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"Carry me back to old Virginny" : Virginia and the Bonus March of 1932

Steven Patrick Schultz

B.A., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

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Steven Patrick Schultz

MA-History

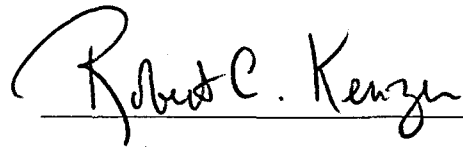
University of Richmond

2008

Professor Robert C. Kenzer

While historians have explored the Bonus March of 1932 at the national level, little has been done to determine regional variations in participation in and sympathy towards the march, and there has been little analysis of the challenges it posed at the state and local level. This study explores the Bonus March in Virginia. Utilizing a broad range of primary and secondary sources, the author concludes that Virginians had a different view of the Bonus March than much of the nation, generally opposing payment of the Soldiers' Bonus most likely as a result of racial tensions, the nearness of Virginia to the veterans' camps, and unique regional cultural differences regarding military service. Further, the author concludes that the record of Virginia's authorities was a mixed one, with local authorities across the state performing admirably, while the state government consistently failed to rise to the challenge posed by the transient veterans.

I certify that I have read this thesis and find that, in scope and quality, it satisfies the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Robert C. Kenzer", written over a horizontal line.

Robert C. Kenzer, Thesis Advisor

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Eric S. Yellin", written over a horizontal line.

Eric S. Yellin, Committee Member

“CARRY ME BACK TO OLD VIRGINNY”: VIRGINIA AND THE BONUS MARCH
OF 1932”

by

STEVEN P. SCHULTZ

B.A., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1996

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

Of the University of Richmond

in Candidacy

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

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Introduction

On 6 May 1932 the Ways and Means Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives declined to pass along for a full vote in the House a bill that would have provided for immediate and complete payment of the Soldiers' Bonus, a small sum of money due in 1945 to veterans of World War I. In doing so it set in motion a chain of events that led to one of the most sordid affairs in American history, the Bonus March of 1932, when tens of thousands of World War I veterans traveled to Washington to ask their government for their own money, and ended when the U.S. Army was called out to forcibly evict them from their shanties on the outskirts of Washington. The perceived justice of the veterans' cause, certainly as the years went by if not always at the time, combined with the government's violent response to their passive approach, somehow made the whole affair seem beneath the dignity of the government and some of the officials involved. At the heart of the matter lies the question; what was the government's obligation to able-bodied veterans home from war? Strongly held and differing opinions on that question eventually led to violence in the summer of 1932.

In the aftermath of World War I veterans' advocates sought, and in 1924 won, an adjustment to the extremely low wages earned by the soldiers of that war. With the power to draft an army the government lacked any incentive to pay soldiers a living wage, and in the absence of progressive legislation designed to protect soldiers' jobs once the fighting was over, those same men often had no jobs to return to. Recognizing the injustice of this, Congress passed the Adjusted Service Compensation Act, which granted a \$1 per day "bonus pay" for each day served during the war, and \$1.25 for each day

served overseas. In order to overcome political opposition to any pay adjustment at all, proponents had to agree to make the bonus payable in 1945. While unpopular, the provision was one most veterans could live with until the Great Depression hit them in 1929. Veterans, like nearly everyone else, suffered immensely from the Great Depression. Suddenly in desperate economic shape, many veterans were unwilling to wait until 1945 for money they needed immediately. Out of work and often with families to feed, many veterans simply couldn't reconcile their present condition with the Bonus Certificates they possessed, promising payment for service already performed in what may as well have been some future lifetime. Pressure began to build across the country to do something to address the veterans' plight.

In the spring of 1932, following the Ways and Means Committee's refusal to support the Patman Bill, which would have provided for immediate payment of the bonus, a group of several hundred veterans from Portland, Oregon, set out on a cross-country trek to Washington, D.C. to demand their money. By the time they reached St. Louis, word of their journey had spread across the country, encouraging veterans from all over the country to organize marches on Washington. At its peak, police and military intelligence estimated the number of veterans in the city at over 20,000, and some suggested that as many as 80,000 may have participated in the protest at some point.¹ After forcing a Congressional vote on immediate payment of their bonus, and losing in the Senate, the "Bonus Army" vowed to remain in Washington until 1945, if necessary, to secure their money. Several weeks later, fearing violence and even revolution, the

¹ Walter W. Waters, *B.E.F.; The Whole Story Of The Bonus Army* (New York, New York: Stratford Press, 1933), p. 1.

Hoover Administration used the U.S. Army to drive the veterans out of the city and their camps in the surrounding area. Although they had not secured their bonus and been evicted from the city, the veterans' persistence is credited with getting full payment of the bonus finally approved in 1936.

The story of the Bonus March of 1932 as a whole has been well examined. *The Bonus March* by Roger Daniels and *The Bonus Army* by Paul Dickson and Thomas B. Allen are good examples of the scholarship that is available on the Bonus Army today. Both books employ a historical narrative format to tell the story of the Bonus Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.) from a national perspective. The issue of payment of the bonus is considered as it affected the nation as a whole, and the leadership and decision-making processes of both the B.E.F. and the federal government are examined at the macro level. Walter W. Waters is the subject of much attention in both books, as he commanded the B.E.F. in Washington and represented it in discussions with federal officials. Daniels suggests it was natural to focus on Waters, "the only marcher whose name was generally known, both inside the scattered B.E.F. and to the public."² George Patton, Dwight Eisenhower, and Douglas MacArthur receive attention as much for their future exploits as for the roles they played as mid-level and senior Army officers responsible for leading the expulsion of the veterans from their camps.³ Hoover the President and Hoover the young director of what would later become the Federal Bureau of Investigation are naturally given prominence, with Herbert coming across as

² Roger Daniels, *The Bonus March: An Episode of the Great Depression*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1971), p. 128.

³ Paul Dickson and Thomas B. Allen, *The Bonus Army: An American Epic*, (New York, New York: Walker & Company, 2004), pp.170-183.

MacArthur's puppet as the latter simply ignored presidential orders and J. Edgar appearing paranoid when he warned that the veterans planned to blow up the White House.⁴ Of all the main players, only Pelham Glassford, Washington D.C.'s Chief of Police, is universally praised for his cool-headed management of the crisis, though ironically he paid for his far-sightedness with his job.⁵ In addition, the reader meets seemingly disinterested third parties who provide the backdrop to the drama that played itself out all around them, such as Washingtonians Evalyn Walsh McLean, owner of the Hope Diamond, who famously provided the B.E.F. with gifts of food and money, and John Henry Bartlett, who provided land for the veterans to encamp upon.⁶

As well as employing similar framework, both books are generally sympathetic toward the veterans, and suggest that national sentiment toward them was generally positive. While the main opponent of immediate payment was "big business," they imply that the common man provided the veterans "broad national support."⁷ Daniels claims "had there been a national referendum on paying the bonus that spring, it would have passed easily." Daniels goes on to suggest that "volunteers and donations from all over the country continued to stream toward Washington" to support the veterans.⁸ Further evidence of national support is offered by Dickson and Allen, who point out that after the U.S. Army gassed the veterans and evicted them from Washington, a shocked American public "booed the Army and jeered MacArthur" while watching newsreels of the event.⁹

⁴ Daniels, pp. 170-173; Dickson and Allen, p. 124.

⁵ Dickson and Allen, pp. 200-201.

⁶ Dickson and Allen, pp. 97-99; Daniels, pp. 124-125.

⁷ Daniels, pp. 36, 113.

⁸ Daniels, p. 113.

⁹ Dickson and Allen, p. 193.

Daniels states newspapers across the country “insisted that both national honor and the people’s will called for payment of the bonus.”¹⁰ Dickson and Allen claim that President Hoover “faced a dilemma” in dealing with bonus legislation; Hoover knew paying the bonus was fiscally irresponsible, but “the bonus was popular.”¹¹ Paul Dickson states that the country was so desperate for a good news story in the Depression plagued summer of 1932 that newspapers, wire services, newsreel producers, and radio stations across the country “fell in love” with the Bonus Marchers.¹² Celebrities like Will Rogers, Ernest Hemmingway, and Evalyn Walsh McLean weighed in at different times in favor of the veterans’ petition.¹³

The Bonus March has been thoroughly examined at the national level, but what about at the state level or even lower? For example, the B.E.F. was not a single homogeneous organization, but a collection of myriad groups of veterans that organized at the town and city level, and only merged into a loose confederation with other veterans’ groups once in Washington. In much of the current research, the B.E.F. is treated as a single organization and, with the possible exception of the original group under Walter W. Waters from Oregon, very little attention is devoted to the individual parts that made up the whole.

The federal government’s reaction to the Bonus March is familiar, but each state that lay on the veterans’ path to Washington endured its own little “Bonus March,” and

¹⁰ Daniels, p. 36.

¹¹ Dickson and Allen, p. 35.

¹² Paul Dickson and Thomas B. Allen, *The Bonus Army: An American Epic Webcast*, 22 June 2005, Library of Congress, 17 June 2006, <http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=3710>

¹³ Daniels, pp. 36-37; Dickson and Allen, pp. 97-99, 241-242.

there is precious little scholarship dedicated to the crisis that the individual states suffered as thousands of indigent men poured across their borders. Whereas existing research chronicles the actions of the President, the U.S. Army, the Justice Department's Bureau of Investigation, and the Washington D.C. Police Department, there is a story to be told that mirrors the federal one at the state level. State governors and their National Guards, Adjutants General, Departments of Motor Vehicles, and State Police were making decisions about how to transport, feed, and house veterans from across the country while maintaining order, not unlike the decisions that are already so well recorded at the federal level. While authors have narrated and assessed the roles played by men like Waters, Hoover (Herbert and J. Edgar), Glassford, and MacArthur in national narratives, what about the roles played by men named Dove, Pollard, Swanson, Glass, Waller, and Mitchell in Virginia?

The core question that lay at the heart of the entire Bonus March, that of the obligation of the nation to its veterans, is also tackled at the national level in much of the current research, with the authors of *The Bonus March* and *The Bonus Army* concluding that the nation, that is the people at large, sympathized with the veterans' cause, even if the government did not. What is largely omitted is the possibility that entire regions of the United States might hold a dissenting opinion, and that it is just possible that some states might strongly oppose the veterans in their bid for their bonus.

The gaps in the current research on the Bonus March can be addressed by refocusing the narrative on the state and local level, as opposed to the national. Virginia offers a superb opportunity to apply the methodology reserved so far for the B.E.F. as a

whole and the federal government to the state level, primarily because of its proximity to the scene of the final action. Because Virginia borders the District of Columbia, it acted as a funnel, pouring veterans from across the South and West into Washington, therefore ensuring Virginia was going to have to grapple with far more veterans than most of the other states. Further, its proximity to Washington meant that Virginia was bound to be a player, whether it wanted to be or not, in the ultimate resolution of the crisis. Whether the Bonus March ended with the veterans receiving their bonus, the authorities crushing the veterans, or in a violent revolution and the toppling of the federal government, Virginia was going to have to provide for its own security against whatever might transpire in Washington in ways that other states obviously did not. Finally, Virginia and Maryland were the only two ways out of the capital for the veterans and, one way or another, they were going to have to go home eventually, presenting the state with a last crisis to manage.

While current research clearly implies that the nation at large supported the veterans' claim to their bonus, is it possible that Virginia did not concur with the bulk of the country? Virginia has as proud a military tradition as any state; would it side with the men who wore the nation's uniform in France in 1917, or the men who wore it in Washington in 1932, and how would they look upon their own veterans who chose to participate in the march? The current research on the Bonus March incorporates assessments of the performances of federal officials during the Bonus March. What about the performance of Virginia's state officials? How did the Governor and his subordinates choose to deal with the tidal wave of veterans from out-of-state, and was

their response effective? How well did the state government coordinate with county and city officials throughout Virginia? Did the government have a plan, or was it largely a spectator, reacting to events seemingly beyond its control? These are fair questions that federal officials have had to endure, and it may only be right that the same standard be applied to the state level.

This thesis examines several heretofore neglected angles on the Bonus March: the participation of Virginian veterans in the Bonus Army, the impact of the march on the state, the performance of state officials during the crisis, and the opinion of Virginians as a whole on the merits of the march and the veterans' claim to the bonus. By focusing on these issues at the state level, rather than the national, one can begin to get an appreciation for the challenges that all levels of government had to cope with when the veterans finally rose up and came calling for their money.

Chapter 1: The Invasion of Washington

Walter W. Waters, a World War I veteran from Portland, Oregon was an unemployed cannery worker in the spring of 1932. Having lost faith in his ability to keep a job, he began to focus on another route to financial security. Holding a Bonus Certificate payable in 1945, he stood up at a veterans rally in March 1932 and suggested they all march on Washington and demand their money immediately. Few took him seriously, and nothing came from his suggestion. A month later he again addressed a gathering of veterans, only to be dismissed a second time. Then in the first week of May news arrived from Washington that the Patman Bill had failed to clear the Ways and Means Committee, and the next time Waters suggested a march on Washington veterans were prepared to listen. By mid-month 300 veterans were prepared to follow Waters to Washington, forming the core of what would become the Bonus Expeditionary Force. Organizing in military fashion, Waters was eventually elected Regimental Commander, and subordinate commanders were appointed. Buglers and first aid teams were assigned to "companies," military police were empowered to maintain discipline, and formations and marching drills were held.¹⁴ It was a model that was to be copied by Bonus Marchers from across the country in the weeks that followed.

Waters' two primary problems as his 300 men set off for Washington were food and transportation. The first he solved through requesting donations from towns he passed through, often sending parties ahead of the main body to solicit provisions before they arrived. For the second he took to the rails. In the America of the 1930s it was

¹⁴ Dickson and Allen, pp. 56-64.

common for people to hop a ride on a freight train. Before the automobile became commonplace, it was the only way for many who couldn't afford regular tickets to travel long distance, and the railroads for the most part looked the other way.¹⁵ Moving 300 men across the country on freight trains was not the same as moving one or two at a time, though, and the group had mixed results, sometimes getting full cooperation from the railroads, other times having to block trains from departing entirely to get on board. In this manner they worked their way to St. Louis, and from there into the national headlines and consciousness.

In East St. Louis, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad finally stood its ground and informed Waters that the veterans would not be permitted to ride its trains free of charge. A standoff ensued during which the veterans refused to allow any eastbound train to leave town without them aboard, and the railroad responded by rerouting traffic around St. Louis to avoid the veterans. Local authorities feared violence, and Governor Louis Lincoln Emmerson of Illinois responded by calling out the National Guard, not to arrest the veterans, but to provide them transportation by truck across his state, thereby preventing violence in Illinois by passing the veterans off to Indiana. Indiana followed suit, and soon all the governors were transporting the veterans through their states, happily passing off the problem, they reasoned, to the city that created it in the first place.¹⁶ When the veterans' standoff with the railroad and authorities in Illinois was picked up by the national media, it ignited spontaneous Bonus Marches by veterans from

¹⁵ Dickson and Allen, pp. 64-65.

¹⁶ Daniels, pp. 81-82.

cities across the country, all converging on Washington to demand immediate payment of the Soldiers' Bonus.¹⁷

Pelham D. Glassford had been the Chief of the Washington, D.C. Police Department less than a year when veterans from around the country began arriving in May of 1932. As he scanned news reports and plotted the position of Bonus Marchers on a map of the United States, Glassford began to develop a sense of the scale of the thing that was about to descend on his city. A retired Army Brigadier General and World War I veteran himself, he may have understood better than most how best to handle his fellow veterans. Glassford immediately determined that it was in the government's interest to help the veterans conduct an orderly protest, rather than oppose them, and set about planning where to house the veterans and how to feed them. When his superiors from the District's government suggested his policy would simply encourage additional veterans to come to the city, Glassford retorted that he'd rather have 10,000 orderly protesters than half as many rioters.¹⁸ He focused on a row of dilapidated buildings that dated from the Civil War located on Pennsylvania Avenue between the White House and the Capital. These buildings were abandoned and scheduled for demolition, clearing the way for a new series of buildings belonging to the federal government in what would form the Federal Triangle. Glassford sought and received the permission of the developers, then the City of Washington, to house the veterans in those buildings temporarily. As the B.E.F. expanded Glassford wanted to settle additional veterans on the outskirts of Washington. In addition to a number of other small areas around the city that would

¹⁷ Dickson and Allen, p. 73.

¹⁸ Dickson and Allen, p. 76.

become veterans' camps, he secured from one donor a 30-acre plot of private property in S.W. Washington which was named Camp Bartlett, after the owner, which eventually became the home of Virginia's veterans during the Bonus March.¹⁹ In addition to small sites in and around the city, Glassford looked across the river to a much larger location at Anacostia Flats, which would become the main camp for the B.E.F. in the summer of 1932.

Anacostia Flats was located on the south bank of the Anacostia River in the southeast corner of the District of Columbia, and was under the control of the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks. By the first week of June Glassford had secured permission for its use, and the first of what would become thousands of veterans moved in and began to build makeshift quarters for themselves, and sometimes their entire families. Imitating a phenomenon taking place across the entire country, Anacostia was to become one of the largest and certainly best known Hoovervilles in the nation, a collection of makeshift shacks which served as homes for many who otherwise had none. By the middle of June 1932, nearly 25,000 veterans were in and around Washington, with the largest single group stuffed into Camps Marks and Sims at Anacostia.

Although Glassford was busy making preparations to receive tens of thousands of veterans, he was hoping he might be able to limit their number to something more manageable, but to do that he needed help. To that end, he sent his first telegram to Virginia Governor John G. Pollard on 23 May 1932. In it, Glassford asked Pollard to do what he could to limit the number of veterans travelling to Washington through his state.

¹⁹ Daniels, pp. 124, 126, 147.

Specifically, Glassford requested that Pollard not transport veterans through Virginia with government vehicles as so many other governors were doing, and if he did, to impress upon the veterans that they were not to stay in Washington longer than 48 hours, at which time Virginia would also provide transportation out of the capital. In short, if Pollard transported the veterans to Washington, Glassford wanted him to take some responsibility for them.²⁰ Pollard did not respond, so Glassford followed up with a second telegram four days later, and a letter four days after that. After his third attempt in just over a week to secure some assistance from the Governor of Virginia, Pollard finally responded by passing the matter to the Virginia Department of the American Legion, though he offered Glenn Elliot of that office no guidance on how he was to proceed on the matter. He further assured Glassford that he had seen “no evidence of the



Figure 1: Virginia Governor John G. Pollard.

movement (of veterans) and there has as yet been no occasion for any action,” and invited Glassford to contact him again if there should be any “movement” in the future and the Chief of Police should like his help.²¹

The Governor’s reply was probably more than Glassford could stand. If Pollard hadn’t seen any movement of veterans in his own state it would only be another three

²⁰ Pelham D. Glassford to John G. Pollard, 23 May 1932, Governor’s Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

²¹ John G. Pollard to Pelham D. Glassford, 2 June 1932, Governor’s Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

days before he would, and even so news reports pouring in from cities across the country should have alerted Pollard to what was coming just as they had alerted Glassford. Further, Pollard was never going to have the luxury of simply passing the veterans on to Washington and making them that city's problem the way, say, the Governor of Illinois did. Washington's problem was going to be Virginia's problem, if for no other reason than simple geography. While Glassford recognized this and reached out to Pollard, the Governor seemingly kept his head in the sand, content to react to events rather than getting out in front of them. It is not difficult to picture Glassford throwing up his hands in frustration to the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia, for whom he worked, ranting that he could get no help from the Commonwealth of Virginia. It must have come to something like that, because on 9 June the Commissioners sent their own telegram to Governor Pollard adding their voices to their Police Chief's, reiterating the challenges the District was facing with so many veterans already present or on the way, and again asking for Pollard's help to stem the tide of men advancing through his state.²² Pollard answered their three-page plea with a two-sentence reply that simply stated that he had received their telegram and would continue to cooperate.²³ The Commissioners must have wondered what cooperation he was referring to, since by that time they would have known that local authorities in Charlottesville, Danville, and Lynchburg were all providing transportation to veterans en route to Washington, contrary to the numerous requests of Washington authorities. In any case they gave up hope of getting relief from

²² Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia to John G. Pollard, 9 June 1932, Governor's Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

²³ John G. Pollard to the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia, 10 June 1932, Governor's Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

the south, and the authorities in Washington wouldn't engage Governor Pollard again until it was time to think about what to do with the B.E.F. as it left Washington, whenever that might be.

Chapter 2: The Boys from Virginia

Once the B.E.F. settled into its designated camps, Walter Waters began to work on the issue at hand – securing their bonus. He needed 145 Congressmen’s signatures on a petition to pull the Patman Bill out of committee and put it to a full vote on the House floor. The bill would then have to go through two votes in the House. The first would be on whether or not to schedule the bill for a full vote, effectively overruling the Ways and Means Committee. If that was successful, the second would be on the bill itself. While their men milled about the streets of Washington, leaders of the B.E.F. worked the halls of Congress, petitioning Congressmen for the required signatures. It took only a couple days to find 145 sympathetic lawmakers, significantly only one of whom was from Virginia, and on 13 June a majority of Representatives voted in favor of putting the bill to the House for a vote.²⁴ In the first indication that Virginia might think very differently than the nation at large, Virginia’s Representatives voted one for, one absent, and eight against sending the bill to the floor for a vote. Speaking for the Virginian majority, Representative Clifton A. Woodrum expressed some of their reasons for voting against the bill including fear of inflating the currency, thereby setting back economic recovery for everyone, and suggested that Virginia’s veterans needed no special help as they were already scheduled that year to get a new veterans’ hospital.²⁵ Agreeing completely with his position, the *Roanoke Times* suggested that Woodrum’s reasons for opposing the bill were sound “and will commend themselves to the judgment of the voters of the 6th

²⁴ Dickson and Allen, pp. 89-102.

²⁵ “Woodrum Votes Against Bonus,” *Roanoke Times*, 15 June 1932, p. 3.

District.”²⁶ Nevertheless, the Patman Bill advanced to a full vote in the House scheduled for 15 June, where the result was expected to be the same as the 13th. While Virginia’s press was initially no help to the veterans, on the day of that first vote in the House Virginia lent the Bonus Army a different kind of support. On the morning of 8 June the first 25 veterans from Virginia had arrived in Washington to join the B.E.F.

Petersburg was the first community in Virginia to mobilize in support of the Bonus March. Having watched a small group of Floridians pass through town on 4 June before stopping in Richmond, Petersburg’s veterans organized and were gone before the local press caught wind of them. On the morning of 6 June two automobiles were seen driving through town with a banner reading “Petersburg to Washington” draped across their sides.²⁷ Although reporters attempted to discover the names of the veterans within, they were gone too quickly. A day later they were seen in Fredericksburg, where reporters put their number at 25.²⁸ Fortunately Richmond’s veterans took a little longer to organize than Petersburg’s, and therefore gave the Richmond press a chance to leave a more detailed account of their enterprise.

The spontaneous nature of the Bonus March caught Richmond’s veterans unaware. Nobody had envisioned a national effort, nobody was prepared, and Virginia’s veterans were running late if they wanted to get to the capital in time for the vote in the House. A couple of Richmond veterans, Joe Williams and J.F. Joinville, began to organize veterans in that city by announcing the creation of a Richmond contingent of the

²⁶ “The Correct Position,” *Roanoke Times*, 15 June 1932, p. 4.

²⁷ “Bonus Band Passes Here,” *Petersburg Progress-Index*, 6 June 1932, p. 1.

²⁸ “Bonus Marchers Ride Through City,” *Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star*, 8 June 1932, p. 1.

B.E.F. Williams posted banners in business and residential districts, in addition to driving trucks through town with banners on the side announcing a planning session to be held on 10 June. Joinville began to work out transportation to Washington for what he estimated would be a 200-man group. Events in Washington were beginning to dictate a compressed timeline to Williams and Joinville. The House of Representatives was scheduled to begin debate on immediate payment of the bonus on 13 June, and if they were going to get to Washington in time to be there for a possible vote, they needed to be on the road by the 11th.²⁹ Perhaps because there was so little time to prepare, Williams seems to have focused his recruiting efforts primarily on Richmond, as there is no evidence that he reached out to surrounding communities in Virginia.

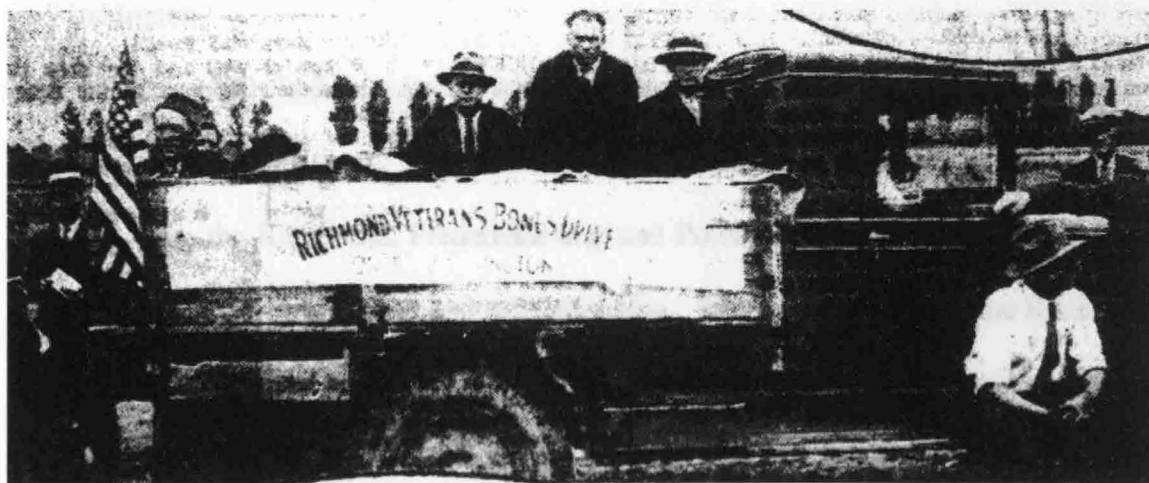


Figure 2: Bonus Marchers from Richmond prepare to depart for Washington.

On Friday night, 10 June, more than 200 World War I veterans met at the Labor Temple on 11th and Marshall Streets in Richmond to organize the Richmond contingent of the B.E.F. Assembled by Williams and Joinville, the veterans quickly organized

²⁹ "Richmonders Plan March," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 8 June 1932, p. 3.

themselves along military lines, and selected Thomas B. Dove, a veteran of the 4th Division during the war, as their commander. Additional leadership posts went to J.K. Sullivan, C.C. Grotz, and B.E. Chalkley. It is not clear why Dove was selected ahead of the others for the position of commander, as he was not one of the gentlemen who organized the meeting in the first place, and seemed to demonstrate no special leadership qualities at the meeting. While Sullivan, Joinville, Williams, and an official from the Richmond office of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (V.F.W.) addressed the assembled veterans on the importance of good behavior and military discipline, no record exists of any substantial address made by Dove. Nevertheless, Dove chose his staff and on the morning of the 11th the Richmond contingent of the B.E.F. set out to join the main body in Washington.

J.F. Joinville had been tasked with the responsibility of arranging transport for the entire group to Washington, and he was under the impression that he had obtained approval from the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad for the use of two box cars on 11 June from Richmond to Washington. When the 200 men of the Richmond B.E.F. arrived at the rail yard, however, they were told they would not be allowed free use of the railroad. Although the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad had already made a regular habit of allowing veterans from outside Virginia free passage on its trains through the state, they declined to offer the same hospitality to Virginia's own veterans.³⁰ Faced with this unanticipated roadblock, the Richmond B.E.F. began to come apart before it even left the city. Nearly half of the veterans quit the enterprise right then

³⁰ "Local Bonus Seekers Balked When They Try to Borrow Ride," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 12 June 1932, p. 1.

and there, sufficiently dejected by the train episode that they decided to simply go home. The other half stuck it out, and after a full night of negotiating with the railroad and looking for truck transportation, just over 100 veterans were permitted to board a northbound train early on the morning of the 12th.³¹ By that afternoon they were outside Alexandria encamped in an abandoned gas station, and later moved to the barn of an



Figure 3: The leaders of the Richmond contingent. From left to right; Thomas B. Dove, C.C. Grotz, and B.E. Chalkley.

abandoned electric train line. Richmond merchants had already sent provisions north to support their veterans, and local residents provided large donations of food and coffee. At 5 A.M. on the morning of 13th, the 100 men of the Richmond B.E.F. set out on foot for Washington and settled into camp near Congress Heights in the extreme southeast of the District of Columbia.³²

While they didn't make any special effort to recruit from outside the city of Richmond before they departed for Washington, the leaders of the Richmond contingent must have hoped to add to their number along the way. If they did they may have been disappointed, because Fredericksburg, the largest city on their route, produced only a handful of additional veterans. Harry Ridge, formerly of the United States Marine Corps (U.S.M.C.), spread the word throughout town that any veterans wishing to join the B.E.F.

³¹ "Local Bonus Army Encamped In Old Shack Near Alexandria," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 13 June 1932, p. 1.

³² "Hundred Bonus Marchers from Virginia Stop Over Night Near This City," *Alexandria Gazette*, 13 June 1932, p. 1.

in Washington should gather in front of the Fredericksburg courthouse at 2 P.M. on 11 June, reasoning that they “might as well starve in Washington as starve in Fredericksburg.”³³ From there he had no idea whatsoever how to get to Washington, so the following day the small number of veterans who had answered his call were seen loitering around town looking for a ride to the capital. Upon hearing that the Richmond contingent was leaving Richmond that day, Ridge decided to join that group as it passed through Fredericksburg, and by 13 June they were at Congress Heights with the rest of the Virginians.³⁴ One Fredericksburg veteran is an interesting case because, unlike many or maybe even most of the men who left home to march on the capital, E.R. Lewis quit a job to join the B.E.F. Lewis was employed by the Battlefield Park Commission until he simply stopped showing up for work on 3 June. His supervisor later discovered that Lewis had reported to the commission’s main office to collect his last two weeks’ pay of \$24 and gone north to join the Bonus March on his own. Although he was only earning about \$2 a day, Lewis represented veterans who felt strongly enough about their bonus that they would leave work that many would have been glad to have at the time. In addition to leaving steady employment, Lewis was one of the many veterans who brought his wife with him, adding an additional dimension to the Bonus March.³⁵

There is evidence of only one other community in Virginia attempting to organize an independent contingent of Bonus Marchers. In Charlottesville, former Sergeant W.T. Calder announced that he had organized 60 veterans to join the B.E.F., and expected up

³³ “Bonus Army Still Sticking on Job,” *Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star*, 10 June 1932, p. 1.

³⁴ “Washington Still Marchers Mecca,” *Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star*, 11 June 1932, p. 1.

³⁵ “Bonus Marchers Pass Through City,” *Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star*, 7 June 1932, p. 1.

to 200 to join him by 16 June. Calder planned to advance to Washington through Gordonsville, Orange, and Fredericksburg, picking up as many veterans as he could along the way. The *Daily Progress* immediately condemned the idea, expressing its hope that the veterans of their city would reconsider heckling a weak Congress into doing something that would hurt the nation's economy, and concluded by admonishing the veterans that "these are not methods of citizen or soldier."³⁶ In any case, it is likely that the Charlottesville contingent never got off the ground, as there is no further mention of it in any of Virginia's newspapers studied. Calder made his announcement on 14 June, and didn't plan to depart until 16 June at the very earliest. By then the Senate was already debating the Patman Bill and on 18 June voted it down. As Charlottesville was already so late in organizing, it is likely that when word reached the assembling veterans that the Patman Bill had died in the Senate they simply didn't continue, at least not as an organized group. If any local veterans did travel to Washington they probably did it in small groups or individually, hitching on with the hundreds of out-of-state veterans passing through Charlottesville, and merging with the Richmond B.E.F. in Washington if they could find it.

Who were these Virginians who felt strongly enough about their right to immediate payment of their bonus that they traveled to Washington to join the Bonus Expeditionary Force? Very little information is available about them individually. There are seemingly no published interviews with Virginian Bonus Marchers in the years after the event, and most newspaper accounts from 1932 offer little biography of their leaders.

³⁶ "Let Local Veterans Take No Part," *Charlottesville Daily Progress*, 14 June 1932, p. 4.

The Richmond contingent commander, Thomas B. Dove, served with the 58th Infantry of the 4th Division during the war, W.T. Calder was a sergeant with the 29th Infantry Division,³⁷ and Harry Ridge served in the U.S.M.C. But service information about the rest of the leaders is not available. In 1919 Virginia established the Virginia War History Commission, charged with documenting Virginia's contribution to World War I. The commission passed voluntary surveys to each of Virginia's nearly 80,000 World War I veterans, only 15,000 of whom bothered to fill it out and return it. Of the eleven Virginian B.E.F. leaders mentioned in newspaper accounts by name, not one filled out his survey.³⁸ In addition, military records for all eleven were destroyed in a 1973 fire at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis which consumed 80 percent of all service members' records who were discharged between 1912 and 1960.³⁹

What we can surmise about them is that they must have been an especially determined group, at least the ones who stuck it out through the failure to get a train on the first day. Of the highest estimate of 25,000 veterans who occupied the capital, reports never place the strength of the Richmond B.E.F. at more than 300, with scattered individuals from around the state swelling their numbers slightly.⁴⁰ Walter Waters was later able to produce roster sheets of the B.E.F. that listed 259 Virginians, placing Virginia 26th among the states in terms of number of veterans who participated in the

³⁷ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 13 June 1932, p. 1; *Charlottesville Daily Progress*, 14 June 1932, p. 4.

³⁸ "World War I History Commission Questionnaires," 2002, Library of Virginia, 25 June 2006, < http://ajax.lva.lib.va.us/F/?func=file&file_name=find-b-clas13&local_base=CLAS13 >

³⁹ "The 1973 Fire at the National Personnel Records Center," National Archives, 7 June 2006, < <http://www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel/fire-1973.html> >

⁴⁰ "Draper Warns Va. Veterans To Guard Health," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 15 June 1932, p. 5.

Bonus March.⁴¹ Waters claimed he had lost about half his roster sheets, so if one assumes the lost sheets were spread evenly across the entire B.E.F. and not limited to veterans from any one state (perhaps a bit of a stretch), the total number of Virginias who participated in the Bonus March at some point may have been a little over 500. Assuming then a top strength of 300 at any one time, Virginia's contribution to the overall B.E.F. represented about 1.2 percent of its total, and only 0.4 percent of Virginia's World War I veterans. Given these small numbers, these men must have represented the most hard-core proponents of immediate payment of the bonus, with the vast majority of Virginia's World War I veterans choosing to stay at home rather than journey to Washington.

⁴¹ Waters, p. 258.

Chapter 3: "Virginia Regrets"

While Virginian merchants and private citizens provided the Richmond B.E.F. with food, landowners looked the other way when their fields were used for sleep or abandoned buildings used for shelter, government officials coordinated with relief agencies for provisions, and railway officials eventually allowed them passage on their trains, not all Virginians were solidly behind the veterans' cause. The editorial boards of Virginian newspapers could be brutal in their contempt for the Bonus Marchers, and were unsupportive when Virginians joined the B.E.F. in Washington. Upon learning that some of Richmond's own were going to join the B.E.F., the *Richmond News Leader* best summarized the opinion of the state's press:

Virginia had heretofore observed a reasonable attitude toward a policy which . . . will bankrupt the treasury. Nowhere have a larger percentage of ex-servicemen opposed bonus legislation. Most Virginians veterans felt that they could well emulate their fathers and grandfathers who, after four years of the direst hardships that war has ever brought on a people, were content to live in the memory of duty done. We are sorry this record is marred by this futile march.⁴²

This begs the question; why did so many oppose payment of the Soldiers' Bonus as strongly as they did? What were the arguments Virginia's press used in opposition to the bonus?

In editorial sections studied from fourteen Virginian newspapers in the summer of 1932, ranging from large city daily papers to small county weeklies, from every geographical area of the state, and from before the veterans appeared in Washington until after their camps were nothing but smoldering ashes, not a single one was ever supportive of immediate payment of the Soldiers' Bonus. Every one of them remained firmly and

⁴² "Virginia Regrets," *Richmond News Leader*, 11 June 1932, p. 8.

consistently opposed to the veterans' cause throughout the Bonus March. In their editorial sections, they stated a number of reasons for opposing early payment of the bonus. First, there was the question of whether an able bodied veteran of war was entitled to compensation in any form. None of the papers denied that wounded veterans or the families of deceased soldiers must be taken care of, but the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* called attention to the fact that those veterans who were not wounded in the war had no claim to a bonus of any sort, as they were chosen for military service precisely because they represented the fittest among them, were still under 40 years of age, were stronger than most of their fellow citizens, and therefore had no excuse for not

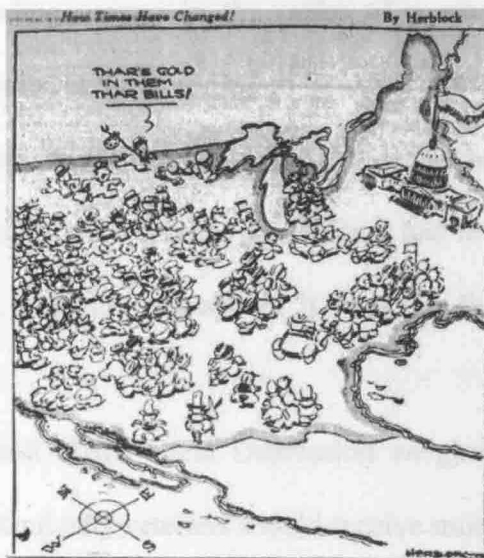


Figure 4: "How Times Have Changed!" One paper regrets that Americans are looking to Washington where they once looked only to themselves.

scraping out some kind of a living.⁴³ The *Petersburg Progress-Index* agreed, and supported its position with an analysis of the support provided to veterans by each of the belligerent powers of World War I concluding that, by the standards of the rest of the world, the American system was relatively generous. No other nation offered able-bodied veterans a lump-sum payment of any kind. Instead, they provided pension systems that only aided "those partly or wholly disabled in the war and to the dependents of those who died in service." While the paper stopped short of calling American war

⁴³ "Those Bonus Marchers," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 31 May 1932, p. 5.

veterans greedy vis-à-vis their former allies and foes, it did note “the idea of a bonus for military service in the World War is distinctly American.”⁴⁴ By the following week the *Progress-Index* had read its history and noted that this was not the first time American soldiers marched upon their government demanding money in the wake of a war. Supporting its earlier thesis that the idea of cash bonuses for able-bodied veterans was a uniquely American idea, the paper cited examples of past clashes between the government and its veterans over money, and proudly noted that the government had not previously caved to the demands of its veterans, implying nor should it do so in the present crisis.⁴⁵

The suffering of so many people as a result of the Great Depression weighed heavily on the minds of some who couldn't understand why veterans should receive more assistance than their countrymen. The *Waverly Dispatch* in Sussex thought that the veterans would have acquitted themselves better by going to Washington to propose “a new economic deal” for all the country's unemployed, using that exact term only a year before President Roosevelt made it famous, rather than seeking quick cash for themselves.⁴⁶ The *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot* concurred when it stated “the nation can not, in fairness to millions in no better case, further this quest.”⁴⁷ The *Daily Progress* in Charlottesville would see any available funds spent on relief or charity, and was certain that paying the bonus represented neither, calling it “more like trading with the enemy.”⁴⁸

⁴⁴ “The Government And The Veteran,” *Petersburg Progress-Index*, 7 June 1932, p. 5.

⁴⁵ “Special Rewards To War Veterans,” *Petersburg Progress-Index*, 11 June 1932, p. 5.

⁴⁶ “Congress Says Bonus Army is Annoying,” *Waverly Dispatch*, 1 July 1932, p. 1.

⁴⁷ “The Tattered March-Past,” *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 9 June 1932, p. 5.

⁴⁸ “Give Them Travel Pay and Send Them Back,” *Charlottesville Daily Progress*, 2 June 1932, p.

Also thinking about the nation as a whole, the *Lynchburg Daily Advance* called immediate payment of the bonus an “obstacle...placed in the way of an improvement in the economic and financial situation.”⁴⁹ The *Roanoke Times* opposed inflating the currency, as the government would surely have to do in order to pay the bonus, thereby damaging the credit of the United States and postponing a return to prosperity for everyone.⁵⁰ The *Alexandria Gazette* agreed, going a step further to point out the disastrous historical examples of inflation and hyper-inflation caused by printing extra money in the Confederate States of America and post-World War I Germany and Russia.⁵¹ In an era when balancing the federal budget was actually taken seriously, the *Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch* wondered if the veterans thought the government had some “magic method” of raising funds and, assuring them that it did not, suggested that the country simply couldn’t afford to pay the bonus at this time.⁵² The *Danville Register* hoped the government would hold firm as well, claiming it had just balanced the budget, would undermine its recent good work by paying the bonus, and would undoubtedly “precipitate...another financial crisis” should it do so.⁵³ Following a speech to veterans in which retired U.S. Marine Corps General Smedley D. Butler told them to stick to their guns, that they are better than their fellow citizens, the *Alexandria Gazette* made clear that we had no military aristocracy in this country, that veterans are no different than

⁴⁹ “A Courageous Stand,” *Lynchburg Daily Advance*, 18 June 1932, p. 6.

⁵⁰ *Roanoke Times*, 15 June 1932, p. 4.

⁵¹ “Printing Press Money,” *Alexandria Gazette*, 5 May 1932, p. 4.

⁵² “The Tragedy of the Bonus Drive,” *Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch*, 14 June 1932, p. 8.

⁵³ “A Depressing Spectacle,” *Danville Register*, 11 June 1932, p. 7.

anyone else, and a very legitimate reason for opposing immediate payment of the bonus would be “the fear of military domination in this country.”⁵⁴

There were counterarguments to each of the above positions to be sure. Proponents of immediate payment of the bonus would claim that inflating the currency would only put extra dollars in the pockets of businessmen, stimulating an economy that needed it desperately.⁵⁵ Veterans might agree that many of them returned unharmed, but would argue that their wartime salary was about 1/20th that of a typical dockworker who stayed home, and they should not have been financially penalized for answering their nation’s call.⁵⁶ Claims that the country simply couldn’t afford the bonus might be met with the disdain that Will Rogers showed when he claimed that was “applesauce,” that the country was not broke, and if it was how was it that automobile manufacturers were months behind in their orders?⁵⁷ However valid some of these arguments may have been, the fact is that the news media in Virginia didn’t make or support a single one of them, holding firm throughout the summer of 1932 that not only was there no compelling reason to pay the bonus, but there were actually quite a lot of reasons for not giving the veterans a dime.

⁵⁴ “The Better Class,” *Alexandria Gazette*, 22 July 1932, p. 4.

⁵⁵ Daniels, pp. 60-61.

⁵⁶ Dickson and Allen, p. 31.

⁵⁷ Daniels, pp. 36-37.

Chapter 4: Southern Hospitality

Bordering the District of Columbia as it does, Virginia had a unique opportunity to host veterans from all across the South and West en route to the capital. Arriving in only a trickle at first, by mid-June some towns had already handled several thousand veterans passing through. Traveling Bonus Marchers found that there were sometimes two Virginias waiting for them; one that went out of its way to extend a helping hand, and another that could be cold and uninviting, making it perfectly clear that the veterans were not always welcome.

Virginians didn't fully understand the scale of the impending Bonus March when the first 44 members of the Florida contingent arrived in Richmond on 5 June, with 150 more expected the next day. They were met with food and places to sleep by the Salvation Army and the Volunteers of America, arranged for by Richmond Captain of Detectives A.S. Wright.⁵⁸ Stories of local hospitality abounded in Virginia's newspapers, especially in the early days of the Bonus March. The day after Detective Wright met the first Floridians with food and accommodations, a follow-on contingent from the Florida group told a Richmond reporter about a former German soldier, employed now in the United States as a railroad worker, who provided the veterans with sandwiches and coffee at his own expense.⁵⁹ In Charlottesville 2,500 Bonus Marchers from the western states moved through the city in the first two weeks of June. Most of the marchers had been moved to Charlottesville from Roanoke through Lynchburg, with transportation provided

⁵⁸ "They'll Stick for Money, Say Bonus Seekers Here," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 5 June 1932, p. 1.

⁵⁹ "German Treats Bonus Marchers, Enemies in France, to Coffee," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 6 June 1932, p. 1.

by each of those cities to the next in the line. Charlottesville Chief of Police Maurice F. Greaver set veterans up at the local National Guard Armory, moving groups as large as 600 per day through town after a night of sleep and a meal on the city.⁶⁰ By mid-July Greaver had handled nearly 4,000 veterans in this manner with hardly an incident, prompting the commander of an outfit from South Carolina to write a letter to the Chief thanking him for “the courteousness shown us during our need by your kind and public spirited officers.”⁶¹ Commenting on Virginia’s hospitality, one group from Wisconsin reported “Richmonders . . . have been very kind to us. We stopped in several grocery stores . . . and were not refused food a single time.”⁶² As late as 18 July Richmond was providing so much food for traveling Bonus Marchers that a group of 35, the last group to leave Richmond before the Army routed the marchers out of Anacostia, claimed they were reluctant to leave the city, as they had eaten well there and didn’t know if they would do so in Washington.⁶³ In Danville the leader of a group of 23 veterans from Florida noted that city was the single most hospitable town they had encountered on their entire trip. Having become separated from their main group, the 23 men were given food and fuel by the Danville Police Department before continuing north.⁶⁴ Danville coped effectively with much larger groups as well. Adding to the number of veterans Lynchburg was already receiving from Roanoke, Danville began sending hundreds of veterans to Lynchburg in the first week of June. The first large group of 200 veterans had

⁶⁰ “More Than 1,200 Veterans Pass Through City During Week-End,” *Charlottesville Daily Progress*, 13 June 1932, p. 1.

⁶¹ “Far West Veterans Join Bonus Forces,” *Charlottesville Daily Progress*, 15 June 1932, p. 1.

⁶² “Band of Bonus Marchers Stops Here En Route to Washington,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 6 July 1932, p. 1.

⁶³ “Last Bonus Army Group Leaves City,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 18 July 1932, p. 1.

⁶⁴ “Veterans Praise Treatment Here,” *Danville Register*, 10 June 1932, p. 3.

been dropped at the city limits by trucks from Greensboro, North Carolina, on the evening of 6 June, and within two hours the city had rounded up enough trucks to ship the men on to the small town of Gretna, whose mayor telephoned the Danville Police Department to object, stating that Gretna simply didn't have the ability to deal with such a large group. Danville Mayor Harry Wooding relented, and Danville picked up the additional cost of moving the veterans through Gretna and on to Lynchburg.⁶⁵ Truckloads of veterans continued through Danville over the next week, nearly all of which followed the same route from Danville to Lynchburg, then on to Charlottesville and finally Washington.

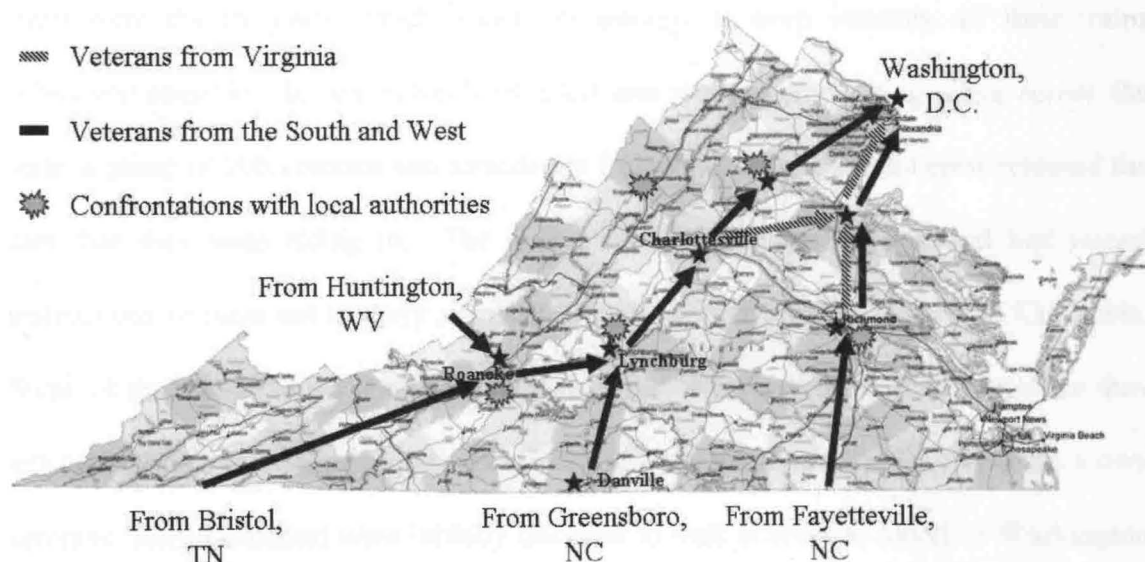


Figure 5: Major routes traveled through Virginia by veterans; June-July 1932.

Many groups of veterans did not impose on local communities for food, shelter, and transportation. On 9 June one such group of 200 veterans from Georgia moved through Petersburg in seven large trucks and, other than needing to buy gasoline, were “plentifully supplied with provisions” of their own. After obtaining their gasoline and

⁶⁵ “Danville Aids 200 Bonus Marchers,” *Danville Bee*, 6 June 1932, p. 1.

spending the night in Petersburg, the group made camp in Colonial Heights just across the Appomattox River, where they cooked their breakfast over open fires and were off to Washington by that afternoon.⁶⁶ One veteran, who hadn't imposed on a single person for charity between his home in Indiana and Virginia, suddenly needed help when he reached Winchester. In what was surely a humorous episode for everyone but him, Vernon Spencer burned every dollar he had when he disposed of an old pair of trousers, pockets stuffed with cash, in a camp fire. He turned to social workers in that town to get him the rest of the way to Washington.⁶⁷

Not everyone welcomed veterans on their way through Virginia, and chief among them were the railroads, which fought all summer to keep veterans off their trains whenever possible. In one example of a cat and mouse game taking place across the state, a group of 206 veterans was stranded in Culpepper when the train crew released the cars that they were riding in. The train crew reported that the railroad had issued instructions to them not to carry veterans over the border into the District of Columbia. Some of the men asserted it was the third time they'd been thrown off a train since they left their homes in South Carolina and Georgia.⁶⁸ As mentioned earlier, Virginia's own veterans from Richmond were initially thwarted in their attempt to travel to Washington by train. Besides the nuisance the veterans represented, railroads needed to discourage veterans from hopping free rides for safety reasons. In a tragic example of rail mishaps probably taking place across the country, Charles Jacobsen, a Bonus Marcher from

⁶⁶ "Contingent of 200 Georgia Veterans Spend Night Here," *Petersburg Progress-Index*, 10 June 1932, p. 1.

⁶⁷ "Vet Burns Bankroll With Old Trousers," *Culpeper Exponent*, 14 July 1932, p. 1.

⁶⁸ "Vets Continue Through State," *Lynchburg Daily Advance*, 7 June 1932, p. 1.

Dansbury, Iowa, was struck by a train in Richmond when he fell asleep on the tracks, of all places. He was critically injured and was not expected to survive.⁶⁹

In addition to the railroads, transient veterans began to encounter resistance from local communities in Virginia as the Bonus March wore on. Lynchburg was the first to take a stand against Bonus Marchers traveling through town. While Lynchburg initially provided transportation for 600 men and fed 500 of them, the City Council voted on 13 June that no further support would be provided to veterans. Calling the veterans' stay in Lynchburg a "hold up," the Council determined that from that point forward the entire city police force in conjunction with the National Guard would be used to force veterans to move on.⁷⁰ In Richmond veterans complained that police officers were squeezing them for \$1 fines, citing vagrancy laws that didn't even exist.⁷¹ In Roanoke the service officer of Blue Ridge Post 484 of the V.F.W. announced that, as his committee had all it could handle just providing food for needy Roanoke veterans, it would not provide free meals to Bonus Marchers en route to Washington. At a subsequent meeting of the Post 484 leadership the service officer was overruled, but no doubt many hungry veterans had passed through the city by then without the benefit of a meal from the V.F.W.⁷² City officials in Roanoke were determined to keep veterans from coming to the city at all, but were quickly overwhelmed by sheer numbers. After a tip from officials in Bristol warned that a large group of veterans was en route from that city, Roanoke City Manager W.P. Hunter determined to meet the veterans outside the city limits to steer them to another

⁶⁹ "Bonus Marcher, Asleep on Tracks, Hit by Train," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 16 July 1932, p. 3.

⁷⁰ "Bonus Marchers Not Welcome Here," *Lynchburg Daily Advance*, 13 June 1932, p. 5.

⁷¹ "Veterans Say Virginia Held Them For Fee," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 14 June 1932, p. 1.

⁷² "V.F.W. Disapproves Denying Food To Itinerant Veterans," *Roanoke Times*, 2 June 1932, p. 3.

place. A veteran on the first truck he encountered informed Hunter that there were 450 men en route behind him who could be expected shortly, and by 10 June there were over 500 veterans in Roanoke. Unable to keep them out of the city, Hunter was compelled to house them in the City Auditorium.⁷³ Officials authorized the purchase of enough food for two meals, and then tackled the problem of getting rid of them. Showing, according to the *Roanoke Times*, “no more intelligence” than authorities in neighboring cities, the City Council “passed the buck” to Lynchburg, perpetuating what the *Times* called “a sorry mess.”⁷⁴ When estimates from railroad companies to move the veterans came in higher than expected, the city decided to pay \$205 to a trucking company to move them on to Lynchburg, and then announced it would take no further steps to assist any more Bonus Marchers.⁷⁵

Residents of Fredericksburg had relatively little interaction with veterans as they passed through on their way to Washington. Observing that the veterans had been traveling through town for several days in the first week of June, the *Free Lance-Star* reported that only a single group of 100 had actually stayed overnight in Fredericksburg, and that they had been well behaved.⁷⁶ Although the city was able to avoid providing transportation and other services to the Bonus Marchers as they made their way to the capital, in the first days of the Bonus March Fredericksburg had the opposite experience of wrestling with veterans on their way out of, rather than towards, Washington. As early as 9 June people began to notice disgruntled veterans traveling in the opposite direction,

⁷³ “Veterans on Way to Capital Spend Night in Roanoke,” *Roanoke Times*, 11 June 1932, p. 1.

⁷⁴ “Our Recent Guests,” *Roanoke Times*, 12 June 1932, p. 4.

⁷⁵ “Second Contingent of Vets Sent On Way To Washington,” *Roanoke Times*, 13 June 1932, p. 1.

⁷⁶ *Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star*, 7 June 1932, p. 1.

already despairing of ever receiving their bonus and returning home.⁷⁷ Many feared they were merely the first in what might be an avalanche of angry men stranded in their area when the Bonus March collapsed, and were immediately nearly proven right. In Washington, the District Commissioners' first plan to bring the Bonus March to a peaceful conclusion was simply to load the men up on trucks, drive them 50 miles outside of town, and dump them, a plan that the *Free Lance-Star* noted would place the bulk of the B.E.F. right in Fredericksburg.⁷⁸ A week later Washington authorities did just that, using three District of Columbia garbage trucks to drop off 47 men in front of the town courthouse. Their arrival was completely unannounced, and City Manager L.J. Houston quickly arranged for two southbound trucks to haul the veterans to North Carolina, at the small cost of \$10.⁷⁹ That was the only group of veterans unilaterally shipped to Fredericksburg, but the fear of mass lawlessness from an army of unemployed men in their midst continued to hang over Northern Virginia for the duration of the Bonus March.

Despite the cold reception they sometimes received, the veterans who passed through Virginia were generally well behaved, belying the fears of many law enforcement officials who expected the worst. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* editorialized that it was "called upon to applaud the cool-headedness displayed thus far by the 'B.E.F.," and local officials often commented on the good conduct of veterans, such as when police officers in Lynchburg reported that one group of veterans passing

⁷⁷ "Bonus Soldiers En Route Home," *Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star*, 9 June 1932, p. 1.

⁷⁸ *Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star*, 10 June 1932, p. 1.

⁷⁹ "Dump Three Truck Loads Of Bonus Marchers Here," *Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star*, 16 June 1932, p. 1.

through was “unusually quiet despite rumors of disorder along the way.”⁸⁰ Virginia State Adjutant-General S. Gardner Waller commented that the veterans were well behaved and that “their discipline had been of a semi-military nature.”⁸¹ Commenting on “our recent guests,” the *Roanoke Times* called the conduct of 500 traveling Bonus Marchers “exemplary and beyond criticism. Aside from . . . feeding and transporting them . . . Roanoke had no cause to complain of their presence.”⁸² There were, however, examples of troublemakers as well. One veteran “went berserk” in Harrisonburg, was taken into custody by local police, and stabbed two inmates with a knife while incarcerated.⁸³ By 20 June Lynchburg had 14 veterans in custody for a variety of offenses, three of whom attempted to escape and were subsequently assigned to hard labor.⁸⁴ In Petersburg, Chief of Police W.W. Jefferson cautioned residents that men claiming to be veterans were going door-to-door asking for money to travel to Washington. Jefferson warned that those men who really were veterans had no authorization to solicit funds in this manner, while those who were not veterans were using the monies gained for “purposes entirely different” from those claimed.⁸⁵ Despite isolated examples like the above, the overall conduct of Bonus Marchers in Virginia was orderly and respectful.

A constant theme throughout the unprecedented movement of veterans through Virginia, men without the means to feed, shelter, or transport themselves, is how

⁸⁰ “Communists Thwarted,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 9 June 1932, p. 5; “Lynchburg Aids Bonus Marchers,” *Lynchburg Daily Advance*, 6 June 1932, p. 1.

⁸¹ “Thousands of Bonus Marchers May Be Stranded in Virginia,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 18 June 1932, p. 1.

⁸² *Roanoke Times*, 12 June 1932, p. 5.

⁸³ *Lynchburg Daily Advance*, 7 June 1932, p. 1.

⁸⁴ “Ten Bonus Hikers Finish Farm Stay,” *Lynchburg Daily Advance*, 20 June 1932, p. 2.

⁸⁵ “Police Warn Against Fake Vet Solicitors,” *Petersburg Progress-Index*, 10 June 1932, p. 1.

consistently absent the state government was from the decision-making process. Local authorities were largely left to develop courses of action and fund their execution entirely without guidance or assistance from Richmond, despite the fact that authorities in Washington were begging Governor Pollard to intervene in order to slow the flood of men descending on the capital. That so many men were transported mostly without incident in so short a period of time is a testament to the initiative and leadership of a number of local officials proactively communicating with each other and taking the steps necessary to preserve order in their communities while weathering the storm that had rolled in upon them.

Chapter 5: Blacks and Reds

The men of the B.E.F. were not always judged solely on the merits of their cause, if agreement could even be found as to what their cause was. Tens of thousands of angry men swarming the nation's capital had a way of bringing out fear, ignorance, and paranoia in some. In the case of the Bonus Army, Southern fears of racial integration and national fears of communism combined to take the spotlight off the bonus and put it squarely on issues that would drain public sympathy from the veterans' cause. The veterans soon discovered that, where public opinion was concerned, it mattered who you were and what you thought.

One of the most striking characteristics of the Bonus Army was that, unlike much of the nation, it was racially integrated. It was unprecedented, spontaneous, and neither dictated by the force of law nor led by society's elites. Regular men upended the conventional wisdom of an entire nation when they crossed racial lines to create the B.E.F. in pursuit of their bonus. The American Expeditionary Force (A.E.F.) in which they had served fifteen years earlier had maintained, like much of the nation it served, that white and black soldiers could not possibly work together; so much so that black soldiers were actually placed in French units rather than alongside their fellow Americans.⁸⁶ That separation didn't exist in the Bonus Army, where black and white veterans might be assigned to different squads or platoons, but otherwise marched, worked, ate, slept, played, and generally lived together.

⁸⁶ "American Expeditionary Forces," *Wikipedia*, 9 June 2008, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Expeditionary_Force>

Virginia in 1932 was no different than most of the American South, where Jim Crow “separate but equal” laws were the order of the day. Whites and blacks could not sit together on public transportation, eat together in a restaurant, live near each other, be educated in the same schools, or worship in a common church. The isolation and marginalization of African-Americans was the overriding goal of Southern elites, and as long as they could claim it was for everyone’s own good, including Southern blacks’, Jim Crow could stand. The basic incompatibility of whites and blacks was the indispensable “truth” without which Jim Crow collapsed. Imagine, then, the shock most white Virginians must have felt at the sight of the racially-integrated Bonus Army traveling through their state, proving with every step toward Washington the falsehood of so many assumptions that were the foundation of a segregated society. The spectacle of white and black veterans traveling, sleeping, and eating side by side while working together towards a common goal must have been hard for some white Southerners to handle. The Bonus Army represented a threat to far more than the federal treasury; it stood the entire Jim Crow notion of “separate but equal” on its head.

Some national observers immediately understood the significance of an integrated Bonus Army, though sadly, few of them were white. Most prominent among the black correspondents was Roy Wilkins from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.), who was astonished to find the degree to which integration had taken hold of the veterans at Anacostia. Writing for the N.A.A.C.P.’s magazine *Crisis*, Wilkins informed his readers that, in the B.E.F., “Jim Crow was ‘absent without

leave.”⁸⁷ Wilkins went on to make the more dangerous connection between what he was seeing at Camp Marks and the hypocrisy of contemporary society. Noting that the U.S. Army in which these veterans had served was still segregated, Wilkins observed how “the Bonus Marchers gave lie to the notion that black and white soldiers . . . couldn’t live together.”⁸⁸

While the racial component of the Bonus March was not lost on some national writers, it seemed to be completely invisible to the Virginia media. The only hint of African-American participation in the Bonus March one will find in any Virginian newspaper of the day was the occasional observation that “the group included 50 negroes” or some such thing. Not one of Virginia’s major newspapers recognized the significance of the story or, far more likely, they recognized it only too well and deliberately ignored it because they didn’t much care for its implications for their way of life. After all, if white and black men together could form an effective body to petition Congress, why couldn’t they eat a hamburger together at any Virginia diner? What Virginia’s media didn’t proclaim out loud, its private citizens sometimes did. After the veterans were expelled from Washington, Dorsey Cullen of Upperville, Virginia, wrote to Governor Pollard in the hope that the Governor would do everything in his power to prevent veterans from loitering in the state. Chief among his reasons for wanting the Bonus Army gone was the following:

While the white men of this organization are not desirable for several reasons, what is worse still is the fact that there are numerous Negroes among them which would certainly be a source of anxiety and danger to the people here. Their

⁸⁷ Daniels, p. 84

⁸⁸ Dickson and Allen, p. 118.

presence here would injure the sale of real estate which is generally moving to the demand of those from other States desiring to locate in this rather select and rich neighborhood.⁸⁹

What is every bit as amazing as the racist rant that Cullen engaged in is the fact that Governor Pollard, in his reply, declined to censure him for it. Instead, he assured Cullen that he would do what he could to prevent a “public menace” and asked Cullen to continue to keep him informed of developments in Upperville.⁹⁰ Paul Dickson, co-author of *The Bonus Army*, understood the racial tensions that were mostly left unsaid when he replied to a query about the reason for the cold reception veterans received as they traveled through Lynchburg by stating that “race may have played some role in the official reaction.”⁹¹ The dichotomy between the integration of the B.E.F. and the segregation of the society it marched through was simply too great not to make the probable connection between the veterans’ racial integration and the public’s hostility to their cause.

In addition to the racial integration of the B.E.F., Virginians may have been startled at the sheer number of black veterans marching through the Commonwealth. If the Richmond contingent of the B.E.F. is even remotely representative of the B.E.F. as a whole, black veterans may have been far more likely to demand their bonus than their white counterparts, a fact that would have deeply shaken any support and sympathy that Virginians would have otherwise had for the veterans’ cause.

⁸⁹ Dorsey Cullen to John G. Pollard, 1 August 1932, Governor’s Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

⁹⁰ John G. Pollard to Dorsey Cullen, 2 August 1932, Governor’s Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

⁹¹ Paul Dickson, E-mail to the author, 25 July 2006.

While no record of the racial demographics of the Richmond contingent of the B.E.F. exists, the leadership roles assigned within that group, given the racial climate of 1932 Virginia, allows us to make some educated assumptions about it. Commander Dove divided his veterans into six squads, three of which were assigned black squad leaders.⁹² That he did so could mean one of two things: either he assigned leaders with no regard for the race of the men they would lead, or half of the Richmond contingent was African-American. It is difficult to imagine that Dove would place white men under the command of black squad leaders, however progressive the Bonus Army may have seemed to some, so perhaps the Richmonders were about half African-American. Blacks accounted for 13 percent of the draftees during the World War, roughly corresponding with their percentage of the population as a whole.⁹³ In Virginia blacks accounted for 32 percent of the population just before the war, and 28 percent just before the Bonus March.⁹⁴ Assuming then that the percentage of veterans from Virginia who were black conformed to their percentage in the general population of the state, as it did nationwide, the fact that Dove split his veterans down the middle on a white/black basis suggests that African-American veterans, in Virginia at least, were between 60-70 percent more likely to participate in the Bonus March than their white peers. Further supporting the conclusion that black veterans were more likely to demand early payment of their bonus is the fact that, as of 2 June 1932, only four of 163 posts of the Virginia Chapter of the American Legion had passed resolutions calling for immediate payment of the bonus, but

⁹² *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 12 June 1932, p. 1.

⁹³ "A.E.F.," *Wikipedia*.

⁹⁴ "1931 U.S. Census Report," *1930 U.S. Census*, 15 May 2008, <<http://www2.census.gov/prod2/statcomp/documents/1931-02.pdf>>

two of the four were described as “colored posts,” although only a small percentage of the 163 total posts could have been “colored,” given the minority status of black Virginians.⁹⁵ This inclination most likely represents the disparity of the socio-economic conditions of white and black America in the midst of the Great Depression, a condition that is beyond the scope of the current study. Nevertheless, if the trend can be applied to the veterans marching from across the country (and it probably can given the national scopes of the Great Depression and African-American socio-economic conditions), the B.E.F. may have been over 21 percent black, although the American Expeditionary Force was originally only 13 percent black. Couple these numbers with the exemplary manner in which the veterans worked side by side for a common cause, and one begins to understand the unique threat the B.E.F. represented to the racial status quo, particularly in the South.

Racial composition wasn't the only Bonus Army demographic that was working against them. Many observers were concerned about the veterans' real or perceived political views as well. In Washington the conviction was beginning to spread through the White House, War Department, and other agencies that the Bonus March was nothing of the sort, but was rather a communist-inspired manipulation and infiltration of a small number of actual veterans, whose purpose was potentially the toppling of the government. The Army was especially sensitive to the possibility of a communist plot, and General Douglass MacArthur, Army Chief of Staff, began to pass detailed intelligence reports to the White House highlighting communist influence in groups of

⁹⁵ W. Glenn Elliott to John G. Pollard, 2 June 1932, Governor's Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

veterans en route to Washington. J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the Justice Department's Bureau of Investigation, contributed to the paranoia with regular reports to the White House highlighting the communist influence within the B.E.F. It seemed that the government was in the grip of a "red scare," convinced that the Great Depression had created conditions that made the country vulnerable to a threat from the left. The arrival of the Bonus Army intensified these fears among many in Washington, and created a potentially volatile situation.⁹⁶

Many of Virginia's newspapers bit hard on the supposed communist infiltration of



Figure 6: One Virginia newspaper's take on the men in Washington; are they really veterans, or just trying to appear so?

the B.E.F. story. Across the state papers warned the veterans not to allow the "reds" to manipulate them, and warned that the use of force may be necessary if the B.E.F. couldn't purge its ranks of communists. In Richmond, the *Times-Dispatch* didn't want "harm to come to anyone," but warned the veterans that they must cleanse themselves of all radicals and not become "the dupes of communists" if they wanted to avoid a confrontation.⁹⁷ Two days later it cautioned the veterans again not to become the "dupes" of the communist "shock troops" in their midst.⁹⁸ The

⁹⁶ Dickson and Allen, p. 53.

⁹⁷ "The Depression Dramatized," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 7 June 1932, p. 5.

⁹⁸ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 9 June 1932, p. 5.

Lynchburg Daily Advance contended in three editorials that the veterans were losing control of their protest to groups of communists, and that they had better do something about it before the government did.⁹⁹

Newspapers weren't the only source of red baiting in Virginia. Elites from all sectors of society jumped on the red bandwagon, perhaps none more prominent than General Billy Mitchell. General Mitchell had pioneered the use of military aircraft during and after World War I, and had been famously court-martialed for embarrassing the Navy by sinking capital ships with torpedo planes in a post-war demonstration during which he deliberately disobeyed direct orders to limit the size of the bombs his planes dropped.¹⁰⁰ By 1932 he had been mostly vindicated in his views on the utility of military aircraft, and was living in Middleburg, Virginia, about 50 miles outside Washington. His status gave him access to the Governor, and he used it to blast away at what he was sure was a communist plot to overthrow the federal government. General Mitchell assured Governor Pollard that he understood, through his contacts in the American Legion and the Army, that the entire Bonus March was planned and directed by the Communist Party in New York. Phase one of their plan, Mitchell claimed, was to march on Washington under the Bonus Certificate pretense with the goal of being forcibly thrown out, while phase two would establish a national movement with the goal of toppling the federal government, funds for which were being provided by the Soviet Union. Mitchell urged Pollard to therefore take a hard line with the veterans, prevent them from "squatting" in

⁹⁹ "The Problem of the Bonus Army," *Lynchburg Daily Advance*, 4 June 1932, p. 4; "Time to Disband," *Lynchburg Daily Advance*, 28 June 1932, p. 4; "Why the Veterans are in Washington," *Lynchburg Daily Advance*, 13 July 1932, p. 4.

¹⁰⁰ "Billy Mitchell," *Wikipedia*, 9 June 2008, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billy_Mitchell>

Virginia, and be vigilant in countering the communistic drumbeat that was sure to accompany phase two of their plan to bring down the government.¹⁰¹

The government and the press needn't have worried about a communist revolution, at least not from the veterans in Washington. There were communists in the ranks of the B.E.F., but their numbers were small and, careful not to give the government any reason to start anything, the B.E.F. did an exemplary job of ridding itself of communist agitators throughout the Bonus March. From the very beginning, Walter Waters went out of his way to assure the authorities that the B.E.F. would not tolerate communists in their midst, then put out orders to his men to turn any communists out of their ranks aggressively. Told by Chief Glassford that they were welcome in Washington as long as they behaved like gentlemen and didn't mix with communists, one Bonus Marcher replied that "if we find any 'red' agitators we'll take care of them ourselves."¹⁰² Take care of them they did. Suspected communists were tried by B.E.F. courts for spreading communist literature and whipped as a result, denied rations and shelter, and some even suspected a couple of communists fished out of the Potomac had been beaten to death by Bonus Marchers.¹⁰³ Virginia's own veterans took their cue from the larger Bonus Army and did whatever they could to discourage any association with communists. At their very first meeting in Richmond, R.J. Pacini from the V.F.W. addressed the men and warned them against mixing with any communists they might encounter in Washington. Calling them the "greatest threat to our country at the present

¹⁰¹ Billy Mitchell to John G. Pollard, 8 August 1932, Governor's Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

¹⁰² Daniels, p. 99.

¹⁰³ Dickson and Allen, pp. 124-125.

time,” Pacini encouraged the Richmonders to “just bust them in the nose” if approached by communists.¹⁰⁴ Veterans passing through the state echoed those sentiments. In Roanoke reporters discovered that no “red” talk was being tolerated by a group of 500 veterans from Texas and Oklahoma, and they had just expelled two of their own in Memphis for engaging in exactly that.¹⁰⁵ Again and again, transient veterans and recruiters were asked by reporters about the communist presence in their ranks, only to be told, as Ben Miller told the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* while selling copies of the *B.E.F. News* in Richmond, “we allow no ‘reds’ around our camps.”¹⁰⁶ No amount of hard evidence could ever convince the government or Virginia’s press that what Miller asserted was true. Convinced there was a threat which simply didn’t exist, at least not on the scale it imagined, Washington inched closer and closer to confronting the B.E.F.

Americans’ fear of communists and nationwide racial tensions would continue for decades after the Bonus Army was largely forgotten, until the end of the Cold War and the passage of civil rights legislation drove those fears to the back burner or underground. Although it may have hurt their cause in the short run, the demographics of the B.E.F. may have borne unintended fruit as well. If nothing else, the Bonus Army would force some thoughtful Virginians to consider the injustice of Jim Crow and perhaps their own hypocrisy. Whatever some white Virginians thought of the African-Americans in their midst, black veterans had no doubt where they stood, or at least intended to stand. Later, as the Bonus Army was being routed from downtown Washington by American troops, a

¹⁰⁴ “Local Veterans Leave Today,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 11 June 1932, p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ *Roanoke Times*, 11 June 1932, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ “B.E.F. News Sold in City,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 19 July 1932, p. 5.

black veteran, badly stabbed in the melee, plainly stated what any Virginian veteran, white or black, on the wrong side of U.S. Army bayonets would have felt when he exclaimed "I may not be an American, but I'm a Virginian."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Dickson and Allen, p. 178.

Chapter 6: "Until We Change The Minds of These Guys"

On 15 June 1932, the House voted 209-176 in favor of paying the Soldiers' Bonus immediately and entirely. Of Virginia's ten Congressmen only Representative John W. Flannagan of the 9th District (Bristol), who had also signed the veterans' petition pulling the bill out of committee, voted in favor. In Richmond, the *News Leader* was proud that no other state voted against the bill with so large a percentage of its strength, but was nonetheless "humiliated" by the single "yes" vote of Representative Flannagan. Indeed, the *News Leader* urged its readers to remove him and any other pro-bonus politicians from office at the earliest opportunity.¹⁰⁸ The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* urged Virginians to be proud of the votes of their Representatives, and assured its readers that the bill would not pass in the Senate.¹⁰⁹ The *Lynchburg Daily Advance* blasted the House for "passing the buck" to the Senate, and hoped the Senate would not do the same thing to the President.¹¹⁰ In Norfolk, the *Virginian-Pilot* scolded the House for taking action that would only encourage other disgruntled groups to travel to Washington to march for their myriad causes and, confident that the veterans would disperse as soon as their legislation was killed, urged the Senate to "get on with the execution."¹¹¹ Although the *Roanoke Times* was disappointed in the House, it was so certain that the Senate would vote the Patman Bill down that it began to write about the Bonus March in the past tense,

¹⁰⁸ "Flannagan And The Bonus," *Richmond News Leader*, 18 June 1932, p. 8.

¹⁰⁹ "It Will Not Pass," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 16 June 1932, p. 6.

¹¹⁰ "Not a Sincere Vote," *Lynchburg Daily Advance*, 16 June 1932, p. 4.

¹¹¹ "Empty Bonus Victory," *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 17 June 1932, p. 6.

blaming the entire affair on politicians who encouraged the veterans to travel to Washington for a bonus they never had any chance of actually receiving.¹¹²

Three days later the Senate took up the Patman Bill. Already working past the end of the current Congressional term, it would be the last act of the 72nd Congress. While thousands of veterans kept vigil on the Capitol lawn, Senators debated into the night, not entirely certain what the B.E.F. would do if they voted against the bonus. At 9:30 P.M. word was sent to Walter Waters that the Senate had defeated the bill 62-18, with 16 not voting.¹¹³ Senator Carter Glass (D-VA) voted against the bill, while Senator Claude Swanson (D-VA) did not vote but was paired against the bill, as he was attending the Geneva Armament Limitation Conference at the request of President Hoover, and therefore had the good fortune, according to the *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, of being “three thousand miles removed from Washington’s unholy mess.”¹¹⁴ While stunned veterans absorbed the news outside, frightened senators made good their escapes through underground tunnels so as not to face the crowd or be in the building if the veterans should storm it, though nothing of the sort happened.¹¹⁵

Virginia’s newspapers unanimously cheered the results of the vote in the Senate. The *Lynchburg Daily Advance* congratulated the Senate for taking a “courageous stand” by removing another obstacle to comprehensive economic recovery, while at the same time congratulating the B.E.F. for the manner in which it “received the blow.”¹¹⁶ The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* suggested that the Senate’s vote was a stinging rebuke of the

¹¹² “The Veterans Misled,” *Roanoke Times*, 17 June 1932, p. 4.

¹¹³ Dickson and Allen, pp. 127-130.

¹¹⁴ “Senator Swanson Should Worry,” *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 12 June 1932, p. 6.

¹¹⁵ “The Bonus Army: An American Epic Webcast,” *Library of Congress Website*.

¹¹⁶ *Lynchburg Daily Advance*, 18 June 1932, p. 6.

House of Representatives, and that even responsible Bonus Marchers would look back one day with no pride on their protest and recognize the Senate had done the right thing by the nation.¹¹⁷ The *Richmond News Leader* thought the six-year terms Senators enjoyed made it easier for them to stand up to special interests, and suggested that the nation might look at longer terms for Representatives in order to “stiffen the backbone” of that chamber as well.¹¹⁸ The *Farmville Herald* was just happy to see the current Congressional session finally come to an end. Disgusted with the overall performance of this particular Congress, the *Herald* suggested it would be forever known “for bad legislation that failed, rather than for good legislation which passed,” no doubt referring in part to the Patman Bill which was the final piece of “bad legislation” to fail.¹¹⁹

In the wake of the Senate’s rejection of the Patman Bill, Virginia began to grapple with the problem of what to do with potentially thousands of veterans stranded within her borders. Most veterans had no more means of getting home than they had to get to Washington in the first place. Assuming, as most did, that the B.E.F. would disintegrate shortly after the “no” vote in the Senate, Virginia State Adjutant General S. Gardner Waller rushed to Washington to meet with officials there regarding how best to ensure the veterans did not linger long in the area. Washington Police Chief Glassford told him that the District would transport veterans to the Virginia and Maryland borders, and suggested that Virginia supply trucks to take them from there, stating that Maryland had already agreed to do so. This Waller refused to do, explaining that the distances in

¹¹⁷ “A Dead Issue,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 19 June 1932, p. 6.

¹¹⁸ “The Senate And The Bonus,” *Richmond News Leader*, 20 June 1932, p. 8.

¹¹⁹ “Congress Adjourns,” *Farmville Herald*, 22 June 1932, p. 4.

Virginia were much greater than those in Maryland, making the cost of transporting thousands of men across his state far too high. No evidence is available that Waller ever requested assistance from the federal government in moving veterans through Virginia. At one point Waller suggested that he may have to appeal to citizens to carry veterans a couple at a time through Virginia in their private automobiles. Lacking the funds or vehicles to do anything else, he waited to see what developed and hoped the numbers of men traveling home through his state would be low.¹²⁰

Waller needn't have worried too much about plans to move the veterans because, to the surprise of most observers, the veterans had decided they weren't going anywhere. While the morning after the vote in the Senate the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* called the pursuit of immediate payment a "dead issue" and declared that the veterans were now "retracing their steps homeward," nothing could have been further from the truth.¹²¹ The very next day the *Richmond News Leader* observed that few if any veterans had been seen passing through Richmond on their way home as expected, and railroad officials had not yet been inundated with veterans riding their trains.¹²² Although many did leave Washington after the Senate vote, Walter Waters immediately announced that the entire B.E.F. intended to stay "until we change the minds of these guys," until 1945 if necessary, when their bonuses were legally due to be paid.¹²³ While many veterans gave up hope and started for home, the bulk of them stayed on, including most of the Richmond contingent. Joined by a second wave of 35 Richmond veterans two days after

¹²⁰ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 18 June 1932, p. 1.

¹²¹ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 19 June 1932, p. 6.

¹²² "Few of Bonus Army Pass Through City," *Richmond News Leader*, 20 June 1932, p. 6.

¹²³ Daniels, p. 121.

the first group arrived, by early July Virginia's veterans had moved from their initial camp located at Congress Heights to 4 ½ Street and Main Avenue. Their choice of location not only put them outside Anacostia, but placed them away from the main concentration of veterans in the city located along Pennsylvania Avenue between the White House and the Capitol, where clashes with police in the coming days would soon initiate the veterans' expulsion from Washington.¹²⁴ The Virginians' location placed them adjacent to the old U.S. Army War College, before it was moved to Pennsylvania, where ironically officers were probably in the midst of discussions about how to suppress the very protest taking place outside their gates.

Shortly after settling on 4 ½ Street the Virginians moved for a second and final time to Camp Bartlett, just outside the District borders east of Camps Marks and Sims at Anacostia. Camp Bartlett was named after John H. Bartlett, a former Governor of New Hampshire who was sympathetic to the veterans' cause. Bartlett owned some wooded land in a secluded area just outside the District of Columbia and donated it to Walter Waters for use as a B.E.F. camp. In what would become home to 1,200 veterans, Camp Bartlett was one of the more civilized bonus camps, with Army tents, electricity, and a couple of kitchens.¹²⁵ In addition to having many comforts lacking in other B.E.F. camps, Camp Bartlett promised to be something of a safe haven for the veterans should things turn confrontational between the Bonus Army and the government, since it was both outside the District of Columbia and on private land. While the camp's location

¹²⁴ "Richmond's Bonus Seekers Request Supplies, Money," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 8 July 1932, p. 5.

¹²⁵ Dickson and Allen, pp. 161-162.

meant a longer walk for veterans to get to the center of the action at the Capitol, its comfortable facilities and supposed safety were probably worth the trouble for many.

An indication of the necessities as well as the boredom of camp life can be seen in the list of items the Richmonders requested through the *Times-Dispatch* on at least two occasions: “blankets, cots, clothing, shoes, cigarettes, pipe and chewing tobacco, matches, magazines, boxing gloves, checker boards and any other games,” as well as plenty of food and money.¹²⁶ The proximity of Virginia’s veterans to their home state meant that supplies from home were plentiful compared to those from further away, so much so that Walter Waters began to centralize collection of all donations in order to distribute the goods evenly across the entire B.E.F. This had the unintended side effect of encouraging Virginians and others in nearby states to stop sending donations altogether “if (their) own boys can’t keep it!”¹²⁷

The Richmond B.E.F. was constantly looking to secure additional men as well as supplies. B.E.F. recruiters scoured Richmond, Hopewell, Petersburg, and the surrounding area throughout June and July, looking for veterans to join the Richmond contingent at Camp Bartlett.¹²⁸ An indication of Virginia’s proximity and importance to the B.E.F. may have been that the very first of many recruiters that Waters sent out after the Senate vote was a Wisconsin woman he dispatched to Richmond.¹²⁹ Their efforts seem to have only seldom paid dividends. Some citizens claimed the veterans were recruiting not only other veterans, but any unemployed men as well. In early July a

¹²⁶ “Bonus Scouts Seeking Men to Invade Capital,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 22 June 1932, p. 5; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 8 July 1932, p. 5.

¹²⁷ Waters, p. 108.

¹²⁸ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 22 June 1932, p. 5.

¹²⁹ Dickson and Allen, p. 132.

single truckload of recruits for the Richmond B.E.F. left town for Camp Bartlett. It was the only documented example of success in their recruiting drive, and it couldn't have included more than 30 to 40 veterans.¹³⁰

One important member of the Richmond B.E.F. was no longer with the outfit after the Senate vote. By 22 June C.C. Grotz, previously 2nd in command, had been elevated to commander of the Richmond B.E.F.¹³¹ Thomas B. Dove is named as the commander by the *Times-Dispatch* as late as 13 June, which placed him with the unit in Alexandria, about to move to Congress Heights. It is clear, then, that Dove was not part of the initial 100 or so Richmonders who slipped away after the setback with rail transportation on the first night, and that he made the trip north. On 15 and 18 June the House and Senate voted on the Patman Bill, and by 22 June Grotz is confirmed to be in charge, making it likely that Dove was one of the many who went home dejected after the Senate voted down the bonus. It is possible that something more dramatic happened, that he was forced out or otherwise resigned as a result of some incident, but the total lack of newspaper coverage accounting for the change in leadership seems to support a less remarkable exit. At any rate, given his previously-mentioned perceptible lack of leadership ability, it was probably no great loss.

As the camps in and around Washington grew ever larger, the health implications of their existence began to concern Virginia's State Health Commissioner Dr. Warren F. Draper. Comparing the conditions of the various camps to those at Camp Thomas at Chickamauga during the Spanish American War where 15 percent of the assigned

¹³⁰ "Will Join Bonus Army in Washington," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 7 July 1932, p. 3.

¹³¹ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 22 June 1932, p. 5.

soldiers developed typhoid fever, Draper urged Virginian veterans to stay away from the camps “unless they should feel the urge of a real duty.”¹³² Sanitation was every bit as bad as Draper feared. Flies, mosquitoes, garbage in the streets, and hasty latrines created appalling conditions. Food was mishandled and improperly stored, was not always fully cooked, and was eaten with filthy hands off makeshift plates passed from veteran to veteran. Many rummaged through trash heaps looking for anything to build shelter with, some lived with no shelter at all, and clothes were washed and men bathed in the river.¹³³

Dr. Draper wasn't the only one concerned about the unhealthy conditions in the veterans' camps. The day after Draper's warning the *Lynchburg Daily Advance* completely agreed with him, urging Virginia's veterans to heed the doctor's advice and not travel to Washington, and took his warning a step further. The *Daily Advance* wasn't only worried about the health of the men in the camps, but was starting to think about the implications for the state if thousands of sick men eventually had to pass through the small towns of Virginia on their way home, spreading disease throughout.¹³⁴ A few days later the federal government began to address some of Virginia's concerns by opening a field hospital for ill Bonus Marchers at Fort Hunt, south of Alexandria. At a cost of \$10,000, it had 46 beds and stocked more food than most Bonus Marchers could probably imagine. As of 18 June there were only twelve men admitted, and the epidemic that many expected in the B.E.F. camps never materialized.¹³⁵

¹³² *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 15 June 1932, p. 5.

¹³³ Dickson and Allen, pp. 107-109.

¹³⁴ “A Warning To Veterans,” *Lynchburg Daily Advance*, 15 June 1932, p. 6.

¹³⁵ “Ill Bonus Vets Now at Ft. Hunt,” *Alexandria Gazette*, 18 June 1932, p. 1.

The B.E.F. was competing for attention with a lot of news items in the summer of 1932. Virginia's papers were dominated with Hitler's rise in Germany, the debate on prohibition, the Democratic Convention in Chicago, the kidnapping and murder of Charles Lindbergh's son, and a reunion of Confederate veterans in Richmond. Despite the busy news season, Virginians were extremely interested in the veterans' march to their north. Besides the coverage they received on the front pages and editorial sections of Virginia's newspaper, the veterans published their own newspaper, the *B.E.F. News*, which was sold throughout Northern Virginia and on the streets of Richmond. By July 1932 circulation of the veterans' paper had reached 100,000 copies a week.¹³⁶

The University of Virginia's Institute on Public Affairs was interested enough in the Bonus March to commission a round table event on the topic of unemployment, and invited B.E.F. Commander Walter Waters to address the forum.¹³⁷ Waters accepted, but on 11 July it was his Chief of Staff, Captain Doak E. Carter, who appeared in Charlottesville. Carter told the panel that the veterans were not in Washington to secure immediate payment of the bonus, but rather to guard American institutions from communists or any other group threatening to overthrow the government. The *Lynchburg Daily Advance* pointed out that it surely would have come as a shock to the 25,000 men flying banners demanding payment of their bonus that their real purpose was not to receive their money at all, but rather to protect the government that wasn't giving it to them.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 19 July 1932, p. 5.

¹³⁷ "Waters, Bonus Leader, To Speak at Institute," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 23 June 1932, p. 7.

¹³⁸ *Lynchburg Daily Advance*, 13 July 1932, p. 4.

As June gave way to July and the B.E.F. continued to linger in Washington, Virginia's press called loudly and often for the veterans to return home. From the day the Senate defeated the Patman Resolution until the Army evicted them from Washington, the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* called on the veterans to disperse no fewer than six times in editorials entitled "A Dead Issue," "This Should End It," "Time to Demobilize," "Veterans Go Home!," "No Time for Bluster," and "A Bonus Concession." When Confederate veterans met for a reunion in Richmond that summer, the *Roanoke Times* recounted the hardships those men endured upon returning home from the Civil War and commented that "no man waited for a bonus, or expected anything of an act of Congress." The veterans of an older war, they thought, had something to teach the veterans of a newer one.¹³⁹ The *Lynchburg Daily Advance*, feeling that the veterans were only adding to their suffering by staying in their dilapidated camps long after all hope of securing their money had faded away, urged them to disband.¹⁴⁰ Letters to the Editor occasionally added to the chorus of voices demanding an end to the Bonus March, such as one particularly angry letter to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* from *A Virginia Voter*, who claimed the federal government could learn from Mussolini, who had just had two would-be-assassins executed: "Stop molly-coddling. Stop nursing men who are enemies to our country. Arrest the leaders of this group . . . put them in jail."¹⁴¹

The *Roanoke Times'* admiration for the veterans of the Civil War may shed some light on the mood of the Commonwealth towards the entire adjusted compensation issue.

¹³⁹ "They Have a Message For Us," *Roanoke Times*, 20 June 1932, p. 4.

¹⁴⁰ *Lynchburg Daily Advance*, 28 June 1932, p. 6.

¹⁴¹ "Suspects Political Move to Destroy Government," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 26 June 1932, p. 6.

Right in the middle of the Bonus March in Washington, Confederate veterans gathered in Richmond and struck a dramatic contrast to the veterans in Washington. Most of Virginia's Civil War veterans would have been content with nothing but victory in their war, yet this new breed of soldier, victorious in their war, demanded *money* in addition to victory. For many Virginians it probably went to the heart of what military service should be in a free republic. It was supposed to be the soldier's honor to serve, not the nation's honor to have the soldier. Sure, veterans were hurting, but in the middle of the Great Depression everyone was suffering, and the World War I veterans surely didn't think the current economic conditions were worse than those Virginia's Civil War veterans experienced. Consider too that after the Civil War the federal government granted pensions to Northern veterans as early as 1862, but left Southern veterans to their individual states.¹⁴² Virginia didn't offer its veterans pensions until 1888, and then at much lower rates than in the North.¹⁴³ Later efforts to incorporate Confederate veterans into the United States pension system were unsuccessful, which only pushed Virginians further away from Washington. One is left to wonder if two distinct military cultures emerged from the Civil War: one that took victory for granted and expected veterans to be well compensated, the other that hoped for victory and expected little material help win or lose. If that be the case, it could be a partial explanation of how the preponderance of the national press might be sympathetic to the Bonus Army, yet Virginians might have nothing but disdain for it.

¹⁴² William H. Glasson, *Federal Military Pensions in the United States*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1918), p. 127.

¹⁴³ "About the Confederate Pension Rolls," Library of Virginia, 11 August 2008, <<http://www.lva.lib.va.us/whatwehave/mil/conpenabout.htm>>

Chapter 7: Exit Strategies

Virginia's newspaper editorial boards weren't the only ones who thought it might be time for the veterans to return home. As Jennings C. Wise had discovered, many in the Richmond contingent of the B.E.F. were beginning to feel the same way. Wise was an Army officer, lawyer, and author who in the summer of 1932 was associated with the law firm of Dunn, Anderson, and Dunn in Washington, D.C. As a native Virginian, he made it his business to seek out his fellow Virginian veterans when they came to town for their bonus. What he discovered was that many of the Virginians wanted to return home, but didn't do so for lack of transportation and food. Wise became convinced that if one group started for home, others would follow their lead, until eventually the whole of the B.E.F. had departed from the city. Determined that it should be the Virginians that led the way, Wise contacted his old acquaintance, Governor Pollard. Wise and Pollard had worked together previously at the firm of Pollard, Wise, and Chichester in Richmond. Wise hoped that he might call upon that previous association to secure the Governor's cooperation with his plan. In a phone call to the Governor in early July, Wise explained that he had met the Richmond contingent in Washington and that they had asked him to serve as their commander.¹⁴⁴ This is entirely plausible, as Wise was a Virginian and had himself served as a Lieutenant Colonel in the A.E.F. during the war, and the time frame roughly coincides with the disappearance of Thomas Dove as the Virginians' commander. Wise claimed he turned them down, yet began to build up support within the ranks of the Richmond contingent for dissolution of the B.E.F.

¹⁴⁴ Jennings C. Wise to John G. Pollard, 12 July 1932, Governor's Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

Wise contacted the Governor by phone to propose a course of action while the latter was attending the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Wise briefed Pollard on the growing discontent in the Richmond contingent, informed him that he had taken the liberty of arranging press coverage of the Virginians' retreat with the Associated and United Press, and asked the Governor for transportation and provisions for the veterans. Judging by the tone of a letter of explanation Wise later sent Pollard, the conversation did not go well. Whatever Wise's intentions, Pollard seems to have suspected they were self-serving, and may have told him as much, because Wise sought to assure Pollard after the fact that his only motive was to help bring the Bonus March to a conclusion, and that his actions had "no political implications as far as (he) was concerned."¹⁴⁵ From Pollard's perspective, Wise's initiative probably risked making the Governor look a bit indecisive by comparison, particularly because Wise had already laid on press coverage, and Pollard would therefore not have the opportunity to influence the story. By endorsing Wise's plan at this late stage Pollard risked allowing real leadership to be demonstrated by someone other than himself, triumphantly concluding the most vexing problem facing the national government at the moment.

Since Governor Pollard declined Wise's request, an opportunity for the Commonwealth of Virginia to bring the Bonus March to a peaceful conclusion was missed. Still, even if he agreed to provide trucks and food, Wise's plan may have come to nothing. Two days after Wise contacted Pollard in Chicago, Walter Waters and the rest of the leadership of the Bonus Army learned about the planned exodus of the

¹⁴⁵ Wise to Pollard, 12 July 1932.

Virginians. Waters moved quickly to crush the revolt by sending men among the Richmond contingent threatening violence should they break ranks. In the face of these threats and absent any support from their home state the men complied, and the Bonus March dragged on into the summer toward what kind of resolution nobody knew.

As the Bonus March wore on into July, the federal government began to look for some way to bring the affair to a conclusion. Recognizing that wishing the veterans away wouldn't make it so, on 7 July Congress authorized payment of \$100,000 to Bonus Marchers to pay their way home. Although the payout would count against the value of the Bonus Certificate of any veteran who accepted, the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* still thought it regrettable that this money, which might have been better used to ease suffering elsewhere, should be spent on the veterans. Nevertheless, it acknowledged that Congress had to do something to remove them from Washington, and strongly urged all Bonus Marchers to take the money and go home.¹⁴⁶

General Glassford, who was forever touring the B.E.F. camps on his motorcycle to check on the men and oversee the distribution of supplies, also urged veterans to accept the government-provided tickets and return home. Glassford worked the crowd himself, but also treated the veterans to concerts by military bands, whose programs were designed to remind the men of home and entice them to return there. Among other songs from all parts of the country, "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny" was a regular part of any concert in the veterans' camps.¹⁴⁷ By 11 July, 1,100 veterans had taken advantage of the "free" tickets home, although just as many replacements had poured into Washington in

¹⁴⁶ "This Should End It," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 8 July 1932, p. 4.

¹⁴⁷ Waters, p. 135.

that time, and some of those traveling home were discovered to be B.E.F. recruiters, traveling to cities far and near to recruit additional veterans to join their ranks in Washington.¹⁴⁸

Having failed to end the standoff with tickets home, the government prepared to meet the veterans half way on their demand for full payment of the bonus. On 21 July President Hoover signed legislation that authorized any veteran to borrow up to 50 percent of the value of their Adjusted Compensation Certificates. Previously no veteran with a certificate less than two years old could borrow against it, and the new rules also lowered the interest on loans from 4 ½ percent to 3 ½ percent.¹⁴⁹ The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* praised the act as another in a series of concessions made to the veterans by an extremely reasonable government and renewed its call for the veterans to take advantage of this generosity and leave Washington.¹⁵⁰ A previous act of 1930 had allowed veterans to borrow against their certificates on less liberal terms, but this new law made an additional 4,000 Virginian veterans eligible to borrow their bonus money. The Virginian branch of the United States Veterans Bureau estimated that those 4,000 veterans might borrow up to \$2.2 million, and prepared to issue checks immediately.¹⁵¹ On the first day applications were to be taken for the new loans approximately 400 Virginians applied for and received 50 percent of the value of their Bonus Certificates, with half the total coming from Richmond. The vast majority of applications were expected to be received

¹⁴⁸ Dickson and Allen, pp. 143-145.

¹⁴⁹ Daniels, p. 129.

¹⁵⁰ "A Bonus Concession," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 23 July 1932, p. 4.

¹⁵¹ "State Veterans Receiving Loans," *Waverly Dispatch*, 29 July 1932, p. 6.

by mail in the days that followed.¹⁵² It was hoped that with free tickets home and half their bonus money in their pockets, the veterans of the B.E.F. would finally disperse. If they didn't, President Hoover's frustration was beginning to grow to the point where he was willing to consider more radical options for dealing with the problem.

The large number of veterans who came out of the woodwork to borrow against their certificates makes one wonder why they were not supporting their fellow veterans in Washington. After all, Virginia only had about 300 soldiers in the Richmond B.E.F. camp at any one time, and traveling there represented a fraction of the effort it would have taken a veteran from the western states, given Virginia's proximity. The number of Virginian veterans who came forward to borrow money only serves to call attention to the number who chose not to call on the government for immediate and full payment of their bonus, and suggests that even Virginian veterans did not necessarily fully support the Patman Bill.

In the midst of all this posturing and back and forth over whether the government would provide for the veterans and whether the veterans would accept anything short of full payment of the bonus, a seemingly inconsequential blurb was published in the *Richmond News Leader* that should have given the veterans pause. On 21 July, the paper reported that a shipment of tear gas guns and grenades had left Pittsburgh for Washington.¹⁵³

¹⁵² "State Veterans Draw \$100,000 as New Loans," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 26 July 1932, p. 3.

¹⁵³ "Tear Gas Guns Are Sent To Washington," *Richmond News Leader*, 21 July 1932, p. 1.

Chapter 8: Plan White

Blockaded in the White House by thousands of veterans and fearing a growing perception of weakness during an election year, by the middle of July President Hoover had had quite enough of the Bonus Marchers. Inundated with intelligence reports that insisted the Bonus Army was teeming with radicals, and having tried and failed to pay their travel expenses home and loan them half of their bonus money to placate them, Hoover determined to use force instead. Unwilling to wait any longer for a compromise solution, Hoover ordered the District Police to evict the veterans from the buildings they had occupied for two months along Pennsylvania Avenue. On 27 July, Walter Waters was informed that his men would have to evacuate said buildings by 1 August. Waters intended to comply, and even planned to relocate the men affected to Camp Bartlett with John H. Bartlett's blessing, but when he appeared before them that afternoon to ask for their cooperation the men refused to give it. If the area was to be cleared, the veterans would have to be compelled to leave.¹⁵⁴

On the morning of 28 July the District Police began to clear the B.E.F. from downtown Washington. Everything went well for the first couple hours until veterans from outlying camps began to arrive downtown to challenge the eviction. Daniels quotes a police officer on the scene as reporting that the B.E.F. reinforcements came from the direction of 4 ½ Street and Main Avenue, which at one time was roughly the location of the Richmond contingent of the B.E.F., but by late July those men were out at Camp Bartlett. Given the speed with which events unfolded, it is unlikely that the Virginians

¹⁵⁴ Dickson and Allen, pp. 161-163.

could have arrived downtown quickly enough to either cause or participate in the riot that ensued. At any rate, shouts escalated to shoves, and then to thrown bricks, and finally bullets when a District Police Officer shot and killed one Bonus Marcher and wounded a second.¹⁵⁵ Once the White House became convinced that the police had lost control of the situation, the War Department was told to clear the entire downtown of veterans immediately.

The Army had first considered the problem of defending the city of Washington against American civilians in the 1920s, culminating in the publication of Plan White. Declassified in 1974, Plan White envisioned a communist rabble attempting to overthrow the U.S. Government by force, a very real fear post-Russian Revolution and one that corresponded with the government's characterization of the B.E.F. In the 1930s the continental United States was divided into nine corps areas by the War Department, each of which was responsible for monitoring "subversive activities" in its respective area. The III Corps area included Virginia and the District of Columbia, in addition to Pennsylvania, Maryland, and parts of West Virginia. Given its geographical area of responsibility, the production of Plan White fell to III Corps. III Corps Commanders had identified key industries and assets within its area of responsibility and envisioned civilian threats to Washington as coming primarily from foreign-born radicals in the cities of Pennsylvania and Maryland. African Americans in Richmond were mentioned as a possible source of agitation, but were brushed aside as not posing the most likely threat to the government. III Corps revisions of Plan White predicted that subversive

¹⁵⁵ Daniels, pp. 147-156.

activity would begin with an information campaign designed to undermine the loyalty of local and federal police and military forces, followed by widespread strikes affecting important industries, and leading finally to the seizure of strategic facilities and assets. While III Corps had assumed disgruntled workers, and not veterans would lead any attempt at revolution, from III Corps' prospective the Bonus March looked a lot like the first phase of how its Plan White predicted a revolution would begin, with an information campaign designed to shake the loyalty of government forces.¹⁵⁶

In accordance with the general outline of Plan White, the War Department had been moving assets in and around Washington for two months in anticipation of the order it now received. A Marine detachment at Quantico, Virginia, had been under orders to be prepared to defend Washington since the second week of June.¹⁵⁷ Fort Myer, Virginia, had been the site of anti-riot training since at least that early. Home to the Army's 3rd Cavalry of which Major George S. Patton Jr. was the executive officer, the officers and men of that famed unit had been confined to post and busy trading places as rioters and soldiers, conducting rehearsals for what many assumed would soon be the real thing.¹⁵⁸ In addition to positioning and training troops, six tanks had been brought in from Maryland and a large number of trucks had been positioned around Washington to quickly move troops to the site of riots in the capital.

General Douglas MacArthur, U.S. Army Chief of Staff, took personal command of the operation, with his aide Major Dwight D. Eisenhower at his side. Troops from

¹⁵⁶ Steven T. Ross, *American War Plans, 1890-1939*, (London, Routledge, 2002), pp. 121-126.

¹⁵⁷ "Marines Ready To Go To Washington," *Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star*, 14 June 1932, p. 1.

¹⁵⁸ Dickson and Allen, p. 121.

Fort Myer, including Major Patton with his 3rd Cavalry, trucked to Washington through Arlington National Cemetery and assembled near the White House, while ships carrying infantrymen from Fort Washington 18-miles downriver disembarked near the Army War College. At 4:30 in the afternoon, shortly after the arrival of the tanks from Fort Myer, the Army began its sweep through downtown. With bayonets fixed and gas masks on, soldiers drove veterans from the buildings they occupied with tear gas and the stocks of their rifles. Although some veterans threw bricks or stones, most retreated in the face of the soldiers, and by that evening downtown Washington was mostly cleared of veterans with no additional loss of life.¹⁵⁹

General MacArthur's orders were to clear downtown of veterans, and he was specifically told not to pursue the veterans into their outlying camps. Nevertheless, after a well executed clearing operation downtown, MacArthur moved his men to the 11th Street Bridge opposite Anacostia and prepared to disperse the Bonus Army from their main camp. Reminded late on the 28th by a messenger from the White House that the President did not wish him to enter the veterans' camp, MacArthur replied that he was "at war," and did not have time for anyone "pretending to bring orders," then ordered his men into Anacostia. Once there his troops drove the veterans out, again making liberal use of tear gas, expelling the men from what had been their homes. Troops then burned the entire camp to the ground, wrapping up the operation by midnight.¹⁶⁰ Demonstrating a media savvy that was second to none, MacArthur concluded his operation by preempting any presidential censure for overstepping his bounds by conducting an on-the-

¹⁵⁹ Dickson and Allen, pp. 170-179.

¹⁶⁰ Daniels, pp. 166-181.

spot midnight press conference during which he praised the President's decision authorizing him to rout the veterans out of their main camps, assuring the nation that had Hoover not done so, the consequences would have been dire indeed.¹⁶¹ Faced with his General's media coup, the President could publicly call the Army Chief of Staff a liar, or accept the responsibility MacArthur had thrust upon him. Hoover chose not to contradict MacArthur, leaving the former to shoulder the legacy of turning bayonets on hungry men, and the latter to develop a taste for discarding presidential orders, to both men's eventual undoing.

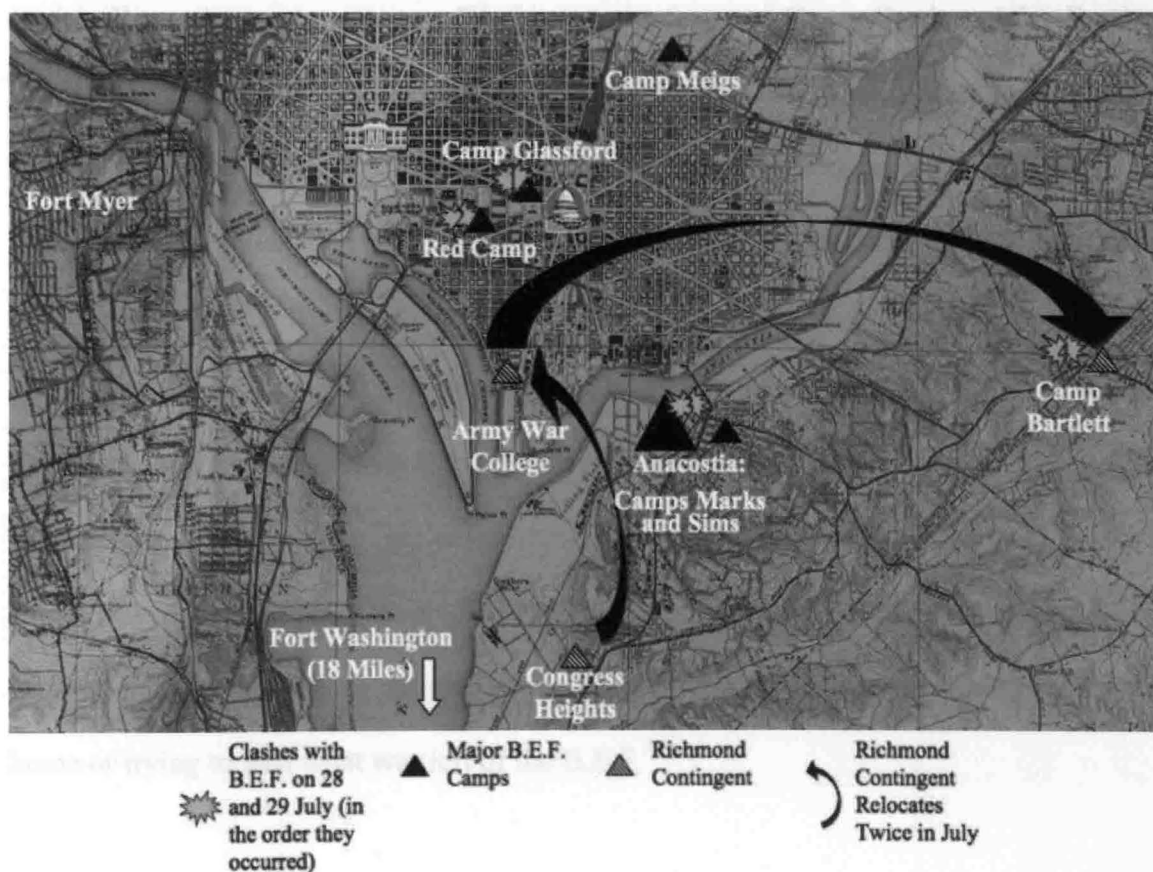


Figure 7: B.E.F. camps and the locations of Virginia's veteran; June-July 1932.

¹⁶¹ Dickson and Allen, pp. 181-183.

When the dust settled on the morning of 29 July the Richmond B.E.F. was still on the outskirts of the District of Columbia at Camp Bartlett. Having been bypassed in the Army's sweep of the city the night before, and billeted on private rather than federal land, they probably felt confident that the worst was over. Late in the morning of the 29th, however, the Army finally arrived to drive them out as well. John Henry Bartlett, owner of the land on which Camp Bartlett was located and until that time unswerving friend to the veterans, had unexpectedly withdrawn his permission for the B.E.F. to encamp on his property, leading to the presence of federal troops there.¹⁶² Shortly after agreeing to Walter Waters' plan to evacuate Washington in favor of Camp Bartlett, John Bartlett began to sense that the Administration would not approve. In 1932 Bartlett was President Hoover's First Assistant Postmaster General, and after a short period of reflection he concluded that he could not endanger his standing with the President by sheltering the B.E.F. on his land if the President should wish otherwise. One day before the eviction, and with no prior knowledge of what was to come, Bartlett penned a letter to Glassford informing him that the veterans were welcome to stay on his land only so long as the government consented.¹⁶³ Two days later the government no longer consented, and the troops arrived on Bartlett's land. The Army quickly pushed 1,500 veterans out of Camp Bartlett and by that evening the men of the Richmond contingent were either heading for home or trying to find what was left of the B.E.F.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Waters, p. 229.

¹⁶³ John H. Bartlett, *The Bonus March and the New Deal*, (New York, New York: M.A. Donohue & Company, 1937), pp. 21-22.

¹⁶⁴ Dickson and Allen, p. 189.

Given the veterans' rough treatment at the hands of the Army one might expect the Virginia press to reevaluate its position on the Bonus March. According to Paul Dickson, co-author of *The Bonus Army*, most anti-bonus newspapers around the country did just that.¹⁶⁵ Newspapers across Virginia, however, were nearly as hard on the veterans as ever. The *Richmond News Leader* claimed that even "habitual sentimentalists" would not be able to make heroes of the men injured in the raid on the 28th, and that the veterans were nothing more than trespassers who never should have

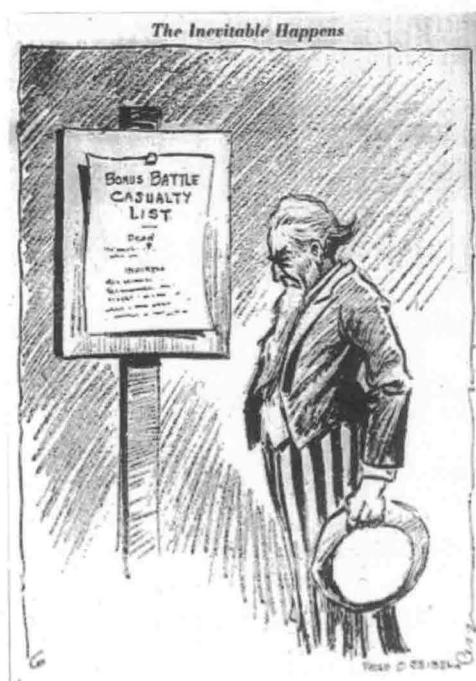


Figure 8: While Virginia's newspapers agreed that the expulsion was necessary, even "inevitable," most regretted it all the same.

been allowed in the capital in the first place.¹⁶⁶

Across town, the *Times-Dispatch* took a more reasonable tone. Sorry that it had come to violence, they grieved for those whose blood had been shed, but reiterated their support for the government, stating that a clash had become necessary and unavoidable, as the nation could no longer endure defiance of the law on such a scale.¹⁶⁷ The *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot* was frankly

surprised that violence hadn't erupted sooner, and expressed the hope that the President had done the right thing by routing the veterans out of their

¹⁶⁵ Paul Dickson, E-mail to the author, 25 July 2006.

¹⁶⁶ "Patience Overtaxed," *Richmond News Leader*, 29 July 1932, p. 8.

¹⁶⁷ "The Inevitable?," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 30 July 1932, p. 4.

camps, but suggested that “only time would tell.”¹⁶⁸ In Lynchburg the *Daily Advance* called the government’s action “necessary,” stating that the B.E.F. had been permitted to lobby their lawmakers and lost, but implored the nation to set about to fixing the problems that had driven these men to such desperation in the first place.¹⁶⁹ Charlottesville’s *Daily Progress* regretted that the veterans hadn’t been dealt with more firmly from the beginning, as it might have made the events of 29 July unnecessary. All things considered, however, the paper was resolute that President Hoover had acted correctly, stating that it was “obviously (his) final duty to . . . restore order.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ “Dispersing the Bonus Army,” *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 30 July 1932, p. 6.

¹⁶⁹ “After Eviction, What?,” *Lynchburg Daily Advance*, 29 July 1932, p. 6.

¹⁷⁰ “What Will Follow The Eviction?,” *Charlottesville Daily Progress*, 30 July 1932, p. 4.

Chapter 9: Virginia's Problem Now

For the first time since the veterans began pouring through Virginia in early June, Governor Pollard acted decisively to shape events. On the evening of 28 July, while General MacArthur was crossing the 11th Street Bridge to burn the B.E.F. out of Anacostia, Pollard met with State Adjutant General S. Gardner Waller and Director of the State Motor Vehicle Division T. McCall Frazier to issue instructions for handling the crisis. Pollard had decided that he could not allow in August a reverse of June, when thousands of veterans had stampeded through Virginia on their way to Washington. He therefore instructed Waller and Frazier to depart immediately for Alexandria with orders to permit only small groups of veterans with means to transport and feed themselves to pass through Virginia. All others were to be turned around, by force if necessary, and sent back into the District of Columbia.¹⁷¹

Waller and Frazier left Richmond that evening around midnight by car, and at 3 A.M. arrived in Alexandria to convey the Governor's instructions to Arlington County Sheriff Howard B. Fields and Alexandria Chief of Police Arnold. While Frazier was present to ensure none of the veterans lingered in Virginia and was prepared to use every agency at his disposal to keep them on the move, Waller remained to call out and take charge of local units of the National Guard, should the need arise.¹⁷² Frazier had ordered 75 of his state troopers north with tear gas and riot guns, and by 4 A.M. men were in place guarding all of the bridges and roads that led into Virginia from Washington, with

¹⁷¹ T. McCall Frazier to John G. Pollard, 3 August 1932, Governor's Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

¹⁷² "Bonus Men Quit Camp Near Here," *Alexandria Gazette*, 29 July 1932, p. 1.

additional men scouring the countryside for roaming veterans who had already slipped through.¹⁷³ It wasn't long before they found some. At 5:30 A.M. Frazier led a group of troopers to a campsite of recently expelled Bonus Marchers just outside the Alexandria city limits. Numbering about 350, they could have created a great deal of trouble for the authorities, but after a short conference and a chance to eat breakfast, they formed up and peacefully marched back into the District of Columbia. Smaller groups were rounded up and pushed across the state line into Washington throughout the morning, and one contingent was supplied with guides to lead them through Washington to Rockville, Maryland, though what the authorities in Maryland thought about Virginia's authorities barring the veterans from their own state, on the one hand, while providing guides to escort them to Maryland, on the other, is not known.¹⁷⁴

By the afternoon of 29 July the worst had passed, although a final large group of 100 veterans arrived north of Alexandria at 8:30 that evening and tried to establish a camp. Fields met them with Frazier and told them they had 24 hours to move on or be expelled by local and state police. By 8:30 the next morning they departed to Frederick, Maryland, and Virginia was mostly free of wayward veterans, though Governor Pollard determined that the state police would maintain its presence in Alexandria until all the Bonus Marchers had left Washington. By 30 July 100 state troopers were housed in the National Guard Armory working in shifts to block all routes from Washington leading into Virginia. The District Commissioners in Washington seem to have caught on to

¹⁷³ Frazier to Pollard, 3 August 1932.

¹⁷⁴ S. Gardner Waller to John G. Pollard, 2 August 1932, Governor's Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

what was happening to their south by then, because that day they informed Governor Pollard that all organized bodies would be prevented from entering the District of Columbia unless it could be proven that their purpose was lawful.¹⁷⁵ By the time Washington shut down its own borders it no longer mattered, as Pollard had completed his coup by cleansing Virginia of veterans at Washington's expense. The next day so few veterans were left in Virginia or attempting to enter it that the number of state troopers present was cut from 100 to 12. Throughout the retreat from Virginia the B.E.F. was extremely well behaved, giving authorities no cause to resort to force at any time.¹⁷⁶

That Pollard denied veterans safe passage through Virginia did not sit well with everyone, and citizens were sometimes quick to let the Governor know it. After Washington papers carried the news that Virginia had been closed to the B.E.F., Claude Thompson, a Virginian attorney working in Washington wrote to protest, claiming that Virginia had always been "a place of asylum for . . . people of every creed and color," and asked Pollard not to "cast a foul name upon her."¹⁷⁷ That Virginia had always been a place of asylum for people of every color probably would have been news to the thousands of African-American veterans being pushed out of the state along with their white comrades. Referring to the charges that many of the veterans were communists, F.M. Walter of McLean, Virginia, told Pollard that he might be a communist too if

¹⁷⁵ Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia to John G. Pollard, 30 July 1932, Governor's Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

¹⁷⁶ "State Troopers Coax Veterans From Virginia," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 30 July 1932, p. 1.

¹⁷⁷ Claude A. Thompson to John G. Pollard, 29 July 1932, Governor's Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

treated as badly as those men were being treated now.¹⁷⁸ Monroe Blake of Alexandria sarcastically begged the Governor to allow him to keep his home. Blake understood by Pollard's handling of the B.E.F. that his own status as a veteran made him legally ineligible to live any longer in the state. He submitted as a mitigating factor in his request for an exception to this new policy the fact that his family first settled in Virginia in 1635. As an aside, he begged for a pardon for his wife as well, "who unfortunately served as an army nurse during the World War."¹⁷⁹ Pollard was either not amused or simply didn't get the intended slight, as he replied that he "required no exemption from any order . . . to remain within our borders."¹⁸⁰

Although Pollard insisted in written replies to anyone who inquired that he never prevented any veterans from traveling through Virginia, and that hundreds had done so, he was being a little disingenuous.¹⁸¹ He had allowed veterans to enter Virginia, but only those who could pay their own way, and thereby barred the vast majority. The poorest of the veterans were the ones who would have represented the greatest danger to the peace, and needed exactly the kind of special handling that Pollard denied them if a riot were to be avoided. That rioting didn't ensue is only because of the tremendous restraint shown by the veterans, and not because of anything Virginian authorities did. The only thing

¹⁷⁸ F.M. Walter to John G. Pollard, 30 July 1932, Governor's Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

¹⁷⁹ Monroe H. Blake to John G. Pollard, 1 August 1932, Governor's Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

¹⁸⁰ John G. Pollard to Monroe Blake, 2 August 1932, Governor's Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

¹⁸¹ John G. Pollard to Claude Thompson, 29 July 1932; F.M. Walter, 2 August 1932; and Henry Meisel, 24 October 1932, Governor's Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

Virginia offered the men of the B.E.F. was the threat of more force if they didn't leave the state.

If some were upset at Governor Pollard for taking a hard line with the veterans, others were demanding that he do so, and the chief source of their anxiety was a proposed haven for the Bonus Army near Upperville, Virginia. Following the Bonus Army's eviction from Washington, anyone expecting it to simply dissolve and go home was met with the same obstinacy it had shown in June after the Senate vote. Although Walter Waters had originally hoped to move from Washington to Camp Bartlett, when John H. Bartlett withdrew his permission for the men to stay there he began urging the men to go home. Most of the men, though, had no homes to go to. To some extent the B.E.F. had given many of them purpose and meaning where previously there had been little of either, and it was the men themselves who determined to keep the B.E.F. together. Wherever they went would have to be relatively close to Washington, be safe from further confrontations with the Army, and would have to be able to provide enough land and adequate services for up to 10,000 men. Two possibilities presented themselves in the days after the burning of Anacostia: Mayor Eddie McCloskey of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, declared his city to be a safe haven for the veterans, and Major L.J.H. Herwig of Upperville, Virginia, offered the veterans his 450 acre farm. For several days there was a very real possibility that the bulk of the Bonus Army might make Virginia home, and the outcry throughout the state at the prospect reveals a lot about the outlook of Virginians toward the B.E.F. in even this, their most desperate hour.

Major Herwig and Mayor McCloskey made their offers of assistance to the B.E.F. immediately after their eviction from Washington, and if there was any debate between the men of the B.E.F. about which one to accept, it was soon settled by the reality that Virginia had closed its border while Maryland had not. Although Johnstown was further away, they couldn't get to Upperville, so there was little choice but to move to Pennsylvania, by way of Maryland. On 29 July 8,000 veterans began the journey to Johnstown, and a few days later established Camp McCloskey on the outskirts of the city. Camp McCloskey rivaled any of the camps the men had just left around Washington in sheer squalor, and it wasn't long before the outcry from local townspeople forced McCloskey to renege on his offer.¹⁸² The loss of Johnstown reopened the discussion about Upperville, as Major Herwig had made it clear as late as 5 August that his offer still stood. With the veterans about to break camp from Johnstown, Virginians scrambled to make sure they wouldn't end up in Upperville.¹⁸³

Virginia's newspapers had mostly moved on to other topics after the Bonus Army was thrown out of Washington, but at least one had kept an eye on the men at Johnstown. In Richmond, the *Times-Dispatch* had taken a few days to absorb the destruction of the veterans' camps around Washington and was now thinking about the danger of permitting the veterans to remain in camp, whether in Johnstown or Upperville. Declaring that the B.E.F. was entering a radical new phase making it a threat on the order of Hitler, they demanded that the federal government (presumably the Army) hit them

¹⁸² Dickson and Allen, pp. 194-197.

¹⁸³ "Camp Offer To Veterans Still Open," *Alexandria Gazette*, 20 July 1932, p. 1.

again, cut them off from Johnstown, scatter them for good, and use whatever force proved necessary to do so.¹⁸⁴

If Virginia's newspapers had moved on, the people who were going to have to live with the B.E.F. should it relocate to Upperville, had not. General William Mitchell lived about eight miles away from the proposed veterans camp at Upperville, and given his standing in the community and his previous contact with the Governor, it was natural that he should take the lead in opposing a veterans' camp in his backyard. Mitchell wrote to Pollard twice in the first week of August strenuously objecting to the potential presence of a "large group of unemployed men" staying in the area. Mitchell urged Pollard to do everything he could to prevent such a thing from coming to pass, and warned that if he did not it would surely "lead to bloodshed and violence in the end."¹⁸⁵ Mitchell went on at length to highlight the communistic origins of the B.E.F., and was convinced that they intended to arm themselves and seize the very



Figure 9: General Billy Mitchell

reins of government if allowed to do so.¹⁸⁶ Less prestigious citizens wrote the Governor as well, like Reverend James Smith, who begged Pollard to announce to the world that

¹⁸⁴ "End the Melodrama!," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 31 July 1932, p. 4.

¹⁸⁵ Billy Mitchell to John G. Pollard, 1 August 1932, Governor's Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

¹⁸⁶ Mitchell to Pollard, 8 August 1932.

“tramp camps will not be permitted” in Virginia.¹⁸⁷ Thomas Atkinson was glad that his neighbor General Mitchell had already petitioned the Governor, and wanted to add his voice as well to ask Pollard to intervene to keep the B.E.F. out of Virginia, assuring him that if he did not, he would surely feel “the seriousness of it in Richmond.”¹⁸⁸ Thomas Glascock of the Fauquier County Board of Supervisors asked for Pollard’s help as well, and brought his attention to the “health and sanitation” hazards that so many men would bring with them to Upperville.¹⁸⁹ Dorsey Cullen, in addition to his previously-cited racial objections to the presence of the veterans in Upperville, added his concern for the safety of local women as well as the tourist industry, which he claimed was centered on hunting and other outdoors activities, and would surely suffer should the veterans make Upperville their home.¹⁹⁰

The amazing thing about Governor Pollard’s responses to several of the above is that, in every case, he asked the letter writer to keep him informed of developments near Upperville, as though he had no access to information save that being sent to him by random private citizens.¹⁹¹ It reminds one of his reaction to the first arrival of the veterans in June, when events seem to have outpaced the Governor. Was it really possible that he had so little access to basic intelligence regarding potential mass protest events like the arrival of the veterans in June or the possibility they might establish camp

¹⁸⁷ James P. Smith, to John G. Pollard, 2 August 1932, Governor’s Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

¹⁸⁸ Thomas Atkinson to John G. Pollard, 5 August 1932, Governor’s Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

¹⁸⁹ Thomas B. Glascock to John G. Pollard, 6 August 1932, Governor’s Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

¹⁹⁰ Cullen to Pollard, 1 August 1932.

¹⁹¹ John G. Pollard to Dorsey Cullen, 2 August 1932, and William Mitchell, 4 August 1932, Governor’s Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

in Virginia in August? If so, one might forgive him for consistently, with the exception of shutting down the border on 29 July, being a step behind events. Perhaps Virginia's problem in that regard was a systems or business process problem, rather than a lack of personal leadership from any one man; the state government of Virginia simply wasn't doing a very good job of gathering and disseminating information. The fact that Pollard was willing to take his intelligence wherever he could get it would seem to suggest so.

One of the more interesting pieces of mail Governor Pollard received in the first week of August came from Major Herwig himself, the man at the center of the storm, who had promised the veterans his land in Upperville. Although the *Alexandria Gazette* reported as late as 5 August that Major Herwig's offer still stood, that very day Herwig wrote Pollard to assure him that he would not turn his land over to the B.E.F. unless he had the approval of the Governor himself, adding "no other plan has ever been contemplated by me."¹⁹² Herwig had said previously that his neighbors were all "unduly excited" about his offer to the Bonus Army, and perhaps it was because he knew he could never go through with it.¹⁹³ Like Henry Bartlett before him, Herwig couldn't persuade himself to offer the veterans asylum if his government objected, whatever his own convictions on the matter, and so died the Bonus Marchers' last hope for refuge in Virginia. Any lingering doubts Virginians may have had were finally put to rest when Mayor McCloskey of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, worked with the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad to provide veterans transportation, free of charge, as far as Chicago.¹⁹⁴ Most

¹⁹² L.J.H. Herwig to John G. Pollard, 5 August 1932, Governor's Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

¹⁹³ "VA Camp Site Still Open," *Richmond News Leader*, 5 August 1932, p. 4.

¹⁹⁴ Dickson and Allen, p. 196.

veterans realized that the B.E.F. had had its day and began the long journey home, and the Bonus Army ceased to exist.

A couple of days later the Virginia Chapter of the American Legion held its annual convention. The American Legion was first formed after World War I in order to represent the interests of the very men who had just clamored for their money and been answered with tear gas. If any organization should have been expected to support full payment of the bonus, it would have been the American Legion. Across the country state chapters of that organization were doing exactly that.¹⁹⁵ Well before the Virginia Chapter met, however, its leadership had gone on record against the bonus. State Commander of the Virginia Chapter Dr. A.T. Finch summarized his position in an editorial in which he called upon Virginia's veterans to recognize their first obligation was to the nation, and they must put their "selfish interests" aside.¹⁹⁶ It was a startling position coming from the head of an organization whose sole purpose was to lobby for those "selfish interests," then let elected officials sort out what was best for the nation.

Virginian veterans of the Bonus Army had no intention of allowing the biases of the Legion's leadership to determine the formal vote at the convention, so many of them, freshly returned from their gassing in Washington, requested permission to address the meeting personally. Unfortunately for the veterans only delegates, alternates, and invited guests were permitted to speak at the convention unless two-thirds of the delegates agreed to grant an exception.¹⁹⁷ No record of any speech from a Bonus Marcher to the

¹⁹⁵ Waters, p. 11.

¹⁹⁶ "Refers To Bonus In Legion Report," *Richmond News Leader*, 1 August 1932, p. 1.

¹⁹⁷ "Bonus Problem Discussion By Legion Is Seen," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 30 July 1932, p.

Legion exists, and it is very unlikely that an invitation was issued or that two-thirds of the delegates ever agreed to allow it. If Bonus Marchers couldn't speak on their own behalf, there were delegates willing to do it for them, and two factions quickly emerged: one in favor of immediate payment of the bonus and the other firmly opposed, whose ranks again included General Mitchell. At that moment Mitchell was busy rallying support against the proposed veterans' camp at Upperville, yet still found the time to address the convention personally to denounce the bonus as well.¹⁹⁸ Colonel John A. Cutchins took the lead of the faction opposed to immediate payment, arguing forcefully in favor of a platform that called for leadership on national issues such as adjustment of war debts and economy in government instead. In its strong endorsement of Colonel Cutchins' argument, the *Richmond News Leader* stated that to further the narrow interests of its members over those of the nation would transform the Legion into a modern day Praetorian Guard, an incendiary reference to the military guard of Roman Emperors whose legacy was that of the power behind the throne.¹⁹⁹

In what the *Alexandria Gazette* described as "the stormiest session ever witnessed at a State convention of the American Legion," the delegates reached a compromise solution.²⁰⁰ Unable to brush aside entirely the demands of its 18,000 members, the Legion's leadership agreed to a platform that endorsed payment of the bonus "as soon as the government is in a position to do so."²⁰¹ It was a resolution that gave a nod to the rank and file members but ultimately endorsed the status quo, which was essentially the

¹⁹⁸ "Payment Of Bonus To Vets When U.S. Is Able Favored," *Alexandria Gazette*, 4 August 1932, p. 1.

¹⁹⁹ "A Great Plan For The Legion," *Richmond News Leader*, 3 August 1932, p. 12.

²⁰⁰ *Alexandria Gazette*, 4 August 1932, p. 1.

²⁰¹ "VA Legion Asks Soldiers' Bonus," *Richmond News Leader*, 4 August 1932, p. 9.

same as voting against immediate payment. It was the last word Virginia had to say on the matter of the Soldiers' Bonus, and once again it was "nay."

Conclusion

Published 39 and 72 years after the Bonus March on Washington, respectively, *The Bonus March* by Roger Daniels and *The Bonus Army* by Paul Dickson and Thomas B. Allen each suggest that the nation was generally supportive of immediate payment of the Soldiers' Bonus. A reading of Virginia's newspapers and other sources from that summer of 1932 reveals that one of two things is probably true: either they have misjudged the sentiment of the general public or Virginia was out of step with the rest of the country. Like much of the nation Virginians helped feed and transport veterans to Washington, occasionally gave them a place to sleep, and were generally sympathetic to their plight. But while donations of food, transportation, shelter, and the like represent sympathy for the veterans, that is very different than having sympathy for their cause, and on the whole, and in stark contrast to the outlook of the rest of the nation, if Daniels, Dickson, and Allen are correct, the Commonwealth of Virginia had no sympathy whatever for the cause of the Bonus Marchers.

In every way of gauging statewide opinion measured in this study, Virginia demonstrated firm opposition to immediate payment of the Soldiers' Bonus. Virginia's legislators in Washington voted overwhelmingly against it, newspaper editorial boards roundly condemned it both before and after the veterans' eviction from Washington, Virginian towns closed themselves down at different times to the veterans, and Virginia's own veterans generally failed to turn out to support it. Given, then, that in Virginia, measurable sentiment towards the Soldiers' Bonus was decisively negative, whereas it seems to have been relatively positive across the rest of the country, one must endeavor

to find an explanation. The answer may be that, in Virginia at least, the Bonus Army was never really just about the bonus, and it was a number of factors that had nothing whatsoever to do with the payment of the Soldiers' Bonus that doomed Virginians' support of it.

To many Virginians the racial integration of the B.E.F. would surely have been an obstacle to their support. In a society governed by Jim Crow, racial integration was unthinkable, yet here came this mass of men converging on Washington and they were proving every day that racial integration was possible. Not only were African-Americans included within the ranks of the B.E.F., they generally weren't segregated from white veterans. Blacks and whites working side by side for a common political goal and doing so publicly in the heart of the segregationist South would have been taken by many Southerners as a stinging rebuke of their way of life, a way of life they had taken decades to build and would not lightly see attacked. The large number of black veterans included in the B.E.F., larger than their percentage of the original A.E.F., would have likely cemented Southern objections to the Bonus Army, and by extension, to their cause.

The proximity of Virginia to the nation's capital meant a number of things to the average Virginian that would have also affected his support of the B.E.F. It meant that the number of veterans from all across the country tramping through his state was far greater than most, with a corresponding effect on his goodwill. It meant that the site of the protest was going to be right on Virginia's northern border, not some faraway place only read about in the papers. Virginians had to live with the Bonus Marchers on their doorstep for more than two months, never sure exactly what they were going to do.

Virginia's nearness to the District of Columbia also meant that Virginians were going to have to deal with the veterans en mass whenever the Bonus March ended. For the two months that the Bonus March lasted, the impending return march of the veterans would have hung over Virginians like a dangerous cloud, no one ever sure when the storm would break or how severe it would be.

Finally, in Virginia there appears to have been a disdain, even sadness, over what many seemed to regard as the demise of a culture of service in favor of an emerging culture of entitlement. Able-bodied veterans demanding extra cash in exchange for past military service, particularly at a time when the best service they could have done their country would have been to ease the burdens on the treasury, not compound them, was nothing short of contemptible to many Virginian writers of the time. Over and over again in editorials, letters to the editor, and general correspondence between the most humble citizens and the highest government officials, Virginians took exception to the notion that the government owed the men of the B.E.F. anything. There was universal agreement that wounded men and the families of the dead must be cared for, but there was little or no support for providing for able-bodied men who should provide for themselves.

As well as claiming that most of the nation supported immediate payment of the Soldiers' Bonus, *The Bonus March* and *The Bonus Army* focus on a national perspective, as does most research on the Bonus March, and both books agree that the track record of the leaders of the B.E.F., the federal government, and other officials and citizens was varied. The authors' assessments include the full spectrum of performance evaluations from the amazing insight of Pelham Glassford, to the paranoia of the U.S. Army, from

the self-control of Walter Waters, to the tremendous generosity of average Washingtonians. Like the federal government, the Virginia state government had an obligation to address the myriad problems the Bonus Army presented at its level, and like the federal government's performance in Washington, the record of state and local authorities in Virginia was mixed. On the one hand, authorities at the local level did a superb job of managing a crisis of the first order, while in Richmond the state government failed to demonstrate much leadership and struggled to develop a cohesive policy for managing the Bonus Army in Virginia.

At the local level, small towns across Virginia banded together to move a tidal wave of men through the state, one small town at a time, during June 1932. Authorities had to coordinate independently with the governments of towns both before them and after them on the veterans' route to Washington, arrange for places to bed sometimes thousands of men at a time, and feed and transport them to the next town, all the while protecting their own communities. They did this on their own initiative, at their own expense, with very little information from the state or federal governments, and they did so with a minimum of disruption to their own people. The performance of small town mayors, sheriffs, and relief workers was one of the great success stories of the Bonus March in Virginia.

While local authorities across Virginia dealt with the veterans as best they could, the government in Richmond missed a number of opportunities to influence events. At the outset of the crisis, state authorities had an obvious duty to coordinate actions between local authorities and provide them with the resources they needed to manage the

stream of men moving through the state. Yet the state provided no guidance to subordinate governments on procedures to take, provided no transportation assets, no funds to ease the cost of providing commercial transportation, no relief supplies, no police assets, and no information about the movements of veterans. Chief Glassford in Washington tried to coordinate his actions with Virginia's, but his pleas for cooperation from Governor Pollard went mostly unanswered, and one can almost sense indifference in Pollard's terse replies to Glassford's requests for help. Once the veterans were in Washington Pollard missed another chance to influence events when he brushed off Jennings Wise's suggestion to bring the Richmond contingent home from Washington, and Pollard seemed more concerned with Wise's motives than with doing what he could to bring the Bonus March to a conclusion. In fact, the only proactive thing that the Governor of Virginia seems to have done throughout the Bonus March was to order the border closed to the veterans being chased out of Washington at bayonet point by the U.S. Army. Had he been willing, there were opportunities for him to do so much more.

The story of Virginia and the Bonus March was bound to be unique if for no other reason than the fact that the Commonwealth bordered the District of Columbia, and perhaps no other state had more veterans pass through its borders from April through August of 1932. Given that distinction it shouldn't surprise anyone that Virginia's point of view on the entire affair and the response of its government was generally unique as well.

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Biography of the Author

Major Steven P. Schultz is a part-time graduate student at the University of Richmond and a regular officer of the United States Army. Schultz has had assignments ranging from Georgia and Virginia to Alaska and the Middle East. Originally from New Berlin, Wisconsin, Schultz holds a BA-History from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (1996), and is married with three children.

