

The Great Depression

The effects of the Great Depression were felt across the United States and to varying degrees in other countries around the world. Widespread unemployment, hunger, homelessness, and political unrest were common as people

PRIMARY SOURCE

A Letter to Seattle City Council, October 17, 1935

As you know, there is urgent need that a substantial sum of money be made available as speedily as possible for unemployment relief . . . it becomes our joint duty to furnish employment to as many of these unemployed citizens . . . on improvement and betterment projects . . . where manual labor can be employed.

—Mayor Robert Harlin

PRIMARY SOURCE

Telegram to the Secretary of War from the Governor of Illinois, November 6, 1930

The emergency existing in the State of Illinois because of unemployment particularly and acutely so in the city of Chicago . . . presents a situation with which local authorities are almost unable to cope and which fully justifies my asking you to do everything in your power by way of loan of all cots and blankets . . .

—Governor Louis Emmerson, requesting aid for the unemployed and homeless

struggled to live their daily lives. All levels of government looked to find ways to alleviate suffering as events unfolded in neighboring cities and states. These excerpts from officials representing different levels of government offer a picture of how the Great Depression impacted life in both the United States and other parts of the world.

PRIMARY SOURCE

Message to the Eighty-ninth General Assembly of Ohio, January 1931

Our State, as the entire nation, is suffering from a heartrendering economic depression . . . I recommend, therefore, that the General Assembly without delay appropriate a reasonable sum to be used wherever distress is most acute . . . Such an **appropriation**¹ should be limited to the year 1931 and be confined to the sole purpose of emergency relief.

—Governor George White

PRIMARY SOURCE

Address by the Secretary of State before the Council on Foreign Relations, New York City, February 6, 1931

During the past two years widespread economic depression and consequent unemployment have brought instability and unrest not only at home but in many other countries of the Western Hemisphere. Since March, 1929, there have been revolutions in no less than seven Latin American republics, resulting in the forcible overthrow in six of them of the existing governments.

—Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of State

¹ **appropriation** setting aside money for a specific purpose

² **municipal** relating to a city or town