials today and reached St. Louis from Council Bluffs, Iowa, in five commandeered freight cars which they compelled a train crew to hook on to a train."

"From California a group of 400 left last week . . . a similar sized contingent left Alabama at about the same time . . ."

"250 Seize Freight Train at Brunswick, Md."

"Free transportation for the 'army' was agreed upon today by Mississippi county and municipal authorities after the veterans fought with police in railroad yards at New Orleans."

"Detroit veterans commandeer street cars to leave town."

"A second caravan of 131 cars from Los Angeles, loaded with bonus seekers, passed through. Fifty cars joined the lines in Hagerstown, Md."

"Caseyville, Ill., May 24.— . . . the veterans today organized

a 'workers council' to assume command. . . . It was this council that ordered the captured train released and accepted instead Sheriff Munie's offer of trucks."

—*Washington News and Washington Star*, May 20-24, 1932.

Masses in motion! Grim portent, indeed, for banker and capitalist politician. The aroused spirit of the unemployed veterans on the march, even as feebly reflected in the Washington newspapers, threw a pall of fear over official Washington.

The meaning of mass action had been revealed to destitute veterans by the National Hunger March, December, 1931. Participating in that march were 400 ex-servicemen who held a conference on demands of veterans and issued a call of struggle for immediate payment of the bonus. In April this demand was brought before the Ways and Means Committee of Congress by a delegation of the Workers Ex-Servicemen's League. The demand turned down, they called for a mass march.

All veterans were to be in Washington on June 8 for a monster demonstration to Congress. Every veteran and veterans' organization that could be reached were balloted. The Workers Ex-Servicemen's League and the unorganized veterans voted overwhelmingly in favor; the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars refused to permit a vote and attempted to stop the march; but their own rank and file repudiated them and joined their comrades.

Spontaneous marches of small groups of veterans had occurred and had come to nothing. The issuing of a call and the setting of a date by the Workers Ex-Servicemen's League crystallized the march sentiment and galvanized the veterans into concerted action. As the date for converging on Washington approached, the veterans were on the move throughout the country.

The struggles the marchers encountered should not obscure the fact that in town after town throughout the country sympathetic workers and storekeepers fed them, sheltered them, raised funds to help them onward. But mainly it was a terrific

struggle to keep their faces turned toward Washington. Most of the "free transportation" came only after hand-to-hand struggles with the police, as in New Orleans, where two pitched battles were fought in the railroad yards and shots were fired by the railroad guards; fighting also in East St. Louis, where the veterans soaped the rails to capture a freight train; in fact, struggles with authorities everywhere from Council Bluffs to Pittsburgh. Perhaps the biggest fight occurred in Cleveland; after forcing the city officials to provide sleeping quarters and meals, a bonus army of 1,500 under John Pace, a leader of the Workers Ex-Servicemen's League, demanded railroad transportation and to get it took possession of the Pennsylvania railroad yards for fourteen hours; they fought the police for hours; the railroad officials put in a call for the militia. New Orleans, East St. Louis, Council Bluffs, Pittsburgh, Chicago—every railroad center saw the bonus marchers smash their way through to commandeer trains or have trucks provided by the state.

The government did its best to smash the march. General Pelham D. Glassford, Superintendent of the Washington police and in charge of the government offensive against the veterans, has since said:

I devoted every resource at my command to this endeavor to stop the bonus march but it proved a failure. I conferred with Daniel Willard, Jr., representing the Baltimore & Ohio, to get the assistance of the railroads to discourage the advance. I secured the assistance of the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars to help to the same end. (*New York American*, October 31, 1932.)

Local authorities, too, sent their police forces against the marchers, fearing the moral strength that the veterans' action gave to all unemployed.

Marchers began to arrive in Washington on May 25. By May 30 there were two thousand in the city and ten times that number nearing the Capital. Official Washington stared at once docile soldiers grimly bearing slogans: "Heroes of 1917—Bums of 1932," "We Fought for Democracy—What Did We Get." But these still undeveloped criticisms of imperialist

war were as nothing to the sight in Washington—a Southern city, where jim-crowing is slightly concealed only because it is the national capital—of white southern veterans marching in the same contingents with Negro veterans, the Chicago rank and file regiment of five hundred under the leadership of a Negro, Joe Gardiner—complete unity between black and white, welded together by their common need. And “Reds,” Workers Ex-Servicemen’s League members, marching into Washington shoulder to shoulder with insurgent American Legionnaires! Official Washington gasped, then moved to the offensive. The government had failed to smash the bonus army before it arrived. How to smash it now?

THE GOVERNMENT PLANS TO SMASH THE BONUS ARMY

General Glassford now claims that there were two different plans for handling the bonus army, his own and Hoover’s. We shall see, however, from Glassford’s own words, that either alternative meant smashing the bonus army and led to the use of troops. Basically there was but one plan, the usual plan of the capitalist class and its government to suppress the masses by whatever means.

The first objective of the plan for breaking up the bonus army was to get the veterans as far away from the Capitol as possible. As Glassford puts it:

It was my plan to place most of the veterans in camps across the Anacostia River, in the southeast section of the city. I realized that the drawbridges might prove of strategical value should trouble occur. Two excellent sites were located; one was at Anacostia Park, the other a 30-acre tract near the District Line... (Camp Bartlett). (*New York American*, November 1, 1932.)

The second point in the plan was to isolate the experienced rank and file veterans from the more backward sections, in order to make easier the task of misleading and dissolving the army. On May 28, therefore, Glassford announced that “Communist-led veterans are to be separated from loyal veterans.” The *Federated Press* dispatch of that date said:

Administration officials believe that by separation of the radicals from the conservatives in the bonus march movement, they can prove that the whole project is a Communist plot, and that most of the marchers can be persuaded to go quickly home.

It is important to remember that this segregation of radicals was made, not by the other veterans, but by force, by the government.

The third point of the plan was to get control of the leadership of the bonus army. Glassford has since boasted:

From the very beginning of the invasion, you see, I realized that they needed a supervising leader and so . . . without going through the formality of an election, or even formally notifying them of what was happening, I simply took the job over. (*Colliers*, October 29, 1932.)

Nothing could have been more conflicting and contradictory than the dual rôle I assumed as a consequence of the B. E. F. invasion of Washington. I became at once the commander-in-chief of two opposing armies—the Washington police force and the bonus expeditionary force. (*New York American*, November 1.)

Glassford was using, however, not only every “peaceful” means for disintegrating the bonus army. When necessary, he was as ready to use force as were Hoover and Hurley. Conclusive proof is the photostatic copy of General Glassford’s letter to the District Commissioners of June 3, 1932, which was printed in the *New York Times* of October 4, and which ends with the following:

Recommendation: That preparations be made by the Commissioners to declare an emergency, and to provide for the use of the National Guard, or to place in effect “The White Plan.”

(signed) PELHAM D. GLASSFORD

The “White Plan” is the official designation of the War Department of the plan to be followed by the regular army in “the quelling of serious internal disorders.”

This, then, as Glassford has since frankly admitted, was the plan to smash the bonus army: isolating it from the city of Washington, dividing it, and controlling its leadership. If these were not sufficient he planned, as his letter of June 3 reveals, to use the regular troops.

But when the bonus army came to Washington Glassford

posed as its friend, went through the motions of helping it to get food, and fraternized with the men. Glassford claims that a meeting of 400 bonus marchers on May 26 elected him their secretary-treasurer; this mandate he considered sufficient to take control of the whole army when it arrived. Actually, of course, as he has himself boasted, he took the job over "without going through the formality of an election."

His next move was to rig up a commanding staff for the army, the time-honored capitalist method of having its agents within the masses; for Glassford's personal control of the army could not have lasted a week. When there were already 2,000 men in Washington the Oregon contingent of 286 arrived under Walter W. Waters. Waters was a canning factory superintendent who left his job for the march, an unscrupulous adventurer, who came cap in hand to Glassford to offer his services. He got into Washington a day ahead of his own men, saw Glassford and was immediately put into command of the situation. He had the billets, the food, and the backing of Glassford: he became commander. Glassford explains it this way: "Because of his success in handling his march, the commandership was offered to Waters, and he accepted." *Who offered him the commandership? Glassford.* When attempts were made later to oust Waters, Glassford stood back of him. There was never an election of a commander. Glassford has praised Waters as "a tower of strength and an able ally during most of the occupation." We shall quickly see why.

STOOL PIGEONS AND D. OF J. AGENTS AS "LEADERS"

Glassford and Waters gathered together a like-minded lot as an executive staff: H. B. Foulkrod, since exposed as a Burns agent formerly engaged in "industrial work"—a labor spy—in Philadelphia; Doak E. Carter, Chief of the Pennsylvania Railroad police in Cleveland during the shopmen's strike of 1922—there were men in camp who had been clubbed then at his orders; A. H. Milton, who had been in the Workers Ex-Servicemen's League's Chicago contingent, was under suspicion

as a stool-pigeon, disappeared, and turned up on Water's staff; French, who was recognized by former Wobblies as a Department of Justice Agent who had operated on the coast. This was the "leadership" imposed by the government—to "fight" for the bonus!

In accordance with Glassford's plan to get the marchers as far away as possible from the Capitol, Waters set up camp on the other side of the river, in Anacostia Park, and incoming contingents were sent there, or even farther, to Camp Bartlett on the outermost edge of the District. These incoming contingents, before they had a chance to see what was going on, were picked up while still on the road by "recruiting officers" sent out by Waters. I saw one such contingent being marched through Washington to Anacostia, trudging trustfully behind a burly, thug-faced Waters man. But as the men marched they sang—vital symbol of the storm of revolt that was brewing—no less revolutionary a song than "Solidarity Forever"! I looked again at the Waters thug; he walked ahead in blissful ignorance.

But for a while—long enough, indeed, to hamstring the fight for the bonus—Glassford and Waters were able to mislead the men. In Anacostia a regular dictatorship was set up. About 500 Military Police were chosen, given clubs and police powers and they used them. Anybody who complained about anything was run out of camp or turned over to the police as a Red. Separate kitchens were set up for the Military Police and the officers. Officers and police constituted a separate class: recognizable by their air of pugnacious authority, their well-fed look, their conspicuously better dress, especially the commanders and officers, in new military clothes and shiny leather puttees.

The need for food and shelter was sabotaged from beginning to end. For the first two weeks most of the men slept practically on the bare ground. There was no organizing of the work of building shelters. When individual twos and threes set about building one, some officer would order them to move it on the pretext that their site was in the middle of a projected

road. To the very last, no one got any aid from the official organization in preparing shelters; by the roughest standards, the men were inadequately, dangerously, unhealthily housed. With any organization decent shelters could have been devised, for materials and men were plentiful.

Similarly, the gathering of food was sabotaged. While the ruling clique and the Military Police ate well in their separate kitchens, the bonus marchers at no time had more than two pitiful meals a day, often only one. A man who worked in the general commissary told me that farmers' associations and individuals were writing in throughout the two months offering quantities of food; most of the offers were ignored, even when transportation was offered or the food was within easy trucking distance. Truckloads of food were left on nearby roads to rot. Funds poured in with never an accounting. Waters later prevented an investigation by incorporating the "Bonus Expeditionary Force," vesting ownership in himself and his cronies. Glassford boasted to a newspaperman: "I kept the chow thin on them."

The purpose of the march on Washington had been to put mass pressure on Congress. The date set by the Workers Ex-Servicemen's League, June 8, for the main body of veterans to arrive in Washington, was for a monster demonstration before Congress. Glassford moved to frustrate this:

I granted a permit for the parade, and then set about blocking any chance for its success... Arrangements were made with the loyal veterans in town to hold a parade the afternoon of June 7... (*New York American*, November 2.)

Instead of a mass demonstration on the 8th, therefore, Glassford and Waters ran a patriotic parade the evening before, when Congress had safely closed for the night. Instead of presenting demands to Congress, the parade was a sentimental orgy of patriotic songs, slogans and protestations of loyalty to the government which was denying the veterans the bonus.

And this parade, which was only called to frustrate a real mass demonstration, was the only event remotely approxi-

mating mass action which was organized by the Waters leadership. They frowned on any and every form of mass action and if it arose tried to crush it. Every time an issue appeared which roused the men, every means, including a vaudeville troupe led by Waters' assistant, "Red" Donlin, was used to turn the men's minds away from the issue. The men had come to Washington to force Congress to give them their bonus; Waters tried to keep them performing a series of patriotic ceremonies, from a solemn service at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier to the daily raising and lowering of the flag at Anacostia. Waters even tried to institute a daily and lengthy military drill; but the men soon balked. And to get the bonus, instead of mass demonstrations a legislative committee was set up to lobby for the bonus bill—with Foulkrod, the Burns agent, as chairman.

THE TERROR AGAINST THE RANK AND FILE

This process of disintegrating the strength of the bonus army went hand in hand with a ruthless terror against any who proposed that the veterans stick to their objective of winning the bonus and use realistic, militant means of getting it. Especially was this terror directed against the Workers Ex-Servicemen's League and the Rank and File Committee it supported. The Red scare, with all its hoary subterfuges, was raised. Dynamite was "found" in Anacostia, "in an area which had just been vacated by members of the Workers Ex-Servicemen's League." General Glassford discovered "a Red plot to precipitate rioting." The newspapers were filled with lynch stuff; an example is the *Washington Post* cartoon on June 7, showing a veteran beating a whiskered Red who is seeing stars from the concussions and is being told: "We have only one flag, see!" Two Rank and File Committee leaders, John Pace and Walter Eicker, were threatened with death by the head of his Military Police in Waters' presence. The Red hunt was given religious sanction by Father Cox and by Father Charles E. Coughlin, Detroit's radio preacher of the "golden hour sermon," who donated \$5,000 to the veterans' fund "to

show that Communism is not the way out," making a condition of his gift that Communist propaganda be kept from the camps. Twice, when other Red scares lacked, the men at Anacostia were tumbled out of bed in the middle of the night with the cry that the Reds were coming to raid the empty commissary!

Waters issued orders that the Military Police weed out radicals and turn them over to the police. This is a matter of record. Waters' *B. E. F. News*, August 27, said:

Daily, Communists attempting to distribute their literature were escorted out of the B. E. F. camps and turned over to the Metropolitan Police or the secret service operators of the Federal government.

How many nameless martyrs to the cause of the veterans there were, we shall probably never know. We know something about the men beaten up, permanently maimed, nearly killed, because they distributed leaflets or spoke out for a real fight for the bonus, in the name of the Workers Ex-Servicemen's League and the Rank and File movement. But there were men who were working in this movement who disappeared in Anacostia and have never been heard from since; and undoubtedly there were others, unorganized, simply honest veterans, who were "given the works." Glassford has since said, with cold, sardonic humor:

The B. E. F. military police worked intimately with the metropolitan police under my command. . . .

The Communists sought to carry their propaganda into the camps of the regular B. E. F. The police discouraged this as much as possible. *Where the metropolitan police under my command had to stop, as a matter of law, the B. E. F. military police carried on.*" (My italics, F. M.) (*New York American*, November 2.)

No doubt that accounts for the veterans' corpses, fished out of Anacostia River, heads battered in unrecognizably, which I saw in the Washington morgue.

Even the most conservative of the honest bonus marchers that I talked to could not understand why they should be told to turn over to the police and secret service, Communists and rank and filers who disagreed with Waters' tactics. Among

men driven out of camp, beaten up or put in the hands of police were their own friends who had spoken up against obvious betrayal. I remember one Texan, a gaunt church-going Baptist, who was very much puzzled by this. "I don't agree with the Reds and all that," he said, "but they want the bonus as bad as we do. They're fighting hard as hell. Why turn them over to the government which is against the bonus? Reds or not, it means turning our allies over to our enemies." He was puzzled only because he was assuming that the Waters' leadership was honest, instead of being in the hands of Glassford and the government.

VETERANS BEGIN TO REVOLT

But from the first the masses of the veterans, even when they did not realize what the government and their leaders were up to, instinctively broke through the sabotage schemes. Waters' own Oregon contingent failed to follow him to Anacostia, refusing to budge out of Washington.



"International"

The bonus marchers demonstrating before the Capitol under the leadership of the Rank-and-File Committee for the immediate payment of the bonus

That same week there was a revolt against Anacostia and Camp Bartlett. Contingents coming into Anacostia under militant leadership found that their leaders were secretly arrested and separated from their men, and new commanders, Waters men, were put in charge. John Pace, head of the Michigan contingent, slipped through this trap, and when his men were sent to Camp Bartlett, joined them there and started a move into the heart of the city. Some 2,000 Southerners evacuated Bartlett, marched into the city, and took over the government buildings at Pennsylvania Avenue and Seventh Street. Pace's Michigan contingent took over government buildings at 13th and B Streets, S. W., and were joined by the Chicago and New York contingents who marched out of Anacostia. Despite cajoling and terrorism, other groups marched out of Anacostia until the movement into the city became general, and about half the bonus army joined. Despite threats by Glassford to oust them and Waters' attempts to cut off their food supplies, the men held these government buildings, in easy walking distance of the Capitol, until the very last. Thus, from the first, the plans of Glassford and Waters to isolate the men from the city and keep them all under Military Police surveillance in Anacostia and Camp Bartlett, went astray.

And despite their misleaders' orders, the men broke into significant mass actions. On June 18, when the Senate defeated the Bonus Bill, more than three-fourths of the 20,000 men then in the bonus army marched to the Capitol. It became clear why Glassford had chosen Anacostia Park, across the river, as the camp; the only reason the rest of the veterans did not get to the Capitol was that they were quartered in Anacostia and the police had pulled up the drawbridges. When the news of the Senate's action was announced at the Capitol, spokesmen rose from the throng to demand a permanent picket of Congress; Capitol Plaza resounded with roars of approval. Waters was hurriedly summoned and was preceded by his vaudeville troupe, "Red" Donlin turning capers until Waters arrived. Meanwhile the Burns agent, Foulkrod, pleaded tearfully with the men to go back to their billets. "Don't antagonize the police

or the citizens. They are our friends. We want to keep them." Waters arrived, begged the men to disperse, praised them for being "gentlemen," and called for the singing of "America." The men jeered, and instead struck up "My bonus lies over the ocean, bring back my bonus to me." The undercover agents of the Department of Justice who honeycombed the bonus army started cheers for Waters and Foulkrod, and after Waters had sworn that the Senate was to reconsider the bill, started the men dispersing. But the mass demonstration had been held and was soon followed by others.

The weeks after the Senate defeated the Bonus Bill were a time of growing and sobering realization by the men that their fight was an uphill struggle, for which the Waters tactics were worse than inadequate. The slogans and demands of the Central Rank and File Committee filtered through the barriers, in spite of a new campaign of terror against the "Reds." As the masses of the veterans took up the fighting slogans, their "leaders" had to follow or lose control of the men. What a travesty, to hear the rank and file slogans mouthed by Waters, Foulkrod, Carter! Not, of course, that they carried them out.

The crucial slogan they fought against until the end: the demand for a mass picket of the Capitol to force the payment of the bonus and to see that Congress would not adjourn until it passed the Bonus Bill. As the Central Rank and File Committee continued to push this demand, and their leaflets and speakers exposed the B. E. F. leadership for what it was, the veterans grew restive and resentment against their leaders grew; it became clear that a revolt against Waters was impending, and that the picket of the Capitol would start in spite of him.

PICKETING THE CAPITOL

The arrival of a California contingent on July 7, who refused to accept Waters' dictatorship, crystallized the situation. This group, the W. E. S. L. and rank and file units, and insurgents from Anacostia, marched on the Capitol on July 11, and pro-

ceeded to picket for five successive days and nights: a gruelling ordeal, indeed, a heroic episode of historic importance.

They were marching night and day. Here one saw the splendid calibre of the men, what stuff they were made of. Here was something that was worth doing and that seemed to them worth doing and they did it, though they broke their feet and their health. They marched in a long single-line picket up and down Capitol plaza, singing, and then for long periods walking with no sound but their steps and the creaks of their broken shoes. When their shoes burned them so they could walk no longer, they took them off and marched barefooted. Congressmen walked by with averted faces; Congress sat uneasily for five days, hurrying through its business so it could get away from that picket line, to sneak out of Washington under police escort. Men dropped out of the picket line to rest a little, and others took their places; the "Death March" went on without stopping. The police kept automobiles—thousands came from near-by cities to see the march—from the Capitol grounds, and tried to keep the citizens away; but day and night enormous crowds came to see the men who marched continuously.

As the picket wound and unwound itself before the halls of Congress, friendly newspapermen would come out and report expertly on the precise state of fear that was contorting the various Congressional demagogues. "You sure have those jelly-pots quivering." On the third day of the picket, July 14, one of the jelly-pots—Vice-President "Charlie" Curtis—nearly fell to pieces in his panic and called out a company of marines. They arrived suddenly and as suddenly disappeared. The mystery was soon solved. The government was not yet ready for naked force and Curtis' order had been countermanded; but, equally cogent reason, some thirty of the marine company had mutinied and refused to leave barracks, after which the rest of the company could scarcely be relied on for action against the bonus marchers. The explanation for the daring action of the mutineers was that the marines are largely composed of veterans, comrades in arms of the bonus

marchers they were sent against.* Enormously heartened by this act of solidarity of their former "buddies," the marchers went on, on, in their long picket line.

As it grew very late and the people of Washington finally went to bed, and the men marched with no one watching them, they turned to the sweet sentimental songs of their youth, things like "Oh Genevieve" and "In the Gloaming." One saw, starkly, the grim turn in the process of American life. They had grown up to sing these songs evenings on the porches of small towns. If one closed one's eyes, one saw the quiet scene; then one looked at the plodding line of men no longer young, in torn, dirty rags; but marching, picketing, fighting.

The grim turn in the process of American life had come upon them unawares. They had been farmers, salesmen, workers, who had grown up in the America still bathed in the illusion of rising in the world. They had been dragged away to fight an imperialist war, but came back soon to the farm, office and factory, to earn a living amid shouts of prosperity; almost suddenly, they had lost their farms and jobs, and had been ruthlessly and probably permanently thrust into the ranks of the unemployed. They had still not assimilated what had happened to them.

They were getting a thorough lesson in trickery and suppression at the hands of the government itself. They were only now learning, slowly and painfully, that the state is, by its very nature, that of the capitalist class. It was a hard lesson to learn. Their very hunger and insecurity misled many into a sentimentally false memory of their army life; they remembered that food and shelter were provided in the army, and forgot death, maiming and blood on one's hands; so when the Waters' leadership had been imposed on them, dictatorial, military leadership had had a connotation of security. But whatever illusions they shared, these marchers *were* marching; they were

* The government was to draw a lesson from this; the troops that were later used against the veterans were picked for their extreme youth, none out of his teens, and the marines were not used at all.

demonstrating against their enemies; their very misleaders had to march with them or be left behind.

Even as they picketed and put the fear of the masses in no longer complacent Congressmen, the veterans were preceded by a misleader, a new one. When the revolt against Waters had begun, the possibility had arisen of unity of all militant and honest bonus marchers, a real, united rank and file movement. To circumvent this, the government needed someone to stand between Waters and the Central Rank and File Committee, to hold the insurgents away from the rank and filers. Glassford found his man in Roy W. Robertson, one of the leaders of the California contingent. Robertson was hailed with a fanfare of suspiciously favorable publicity; a brace he wore down his back to support a broken neck helped dramatize him. Many before him had been saying they were against dictatorship and Waters and for mass action—this was, in fact, the program of the Workers Ex-Servicemen's League which had pervaded the whole bonus army—but for good and sufficient reasons, it was Robertson upon whom the searchlight of publicity played. It was this man, with the newspapers hailing him and Glassford treating him as a new leader, who with Glassford's aid took over the rebellion in the B. E. F. To do so, however, Robertson had to lead the insurgents in the only direction they would go—to picket the Capitol.

Robertson's rôle was clear enough from the first. The men would have marched in spite of him, and he could only hold them by marching in front of them. He attempted to keep the rank and filers out of the picket; in this he failed. But he confused the bonus issue by declaring that the bonus be paid "only to needy veterans"—a form of bonus bill that would mean discrimination, terrorism, favoritism and racketeering, the erection of an enormous bureaucratic apparatus which would swallow funds rightfully belonging to veterans and other unemployed and be used to keep the veterans under surveillance. And by his temporary hold on the men Robertson fulfilled his major task; he prevented a junction of all militant forces for concerted action during the most crucial period.

Then, on the day that Congress adjourned, he sold out completely.

On the fifth day of the picket of the Capitol, July 16, word went around that Congress was adjourning. A movement to the Capitol began from all camps. Anacostia had been in a ferment for days. The day before adjournment Glassford had asked Waters, "How about your demonstration tomorrow?" thus gently letting him know that his men were running away from him and it was up to Waters to do something. When almost all the veterans in the bonus army had gathered across the plaza from the Capitol steps Waters suddenly appeared before them and shouted, "Follow me!" and the men poured across the plaza. Here ensued a little farcical stage play. Glassford loudly accused Waters of leading the unlawful demonstration and arrested him. The usual vaudeville show started, a "volunteer nurse" being put on the stand to lead the boys in singing songs. Strategically placed men lustily took up the tune. The same voices raised a cry of "We want Waters," and Glassford at last gracefully yielded and released Waters. Waters, now placed at the head of the men, gave them a patriotic speech and announced he was going to see Speaker Garner. He returned to declare that he had been given Garner's word that Congress would not adjourn. Therefore, Waters pleaded, the men should march back to Anacostia, the demonstration being unnecessary. *At the same moment Garner was telling newspapermen he had promised Waters nothing.*

Waters marched his men back to Anacostia and ordered them to stay in camp and go to sleep early—because he had arranged for a Drum and Bugle contest for next morning!

But as it became known, later in the day, that Congress was actually adjourning, thousands from all camps began to flock back to the Capitol. Near midnight the Capitol plaza was again filled. Now came Robertson's turn. The Central Rank and File Committee had announced two days before that if Congress adjourned the picket would be moved to the White House, and the next day Robertson had made a similar announcement. So when the light went out in the Capitol dome,

signifying the adjournment of Congress, and Robertson began to march the pickets off Capitol Hill, the cry went up, "On to the White House!"

Robertson led the men toward the White House—but stopped on a vacant lot en route. There, in the pitch dark, he announced he would hold a conference. Time passed with nothing said. A policeman told Robertson half his men were still at the Capitol and Robertson said he would go after them. He was gone twenty minutes while the men sat around uneasily; the usual comedian was there to do tricks. Glassford appeared, then Robertson returned, without the other men—as far as I could check up, he had apparently led them somewhere else and dispersed them—and proceeded to give a long, leisurely talk on what a fine, gentlemanly lot the veterans were. He seized upon every interruption to drag out his talk. One kind of interruption he ignored: a rank and file group had meanwhile attempted to picket the White House and been beaten up by police: "What about the vets beaten up at the White House?" came cries, but these Robertson chose not to hear. Robertson turned to singing Glassford's praises—the General stood, without speaking, melodramatically silent—and ended the meeting by announcing that a conference on further action would be held the next day. Men had marched off Capitol Hill determined to picket the White House and had been completely side-tracked!

The conference the next day was a fiasco. Robertson could lead no more betrayals. He announced that he would lead his men out of Washington on a tour of the country. When the appointed day came, none followed him; Robertson left alone with his chauffeur.

The twelve days between the adjournment of Congress and July 28, "Bloody Thursday," were tense, bitter days, days when negative disillusionment was slowly changing into positive desperation. The \$100,000 which Congress had voted to pay fares home proved inadequate bait for the remaining 15,000 veterans. These were no floaters; their wives and children, in many cases, were with them in camp; they would leave Wash-

ington for nothing less than their back wages. Robertson's side-tracking of the picket of the White House only meant that some days must pass before momentum would build up.

Now the Central Rank and File Committee came once more clearly to the fore. It was the only leadership to take the next decisive step. Its slogan, "Picket the White House to demand an extra session of Congress" quickly permeated the veterans. A Rank and File Conference on the 18th showed its increasing strength. The second picket of the White House on the 20th—the first small picket had come the night Congress adjourned—brought out five hundred determined veterans in the face of the most elaborate show of police force, including police cars cruising with machine guns set up. The police were openly provocative, ganging the marchers at every corner, slugging without pretext. Despite this, the third picket on the 25th was twice as large. The groups who had been misled by Robertson joined in. And beside the Washington unemployed who also supported the pickets, the government clerks—unaccustomed sight indeed for Washington—the usually docile and indifferent civil service employees, lined the sidewalks ten deep, booed the provocative tactics of the police, and refused to be dispersed!

Waters meanwhile had been staving off his men, promising further action as soon as the conference of officers he had called would come to a decision; he and his officers went through the motions of a conference day after day but they could not stay in conference indefinitely; the conference racked its brains but could think of no plausible substitute for mass action. Indeed, there could be none concocted, now that Congress had left the veterans empty-handed. The men at last could see that patriotic ballyhoo and temporizing measures had gotten them nothing. A bolt to the White House picket, under the Rank and File leadership, was only a matter of days.

Then the bonus army began to grow again; new groups coming in; some smaller groups, then one of 400 on July 23; others reported on the road. Equally significant, the Washington newspapers reported regiments of unemployed organizing and on the road.

For all the chicanery of Glassford-Waters-Robertson & Co., then, the government was no nearer to its major objective of getting the veterans out of Washington than it had been two months before when the veterans had marched in. Even more, the veterans had had an intensive political training; they were not the boys who had marched in the patriotic parade of June 7; and the Rank and File leadership was rapidly gaining control. And the unemployed were beginning to move on Washington.

The time had arrived when the capitalist class and its government were ready to smash the bonus army by force of arms.

THE ORDER FOR EVACUATION

Five days after Congress adjourned, the District of Columbia Commissioners issued the order for evacuation. The plan was to evacuate different contingents separately. The first was the Texas and Dixie Units camp on Pennsylvania Avenue, housing about 2,000 men. This was the same group that had been the first to take over government buildings. Now, two months later, they felt as they had when they marched from Camp Bartlett to Pennsylvania Avenue. "They'll have to blast us out of here. We ain't goin'."

The first order of eviction was postponed and then postponed again. Glassford knew the temper of the men and was giving Waters more time to get the men out, if possible. For Waters, shouting until the last moment "We will stay here until 1945 if necessary," had already arranged with Glassford to evacuate the men, as we know from Glassford himself:

More than three weeks before, Waters had made an agreement with me to establish a cantonment for the entire B. E. F. on the land owned by John Bartlett. This site, on the outskirts of the city, was inaccessible and was not a popular location with the rank and file of the B. E. F.

I desired it for just the reasons that made it undesirable to them. Here they would be isolated from the heart of the city, from the constant mass of curious and sympathetic visitors and from all the glamor that intrigued their fancy. Deprived of all this, I foresaw the eventual and peaceful dissolution of the B. E. F. in Washington.

Also it was probable that some units and individuals would refuse to obey Waters' orders for the move. Instantly they would be placed in the category of rebels, and as Waters tolerated no opposition to his supreme command, he could be counted upon to assist in their eviction. (*New York American*, November 4, 1932.)

So Waters, not daring to show his hand as yet to the men, was shouting they would stay in Washington, *when he had already planned to evacuate!*

We know this, in even more sickening detail, from another source. Herbert S. Ward, a Washington attorney who worked with Waters, was present at an interview between the B. E. F. leaders and Secretary Hurley on Tuesday, July 26, and later "defended" the bonus marchers against Hurley in a letter which gives a damning picture of the B. E. F. leaders:

You will recall, Mr. Secretary, that this interview took place in your office and extended over a period of more than three hours; that there were present yourself, Major General Douglas McArthur, B. E. F. Commander Walter W. Waters, Doak E. Carter, Lieutenant Johnston and myself; that during this interview the Pace Communist group of about two hundred men was constantly referred to as entirely separate from the B. E. F.—that Commander Waters stated he would evacuate the three congested areas in Washington as soon as he could find shelter for some 250 women and children; that Waters had advised all veterans with homes to return to them and that the men still in Washington had no homes, except the temporary quarters which they occupied, many with their families and all their worldly goods; that Waters was at that time working on a Florida colonization scheme and had other projects for dispersing these men into productive industry; that temporary shelters were planned at Camp Bartlett, on the extreme outskirts of the District of Columbia, which would clear the congested area within a week; and lastly, that Captain Carter tendered to you the loyal support and coöperation of every man in the B. E. F. to carry out any order which you might, officially or otherwise, express." (*The New Republic*, November 9, 1932.)

That same afternoon, after making these offers, Waters and Carter were still shouting "Here till 1945" and declaring they would fight the eviction in court.

But the next morning, fateful July 28, Waters was at the Pennsylvania Camp with Glassford and the police, ordering the men to evacuate and go to Camp Bartlett. Apart from working

under Glassford's orders, Waters had his own little plan, which was nothing less than to start a Fascist Army. Some wealthy people, he said, had approached him and offered financial aid to put his army on a permanent basis, its purpose: "to stand between the constitution and the forces of anarchy." Waters wrote in that week's issue of his *B. E. F. News*:

Inevitably such an organization brings up comparison with the Fascisti of Italy and the Nazi of Germany. For five years Hitler was lampooned and derided. But today he controls Germany. Mussolini before the war was a tramp printer, driven from Italy because of his views. But today he is a world figure.

So why not Waters?

General Glassford's move to get the men out of Washington, therefore, was quite satisfactory to Waters, who wanted to get them to an isolated place like Camp Bartlett, where they could be regimented without interference from Communists and militants. But just when everything looked so rosy, the Southerners in the Pennsylvania Avenue camp told Waters to go to hell, put their backs to the wall and dared the police and the Federal troops to put them out. As the fighting began, Waters ran up to Glassford and cried: "I am not responsible for this. These men are no longer under my control."

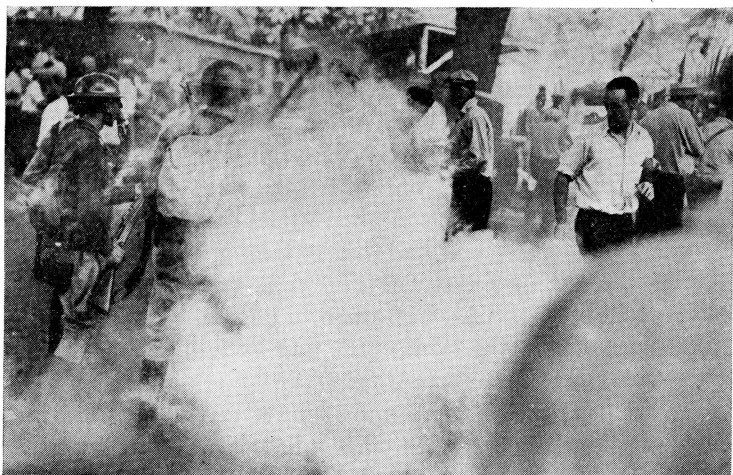
Two men were killed that morning by Glassford's police: William Hushka, a member of the Workers Ex-Servicemen's League, and Eric Carlson. Days before newspapermen had known that the government planned the usual excuse for using force: get somebody killed, raise a hue and cry of "disorder" and use the troops. This was what happened. In an effort to put the whole blame on others, Glassford has actually admitted this:

The only reason evacuation on the 28th was insisted upon by the Administration was because the Government expected some disorder to result. It needed this to give an appearance of justice for the policy upon which it had decided. The Government assumed the rôle of agent provocateur unprecedented [?] in this country. (*New York American*, November 5, 1932.)

What happened then is on the open pages of history. The troops, with fixed bayonets, gas and torch, backed up by ma-

chine gun squads and tanks, began the systematic destruction of the veterans' camps. Men physically weakened by years of poverty and by the horribly inadequate food and shelter they had been getting in Washington, would not give up their shacks until their ranks had been broken up by gunfire and they were driven out by tear and mustard gas. When Hushka and Carlson were killed, the liberal press, ever anxious to preserve democratic illusions and ignore the suppressive character of capitalist government, spoke of the police as having "lost their heads."

But three hours after the police had attacked and been repulsed, when there was not the slightest opportunity to pretend there was disorder, the infantry, the cavalry and machine gun squads did not lose their heads. They destroyed the bonus camps in military manœuvres executed as calmly and coolly as if directed against so many sandbags on the parade ground. *The cannon fodder of tomorrow taught the soldiers of yesterday what the capitalist government is: an instrument for the suppression of the working, hungry masses.* The veterans learned



"Acme"

Bayonets and tear-gas—the answer of the government to the bonus marchers. A flash of the "mopping-up campaign" directed by Chief-of-Staff, General McArthur. Notice the marchers overcome by the gas at the extreme upper right of the photo

to the full, in those last bitter hours, what they could expect from the capitalist class and its state. And the veterans went from Washington only because naked flesh had, finally, to move away from the stab of steel and the hurt of gas. They fought the cavalry and infantry at every step. They gave way by inches only when they could bear pain no longer. Their women and children, choked by gas and fire, wandered wailing through the smoky streets of Anacostia.

And then the retreat from Washington. Word went around that there was shelter in Johnstown, Pa. They went there to be greeted by smiling ex-pug Mayor McCloskey; he still smiled, four days later, when they were locked like cattle in trains and carted off to the middle west and dropped there—far enough from Washington—with no homes to go to, children dying from the gassing, veterans and their families straggling and starving everywhere from Washington onward. But as we shall see, it was a retreat and not a rout. Smoke was still pouring from Washington and Anacostia when the militant veterans began to re-form their ranks to carry on the struggle.

SOCIALISTS AND LIBERALS SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT

If the bonus marchers, misled and still imbued with democratic and patriotic illusions, often failed once they got to Washington to realize the revolutionary implications of their march, their enemies did not. Secretary Hurley was speaking for the whole capitalist class when he said that the march was a coercion of government and that to temporize with the bonus marchers would set a precedent for feeding all the unemployed. The government and its bureaucratic and military apparatus, state and national, the Democratic and Republican parties, the officer-controlled American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars, all the businessmen's and manufacturers' organizations, in short, the whole capitalist class, was mobilized to smash the bonus march.

And in this solid front against the veterans, the liberals and Socialists found their place also, and attempted to set the veterans and other unemployed *against* each other. When the

Workers Ex-Servicemen's League called for the bonus march, the Socialist Party's organ, the *New Leader*, of April 16 said: "The demand for bonus payment is unfair to the unemployed, to the debt-burdened farmers, and to the whole country." Norman Thomas, the Socialist Party leader, went to Washington with the same argument to call upon the bonus army to abandon its fight, and then wrote of Glassford's tactics:

It is fair to say that some credit goes to the Washington Police Department for the good sense it has so far shown in getting along with these men. (*New Leader*, June 25, 1932.)

Even two months after Glassford led his police against the bonus marchers in the attack which culminated in the destruction of the bonus camps, Thomas made a speech attacking the bonus demand, and the N. Y. *Herald Tribune*, September 14, reported: "Mr. Thomas said he had been talking with General Glassford, Superintendent of Police in Washington, *whom he admired profoundly.*" (My italics.)

Not only do the liberals and Socialists lie in calling the bonus demand "unfair to the workers." The fact is that the fight for the bonus is an entering wedge in the fight for unemployment insurance. The march was a splendid opportunity to weld together ever larger sections of the hitherto divided workers, farmers and non-proletarian working population.

Here was a body of resolute men, unemployed, hungry, with destitute wives and children at home. They were a significant force which had been called into being by their bitter need. And in their bitter need they had seized on the fact that the government owed them back wages and had marched to Washington to get it.

The march meant a revolt against the officer-controlled reactionary veterans' organizations which since the war had deliberately separated the veterans from the rest of the working masses.

The Communist Party saw in the bonus march a potentially revolutionary force. Men who were driven by the need of food, shelter and clothing could be brought to see that unemployment insurance was as necessary to them as a bonus;

that the bonus would soon enough be spent, and then what? That their needs were the needs of the whole army of the unemployed. First one had to make common cause with them in the fight for the bonus; as this progressed the broader character of the struggle could be made evident to them.

And this is what did happen. Despite overwhelming forces drawn up against them—reactionary and government-agent leadership, the whole force of the state and the capitalist class, the opposition of the Socialists and liberals—despite all this, the Communists and the Workers Ex-Servicemen's League were able, during the long weeks in Washington, to infuse the bonus marchers with the realization that unemployment insurance was just as important as the bonus. Under the pressure of the rank and file program, even the B. E. F., the "official organization," had to retreat from its original narrow line of considering the bonus march as solely arising from the bonus. General Glassford himself has admitted that "In the latter days of the occupation the B. E. F. altered and broadened its policy." Even the B. E. F. newspaper, at the last, had to speak of the bonus army as the "front line of an army of distressed." When the official organization had to do this at the same time that they were betraying the bonus march, one may imagine how thoroughly the idea of their common ground with the unemployed millions had penetrated the bonus marchers.

As the unemployed saw the bonus army dig in in Washington, they grew ready to follow their inspiring example. Their presence in Washington would have brought unemployment insurance immediately on the order of the day. The liberals and Socialist leaders who opposed the bonus aided effectively in shaping public opinion to a point where the government and the capitalist class dared to drive the bonus army out; and the liberals and Socialists thus effectively impeded the fight for unemployment insurance which they claim to advocate.

THE FIGHT GOES ON

The camps were still burning the morning after Bloody Thursday when, amid the troops hounding them out of the

city, the rank and file met together to plan for renewed struggle. That action in the midst of terror tells the aftermath of July 28. Neither defeats nor continuous terror has prevented the rank and file from coming to the fore. The Rank and File Conference was broken up and the troops finished "mopping up"; at Johnstown the B. E. F. leaders picked out militants and turned them over to Federal officers for "deportation proceedings"; despite the rank and file's warnings the veterans were tricked into locked trains and dispersed; the B. E. F. leaders began to recruit Khaki Shirts and set up camps under military discipline in which veterans were segregated from their fellow unemployed. But two months after Bloody Thursday the veterans had unmistakably declared against their misleaders and for further struggle.

Retreat, for the Workers Ex-Servicemen's League and the Rank and File Committee, only meant going back to the cities, to Waters' forced labor camps, to the membership of all veterans' organizations, to rally them anew. And they soon rallied. Despite gag rule and coercion, the rank and file of the American Legion revolted. At the New York State convention, August 27, the delegates howled down F. Trubee Davison, Assistant Secretary of War, with cries of "baby killer." The same cries met Secretary of War Hurley at the National Convention of the American Legion in Portland, Oregon, September 16; and the pressure of the rank and file forced through, first in the State conventions and then at the National Convention, an indorsement of the demand for immediate payment of the bonus. The revolt spread to the B. E. F. convention where, despite hand-picked delegates, the convention voted for a second bonus march. That the American Legion officials later announced that lobbying would be used instead of a march and that the next session of Congress would be inappropriate for such lobbying; that Waters refused to recognize the B. E. F. convention's vote, instead appointing a committee to ask recognition from Hoover, and has since sent telegrams to the State governors asking them to stop the next march; that the Veterans of Foreign Wars



"International"

A war scene in Washington. Camp Anacostia was put to the torch. Infantry with bayonets fixed, cavalry and tanks were employed to oust the veterans and the Disabled American Veterans oppose this march as they did the first; these facts only mean that the reactionary organizations have thoroughly exposed themselves and that, without them and in spite of them, the fight for veterans' rights goes on, backed by the overwhelming majority of the veterans in these organizations.

And this fight now includes *all veterans' rights*; not only the "bonus"—adjusted compensation per day of actual war service. For, as part of the general drive to put the burden of the crisis on the backs of the working class, the next sessions of Congress will consider proposals to reverse the vet-

erans' legislation of the last fifty years. The United States Chamber of Commerce, Admiral Byrd's National Economy League, and other patriotic organizations, are demanding a yearly slash of \$450,000,000 in veterans' compensation, which is one-half of the sum covering all veterans of all wars, their survivors and dependents: insurance, hospitalization, disability allowances, orphans' and widows' pensions, etc.

And the revolt against reactionary veterans' organizations has a significance far beyond the important issue of veterans' legislation. For it means the end of the separation of veterans from their fellow workers and unemployed, which has been the policy (and the reason why they were organized) of the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I saw the fruits of this revolt and its meaning at the National Rank and File Convention in Cleveland, September 23-25. Among the most outspoken of the delegates were men still wearing B. E. F. badges from Washington, or American Legion caps from the Portland convention of the week before. Men had come a thousand miles by box car to ask recognition for local veterans' posts that had sprung up or seceded from reactionary organizations. None of the well-dressed businessmen, drunkenness and patriotic ballyhoo, the "professional veteran" attitude of an American Legion convention. Here were gaunt, serious men, many of them in overalls, cheerful but in no holiday mood; they had not come from every corner of the country, by freight and highway, for a picnic; they talked fight and they looked it. And they knew clearly what it meant that they were not only veterans, but farmers driven from their ruined farms or hungry on the land; factory and white collar workers sent home from closed shop and office to starve; salesmen who would never sell again, storekeepers permanently separated from their counters, whose only hope to alleviate the miserable conditions brought on by the crisis is in uniting with all unemployed and employed workers in the fight for immediate relief and unemployment insurance at the expense of the government and the employers.

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