

## Dust Bowl Exodus: How Drought and the Depression Took Their Toll

**In the 1930s, in the midst of the Great Depression, many farmers and farm workers left failed farms in the southern Plains for work in California. Suffering from the Depression themselves, Californians had a difficult time dealing with these refugees.**

California's population exploded in the first half of the 20th century. In just 10 years, between 1920 and 1930, more than 2 million people came to find "the good life," believing that they would make a new start and build a fortune under the state's sunny skies. The new migrants of the '20s were mostly middle-class people, including some farmers. They were drawn to a state where opportunity was booming. But things changed in the decade of the '30s. The stock market crash

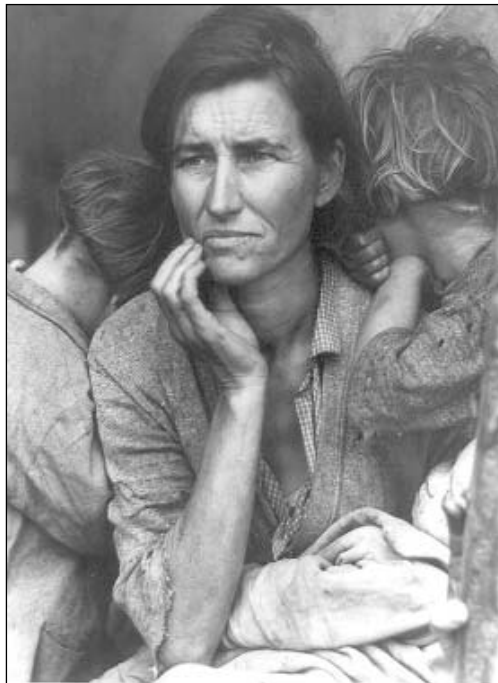
in October 1929 marked the beginning of the Great Depression. Banks closed, businesses folded, and by 1933 three of 10 Californians were unemployed.

Beginning in the early '30s, migrants from the states of Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and Missouri came to California in ever-increasing numbers. Farmers, who hired the migrant workers at 20 or 25 cents an hour to pick cotton, oranges, and peas, initially welcomed them. But by the end of the decade, they were the objects of scorn and prejudice.

These migrants were called "Okies." "Okie" is slang meaning "a person from Oklahoma." But during the Depression, the term was used to refer to people from states neighboring Oklahoma as well, and it was often used derisively.

### Leaving the Southern Plains

The southern Plains experienced a terrible drought during the early 1930s. Intense heat accompanied



*This is "Migrant Mother," a photograph taken by Dorothea Lange in 1936 in California. The woman pictured and her children were living in a tent near vegetable fields. (Library of Congress)*

the drought. In the summer of 1934, Oklahoma reached 117 degrees on July 24, the 36th day in a row that it had been above 100 degrees. Fields and rivers dried up, and clouds of grasshoppers ate what was left of the wheat and corn. According to one Weather Bureau scientist, the drought of the '30s was "the worst in the climatological history of the country."

Drought was not the only cause of the westward movement of farmers and sharecroppers from the southern Plains. When prices fell because of oversupply following the end of World War I, many farmers lost their farms and became tenants or sharecroppers. As more and more farms were cultivated

with tractors, the tenants and farm laborers lost their jobs, because tractors were much more efficient. And as the soil was tilled and retilled, it lost its fertility. Worn out, it lay naked and unprotected from raging winds.

*(Continued on next page)*

## Economics and Democracy

This edition of *Bill of Rights in Action* looks at issues of economic stability and the impact on democracy. The first article explores the migration of refugees from the Dust Bowl to California during the Great Depression. The second article examines the Weimar Republic and its failure to sustain a democratic government in Germany after World War I. The final article looks at the controversy surrounding outsourcing of services to other countries.

**U.S. History:** Dust Bowl Exodus

**World History:** The German Weimar Republic

**Current Issue:** Outsourcing Jobs to Other Countries

In 1934, windstorms ravaged the Plains states. The incredible storms sent clouds of dust as far as Chicago, New York, and Boston. In 1935, the storms became even worse. For six weeks in March and early April, it was unusual to see a clear sky from dawn to dusk anywhere in the Plains states. In Kansas, 12 consecutive days of dust storms raged in March. One Kansas resident wrote in her diary: “This is the ultimate darkness. So must come the end of the world.” But in fact, it got worse. On April 14—“Black Sunday”—a deadly storm turned day into night. The storms resulted in more farms failing and more people out of work. Desperately poor, people began an exodus from the Dust Bowl.

### Coming to California

Of the half million people who fled Oklahoma and neighboring states during the Depression years, more than 300,000 went to California. Most were farmers or tenant farmers, and they came to California in search of farm work. One magnet was California’s cotton crop, which had exploded in size. In 1926, California farms planted 170,000 acres of cotton. By 1937, there were 600,000 acres of cotton fields in the San Joaquin Valley alone. Cotton was the state’s fourth largest crop. California’s cotton growers desperately needed trained pickers, and many people from the southern Plains had picked cotton for years. News of the new bumper crop lured people west on Highway 66.

Many stopped in Arizona to pick cotton. Following Route 66, they headed to California’s San Joaquin Valley and joined earlier migrants, who were camping on ditch banks or in vacant lots outside the towns. After the fall cotton harvest, they had little or no income (except welfare, then known as “relief”) until May, when the potato crop was ready for harvest. In the summer, many drove their jalopies north to the Sacramento Valley to pick citrus, peaches, grapes, and peas. To earn a living, they traveled for six to nine months a year. But while some did reasonably well, and a few earned as much as \$1,600 in a year, the median family income in 1940 was \$650. (The median family income for other white Californians in the San Joaquin Valley was \$1,510.)

Even for those who did not travel, living conditions were ghastly. The new migrants pitched tents along irrigation ditches or on the side of a road close to a spring of water. Some built houses out of corrugated paper tacked to wooden frames. Most camps had no toilets and no clean water. Public health officials grew

alarmed. Outbreaks of smallpox, tuberculosis, malaria, and pneumonia were common in the camps.

Journalists and activists who visited the squatters’ camps described what they saw. An article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1937 told about conditions in Kern County camps where “migrants live in almost unimaginable [sic] filth . . .” The *Berkeley Gazette* reported on “hungry ‘Dust Bowl’ refugees . . . living in the fields and woods ‘like animals.’”

### From Welcome to Hostility—and Worse

In the early ’30s, owners of large farms had feared an inadequate labor supply. They had relied on Mexican laborers. These laborers had come north after the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and subsequent unrest in Mexico. But in the 1930s, many Mexican laborers began returning to Mexico because of the Depression, stability in Mexico, and prejudice against them. Many of the remaining Mexican field workers were beginning to organize into unions and go on strike in the fields. The arrival of the refugees from the Dust Bowl calmed the growers’ fears of a labor shortage. And the new arrivals, who were penniless and not yet eligible for state relief, were willing to accept lower wages than Mexican laborers.

Unlike the Mexican farm workers, the refugees from the Plains did not disappear when the harvest season ended. Nor did they spread themselves throughout the state. Because they came to work on farms and had hopes of getting a farm of their own, most settled in farming counties. They soon began converting squatter camps into “Little Oklahomas” around many of the valley’s older towns. The new arrivals required health services, and their only recourse was to seek aid at county-supported public hospitals. They had children who needed schooling. It cost public money to provide for them, and as tax rates began to rise, long-term residents blamed the migrants.

From 1935 to 1938, as the migration continued to increase, the problems experienced in the farming counties were largely ignored in the rest of California. But floods came to the San Joaquin Valley in early 1938 washing out ditch banks and leaving the migrants cold, sick and hungry. Journalists recorded the horrible conditions, and suddenly the migrants were headline news.

A new federal law cut back cotton acreage from 618,000 to under 400,000 acres. The cut in acreage meant less demand for agricultural labor. And the floods ruined other crops as well. There were now “ten

pickers to every pea in the pod,” and panic spread throughout the state. The sea of antagonism continued to rise. The Dust Bowl migrants were portrayed as “shiftless trash who live like hogs” and accused of “stealing jobs” from native Californians.

### How the New Deal Helped and Hurt

The Depression that began in 1929 created suffering throughout California. In 1933, the unemployment rate in Los Angeles was 33 percent. Banks were locking doors, and people stuffed what money they had under their mattresses. When Franklin Roosevelt was elected president in 1932, he spoke in his first inaugural address of the grim reality that faced the nation: a time when “the withered leaves of industrial enterprise lie on every side; farmers find no markets for their produce; the savings of many years in thousands of families are gone.”

To address the devastation of the Depression, the Roosevelt administration introduced and passed social-welfare legislation that came to be known as the “New Deal.” Bills were passed providing workers with a right to bargain collectively (the National Labor Relations Act); minimum wage and maximum hour protection (the Wage and Hours Bill), and support in old age (the Social Security Act). But farm laborers received none of these benefits. They were exempted from each of these acts because of pressure from farming states.

One piece of New Deal legislation even contributed to the hardship of farm workers. In an effort to control farm prices, the Agricultural Administration passed a law in 1933 that paid farmers to withdraw land from cultivation in return for cash payments. According to the law, the farmers were supposed to share the payments they received with their tenants and sharecroppers. But most of them kept the money for themselves. And with fewer acres being farmed, more and more tenants and croppers were evicted. “I let ’em all go,” said one Oklahoma farmer. “I bought tractors on the money my government gave me and got shet o’ [rid of] my renters.”

The New Deal made attempts to alleviate the distress of rural workers. In 1933, Congress passed the Federal Emergency Relief Act (FERA), which gave grants to



*A family occupied this Dust Bowl farm in northern Texas in 1938. Most of the surrounding farms lay abandoned. (Dorothea Lange, Library of Congress)*

states “to aid needy persons who have no legal settlement in any one State or Community.” By 1935, over 200,000 migrating poor families received federal aid, and California was the state most dependent on FERA funds. With funds from the Farm Security Administration, the State Emergency Relief Administration also began a migrant housing program. In 1935, two model camps were built, in Marysville and Arvin. The camps provided tents, one-room cabins, and most important, buildings with toilets and showers. But with room for only 400 families, the camps did not come close to solving the hideous living conditions of most migrant workers. And in August 1935, the federal government shut down the federal Transient Service, which had been the sole source of cash relief to unemployed migrant workers during their first year in California. For migrants who had depended on federal relief, all that was left was state relief—and that was available only after they had lived in the state for one year.

### “Anti-Okie” Hysteria Explodes

When the federal government discontinued cash aid to transients in 1935, Californians began to worry about the wave of indigent migrants. The panic was particularly fierce in Los Angeles. In February 1936, Police Chief James Davis dispatched an “expeditionary force” of 150 police officers to points along the border with orders to enforce a “bum blockade.” Mayor Frank Shaw



defended the legality of the blockade, declaring that Los Angeles “would not be the dumping ground of charity seekers.”

The “bum blockade” garnered attention, and criticism, throughout the state and nation. After the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed suit in federal court, Chief Davis backed down, and the “bum blockade” ended. But the “anti-Okie” sentiment continued. Three years later, in 1939, police in the Central Valley counties began arresting migrants under a law that made it a crime to knowingly bring an indigent person into the state. One person arrested under the indigent law was a lay preacher named Fred Edwards. He was arrested for driving his brother-in-law, Frank Duncan, from Texas to California. After he had been tried and convicted, the ACLU came to his defense and filed an appeal that was eventually heard by the U.S. Supreme Court.

In *Edwards v. California*, the court ruled unanimously that California’s indigent act (and similar laws in 27 other states) was unconstitutional. But the court was divided on the basis for its ruling. The majority opinion held that the law violated the interstate commerce clause, by interfering with the free movement of people.

Four other justices agreed that the law was unconstitutional, but for different reasons. In a concurring opinion, Justice William O. Douglas wrote that the right of people to move freely “occupies a more protected position in our constitutional system than does the movement of cattle, fruit and steel and coal across state lines.” Because the right to move freely from state to state is a right of national citizenship, Douglas invoked the privileges and immunities clause of the 14th Amendment. It provides that “No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges and immunities of citizens of the United States.” (Justice Douglas was joined by Justices Black and Murphy.)

Justice Robert H. Jackson also invoked the privileges and immunities clause. Indigence alone, he said, cannot be used by a state to limit a person’s rights as a citizen. “We should say now, and in no uncertain terms,” Jackson wrote, “that a man’s mere property status, without more, cannot be used by a state to test, qualify, or limit his rights as a citizen of the United States. . . . I think California had no right to make the condition of Duncan’s purse . . . the basis of excluding him or of punishing one who extended him aid.”



After a dust storm had passed, a farmer’s son stood outside in Oklahoma in 1936. (Arthur Rothstein, Library of Congress)

In 1837, the U.S. Supreme Court had referred to the poor as a “moral pestilence.” The *Edwards* case marked a significant departure from the prejudice against paupers and vagrants. But by the time the opinion was issued in early 1941, the migrant farm workers’ problems had begun to disappear.

### A Happier Time

Although relatively few Americans paid attention to the plight of the Dust Bowl migrants during the early ’30s, a small group of reformers was documenting the problems in the fields and squatters’ camps. Two, in particular, brought the issue to national attention. One was a photographer, named Dorothea Lange, whom the Resettlement Administration had hired to document the lives of farm workers. The *San Francisco News* published Lange’s photographs in 1936 under the headline, “Ragged Hungry, Broke, Harvest Workers Live In Squalor.” Another of her photos published later that year—the “Migrant Mother”—became one of the most famous photographs of American history.

Also in 1936, the *San Francisco News* published a series of articles titled the “Harvest Gypsies,” which depicted the plight of the migrant farm workers in excruciating detail. The articles were written by John Steinbeck, a novelist who had become concerned about the problem and spent months during 1936 living with the farm workers in the ditch banks and the FSA

camp. Two years later, Steinbeck transformed the documentary material into a novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, which within a few weeks became the nation's bestseller. *The Grapes of Wrath*, which also became an immensely popular movie, recounted the lives of the fictional Joad family, as they moved from Oklahoma to California and struggled to survive in the fields.

Lange's photographs and *The Grapes of Wrath* created a storm of publicity and focused the nation's attention on the problem of migrant farm workers. The president sent emissaries to visit the camps, and Eleanor Roosevelt herself came to California for five days to visit with the migrants and talk to Californians about their migrant problem. Congress established the Select Committee to Investigate the Interstate Migration of Destitute Citizens. In 1940, the committee held hearings around the country and collected yet more evidence about the problems of the migrants.

But developments elsewhere in the world made the committee's work almost irrelevant. In March 1939, Germany's Adolf Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia. In September, he invaded Poland, and Britain and France declared war. Ill-prepared for war, Britain and France urgently needed American airplanes and weapons. Thus began a program of military preparedness that brought with it new prosperity and employment. As the defense boom gained momentum, many of the migrants left the farms and went into the cities for work.

Because the migrants were able to get new jobs in the cities, fewer remained on the farms. Those who stayed were needed as workers. By the end of World War II, the "Okies" were assimilated into California. It was war—not the New Deal—that solved their problem.

### For Discussion

1. What were some of the causes for people living in the Dust Bowl to leave and head for California?
2. What social and economic impact did these people have on California?
3. What was the case of *Edwards v. California*? What did the court agree and disagree on? Which opinion do you most agree with? Why?
4. What problems of poverty do you see today in the United States? What, if anything, do you think should be done about these problems?

## A C T I V I T Y

### Artists of the 1930s

John Steinbeck and Dorothea Lange were among the many artists working in the 1930s. Below is a sampling of more. Choose an artist (or artists) and create a report that explains (1) what the artist(s) did, (2) what works the artist(s) created in the '30s, and (3) how the artist(s) reflected the conditions of the times. If possible, exhibit a sample of the work of the artist(s).

James Agee	George and Ira Gershwin
Fred Allen	Benny Goodman
Fred Astaire and Ginger Rodgers	Woody Guthrie
Jack Benny	Dashiell Hammett
Thomas Hart Benton	Fletcher Henderson
Edgar Bergen	Edward Hopper
Busby Berkeley	Ernest Hemingway
Gutzon Borglum	Zora Neale Hurston
George Burns and Gracie Allen	George S. Kaufman
Erskine Caldwell	Dorothea Lange
Frank Capra	Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy
Charlie Chaplin	Marx Brothers
Walt Disney	Johnny Mercer
Tommy Dorsey	Margaret Mitchell
John Dos Passos	Clifford Odets
Duke Ellington	Paul Robeson
James T. Farrell	John Steinbeck
William Faulkner	Orson Welles
W.C. Fields	Mae West
John Ford	Thomas Wolfe
	Grant Wood

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# The German Weimar Republic: Why Did Democracy Fail?

After its defeat in World War I, Germany adopted a democratic form of government with a constitution and free elections. But barely 14 years later, the elected German parliament voted to hand over its powers to Adolf Hitler.



*The Reichstag was the German parliament. Part of the Reichstag building was mysteriously burned down in 1933. (German Information Center)*

**I**n 1871, the modern state of Germany was formed. During the 19th century, many people had yearned to unite Germany, but one man was responsible, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck of Prussia. Working for the Prussian monarch, Bismarck had provoked two short wars—one with Austria and the other with France—to achieve his goal of uniting Germany. He considered the new German state the “second reich.” (*Reich* is German for “empire.”) The first reich was the Holy Roman Empire (800–1806) founded by German emperors in medieval times. The new reich had a constitution and parliament (Reichstag). But the power rested with the chancellor chosen by the emperor, the kaiser. (*Kaiser* comes from the Latin word “Caesar.”)

By 1914, a web of hostile alliances entangled Germany and most of the other European nations. When war erupted between Austria and Serbia, Russia and France threatened to intervene. Germany’s Kaiser Wilhelm II declared war on the Russia and France, calling it an act of self-defense. World War I had broken out.

Kaiser Wilhelm largely ignored the Reichstag and directed the war along with his top generals headed by Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg. Germany had to fight on two main fronts—the eastern and western. In the east, the war went well. A new communist government in Russia sued for peace in 1917. In the west, the Germans advanced quickly, but were stopped about 60 miles from Paris. The western front turned into a stalemate, with neither side able to advance. In 1917, however, the United States entered the war against Germany.

Throughout the war, the kaiser and his generals had assured the German people of victory. In the fall of 1918, however, with defeat certain, the German generals suddenly called for an armistice, a ceasefire until the signing of a peace treaty. Most Germans were shocked. To divert blame from themselves, the generals claimed that the German army had been “stabbed in the back” by Reichstag politicians who had not adequately supported the war effort.

As a condition of the armistice, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson demanded that Kaiser Wilhelm give up his monarchy. The kaiser agreed and left Germany for exile in Holland. The German Reichstag assumed the responsibility of signing a peace treaty.

Before the Reichstag politicians could act, mutinies by sailors, soldiers, and workers broke out all over Germany. Many set up local governing councils and called for communism as in Russia. The German army and marauding bands of right-wing soldiers broke up these governing councils. Amid the pandemonium, the politicians in the Reichstag promised a new form of government—a democracy.

Despite the chaos and a Communist Party boycott, 83 percent of German voters (including women for the first time) turned out in January 1919 to elect a National Assembly. The purpose of this body was to write a new constitution and negotiate a peace treaty with the victorious Allied Powers.

## The Weimar Constitution

The National Assembly began its sessions on February 9, 1919, in Weimar, a small German city about 100 miles from Berlin. The city was considered safer from left- and right-wing extremists than Berlin, the capital. The delegates debated a constitution for several months and finally agreed to adopt a republic, a representative form of democracy.

The so-called “Weimar Republic” included two legislative bodies—an upper and lower house. The members of the upper house were appointed by regional governments. Each German state sent representatives to this body based on its population. The upper house approved or rejected laws passed by the lower house, the Reichstag.



Elected by the people, the Reichstag made the laws. After a Reichstag election, the political party winning the majority of seats formed a new government. This was like other parliaments in Europe. But one party rarely won a majority in the Weimar Republic, so two or more parties had to agree to rule together. After a coalition formed, the president of the republic chose a chancellor to put the government together and lead it.

Reichstag elections had to be held at least once every four years. But, like other parliamentary systems, whenever the chancellor failed to win a majority vote in the Reichstag, his government would fall. The president would then call for new elections. In fact, Reichstag elections in the Weimar Republic took place frequently, sometimes twice in one year.

Under the Weimar Constitution, the people elected the president for a seven-year term. In addition to appointing a chancellor and calling for Reichstag elections, he was the commander-in-chief of the German military. The Constitution also gave him the power to temporarily suspend constitutional rights and let the chancellor rule by decree in a “state of emergency.”

The Weimar Constitution granted citizens civil liberties like freedom of speech and press. It also provided economic and social rights such as unemployment benefits and a ban against job discrimination because of sex, religion, or politics. In addition, the people had the right to put laws directly before the voters in a referendum.

The National Assembly adopted the Weimar Constitution in July 1919. Meanwhile, the Allied Powers presented their terms of peace to a German delegation at Versailles, the magnificent palace of the old French kings near Paris.

### **A Bitter Peace**

The Allies had not invited Germany to the Versailles Treaty negotiations, so Germans were shocked at what they considered its harsh demands. The treaty:

- Prohibited German troops in the Rhineland. (German territory west of the Rhine River that bordered France, Belgium, and Holland). A separate treaty authorized the Allies to occupy the Rhineland for 15 years.
- Placed severe limits on the number of soldiers in the German army and banned German warplanes, submarines, and tanks.
- Put all German overseas colonies under the control of the League of Nations.
- Required Germany to pay reparations to the Allied Powers.

Even more humiliating, the treaty placed sole responsibility for the war on Germany. German right-wing nationalists,

viewing themselves as defenders of national honor, rejected this “war guilt” clause as “shameful.”

The German public strongly opposed the treaty. The National Assembly at Weimar at first refused to sign the Versailles Treaty, but finally did so in June 1919 under the threat of a renewed Allied attack.

The treaty incited the radical right. Already thinking that the army had been “stabbed in the back” by traitors, right wingers now believed that the politicians at Weimar had further betrayed Germany. A campaign of political violence began. In the next three years, more than 400 people were assassinated, most by right wingers.

### **Reparations and Hyperinflation**

The first Reichstag election under the new Weimar Constitution took place in January 1920. More than a dozen political parties competed for seats. The strongest of these parties, the moderate Social Democratic Party, won only 22 percent of the vote.

The Social Democrats thus had to put together a coalition government with other moderate parties. This set the pattern for the Weimar Republic. Between 1920 and 1932, 14 coalition governments formed and fell.

In 1921, Britain, France, Belgium, and Italy settled on a reparation sum that would burden Germany with enormous payments for decades. (The United States did not participate in the reparation plan since the Senate had refused to ratify the Versailles Treaty.)

The moderate German government agreed to cooperate with the reparation schedule, hoping to persuade the Allies to reduce the payments in the future. Right-wing nationalists objected, calling the reparations nothing more than “slave tribute.”

Unwilling to increase taxes to make the reparation payments, the German government depended heavily on foreign, mainly American, short-term, high-interest loans. The government began to pay for these loans by printing more marks, the German paper currency.

The Allies complained that the Germans were paying their reparations with increasingly worthless currency. The German people also suffered as prices spiraled upward.

In 1923, Germany was late in making reparation deliveries of coal and other products to France. In response, French and Belgian troops occupied Germany’s Ruhr Valley, a major coal-mining and industrial region.

The German government responded to the Ruhr occupation by ordering miners and railroad workers to stop digging coal and transporting it to France. While the workers were idle, the government paid their wages.

To pay the Ruhr workers, the German government again printed more paper money. This severely worsened inflation in the entire country as shown by these exchange rates:

July 1914: 4 marks = \$1

Jan. 1923: 353,000 marks = \$1

Nov. 1923: 4 trillion marks = \$1

At the peak of this hyperinflation crisis, an obscure anti-Jewish leader of the extremist National Socialist German Worker's Party (Nazi) attempted to overthrow the state government of Bavaria. Adolph Hitler hoped to take over the Bavarian government as a first step in a revolution against the Weimar Republic. But Hitler planned badly and was arrested, tried, and sentenced to prison. In prison, he wrote his political manifesto, *Mein Kampf* ("My Struggle").

In the meantime, a new German government worked to stop inflation. It abandoned the policy of paying the wages of Ruhr workers. It stabilized the mark, tying it to the value of grain and real estate. In addition, the Allied Powers agreed to reschedule reparation payments, encourage more foreign loans and investments, and end the Ruhr occupation.

Thus by 1924, inflation was under control and the German economy was recovering. Even so, the hyperinflation of 1923 caused great damage to the German people, especially to the middle class, which had the most to gain in a democratic Germany. Pensions had been wiped out. A lifetime of savings accumulated before the crisis would not buy a loaf of bread. Extremists of the right and left gained influence.

### Germany and the Depression

By the mid-1920s, the German people had grown disillusioned with ineffective coalition governments and seemed to yearn for a "strong man" in charge. In 1925, the moderate parties persuaded the old Prussian military hero Paul von Hindenburg to run for president. Hindenburg, 78, won easily.

In 1928, an international conference assembled to review the German reparations issue. This time the Germans participated and argued that the remaining payments were far beyond what Germany could pay. Chaired by an American corporation officer, Owen Young, the conference agreed on a plan of nearly 60 years of installments. The payments would be reduced at first and then gradually increase over time.

Right-wing nationalists like Hitler believed that reparations were part of the "war guilt lie." Hitler condemned German politicians who agreed with the Young Plan and said they should be imprisoned. He and other nationalists put these views before the voters in a referendum. When

the referendum failed, the Reichstag and President Hindenburg ratified the Young Plan.

The 1929 New York stock market crash signaled the worldwide Depression. Foreign loans to the German government dried up. Without funds, the government could not pay its reparations or sustain its unemployment and other social-spending programs. Foreign investments in German businesses also stopped, causing many to go bankrupt.

Another German government took over in 1930 with Heinrich Brüning as chancellor. When Brüning and President Hindenburg declared a "state of emergency" and attempted to rule by decree, the Reichstag passed a law opposing this.

Hindenburg called a new Reichstag election. In the September 1930 election, the moderate parties lost seats, but still put together a weak coalition to form a government. The Nazis gained almost 100 seats in the election to become the second strongest party in the Reichstag. Brüning returned as chancellor and together with Hindenburg continued to rule by emergency decree. As German employers cut wages and laid off workers, Chancellor Brüning increased taxes and reduced unemployment benefits.

In 1931, U.S. President Herbert Hoover secured an agreement among the Allies to postpone all international war debts, including German reparations. Political events in Germany soon made the reparations issue irrelevant, however, and Germany never made another payment.

### The Fall of the Weimar Republic

Blaming Germany's troubles on Jews, traitors, communists, and the failures of Weimar democracy, Hitler ran against Hindenburg in the April 1932 presidential election. Hindenburg won, but Hitler got 37 percent of the vote. In July, 14 million Germans voted for the Nazis in new parliamentary elections, making Hitler's party the largest in the Reichstag with 37 percent of the seats.

Continuing political turmoil resulted in yet another Reichstag election barely four months later. The Nazis lost some seats in the Reichstag, but the Communist Party gained seats, which drove a wide range of parties to back Hitler.

Finally, on January 30, 1933, President Hindenburg reluctantly agreed to choose Hitler as the new chancellor. Hitler promised to observe the Weimar Constitution and form a broad coalition government to solve the economic crisis. The politicians advising Hindenburg told him they could control the upstart from Bavaria. One political leader said, "In two months we'll have pushed Hitler into a corner so hard he'll be squeaking."



Hitler, however, quickly outflanked the other politicians. He persuaded Hindenburg to call another election while ruling by decree. One edict restricted political party activities and the press.

During the election campaign, part of the Reichstag building mysteriously burned down. Hitler blamed the communists. He issued a new “temporary” decree, suspending constitutional rights to crush the communists.

In March 1933, with close to 6 million Germans unemployed, the Nazi Party won 44 percent of the Reichstag seats. With the support of smaller right-wing parties, Hitler commanded a majority to form a new government.

Hitler submitted an “Enabling Act,” calling for the Reichstag to transfer its lawmaking powers to him. The law also allowed Hitler to ignore any provision of the Weimar Constitution.

On March 23, 1933, the Reichstag met in a Berlin opera house to vote on the Enabling Act. With the aisles packed with Nazi storm troopers, the Reichstag voted to end democracy in Germany and make Hitler dictator of what he called the “Third Reich.”

### Why Did Democracy Fail?

When the Weimar Republic was formed in 1919, there were hopeful signs that democracy would take root in Germany. The new democratic constitution with its expanded bill of rights was one of the most progressive in the world. Many Germans belonged to the well-educated middle class made up of business owners, government workers, and professionals who normally flourish in a democracy. Political parties freely competed in elections. But democracy still failed in Germany. Why?

Some historians blame the failure of democracy on individuals. The moderate chancellors were ineffective leaders who constantly rose and fell as party coalitions gained or lost strength in the Reichstag. President Hindenburg doubted democracy and dreamed of restoring the kaiser to power. Extremists like Hitler hated democracy.

Other historians point to flaws in the Weimar Constitution, such as the provision that allowed rule by decree and the suspension of constitutional rights in a national emergency. Many criticize the Versailles Treaty for humiliating Germany with the “war guilt” clause and punishing future generations of Germans with the burden of reparations.



Adolf Hitler was named chancellor of Germany in 1933. He posed for this picture with Nazi storm troopers after his appointment. (USHMM)

Historians have also placed great emphasis on the economic conditions that ravaged the German people with hyperinflation and unemployment.

The sudden replacement of the kaiser with the Weimar Republic never won the hearts of most Germans. The numerous political parties often appealed to narrow interests and fractured the nation. In the end, the political movement most successful in uniting Germany was the Nazi Party.

Democracy did not die forever in Germany. After World War II, a new German democracy slowly rose from the ashes of Hitler’s Third Reich.

### For Discussion and Writing

1. What do you believe was the *most important* cause of the failure of democracy in the Weimar Republic? Use evidence from the article to support your answer.
2. Why do you think Hitler and the Nazi Party gained increasing support from German voters?
3. How did the victorious Allied Powers contribute to the failure of democracy in the Weimar Republic?

### For Further Reading

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## A C T I V I T Y

### A Debate: Was the Weimar Republic Destined to Fail?

Divide the class into two groups. Assign each group a pro or con position on the following thesis statement:

Given the circumstances of the Weimar Republic, it was doomed to failure.

Using the article as a source, each student should write a position paper. Then students should meet in pro and con teams and decide on their best arguments. Finally, the class should hold a debate.

# Outsourcing Jobs to Other Countries: Is Globalization a Threat to American Workers?

**For several decades, U.S. companies have been outsourcing manufacturing jobs to countries with much cheaper labor. Now, companies are doing the same with business services and even professional work that foreign workers can do over the Internet.**

**S**amuel Slater, the manager of a textile (cloth-making) factory in England, immigrated to the United States in 1789. Four years later, he built his own textile factory in Rhode Island, the first successful one in the United States. Soon, numerous New England textile factories, located not far from the cotton-producing South, were manufacturing cheaper cloth and clothing than Old England.

After the Civil War, New England's textile factories began to relocate to the South, where non-union workers were willing to accept much lower wages. One hundred years later, U.S. textile manufacturers relocated once again, this time to countries like Mexico and Indonesia.

Poor foreign countries have large numbers of job-hungry workers who will work for wages far below the U.S. minimum wage. The globalization of textile manufacturing continues today with China out-competing even these poor, low-wage countries. In this period, hundreds of thousands of textile manufacturing jobs have disappeared in the United States.

The relocation of textile manufacturing from the United States to foreign countries with cheaper labor is an example of outsourcing. American companies import goods for sale in the United States that they once produced here. Sometimes American firms own the foreign factories outright. Or, foreign companies may own them and contract work for American importers.

American companies began to take greater advantage of international outsourcing in the 1970s. Many kinds of factory work began to shift overseas—clothing, steel, toys, television sets, and computer hardware and chips.



*The Internet has caused the "death of distance." Sitting at a computer, people can do work for others thousands of miles away.*

Outsourcing accelerated in the 1990s when the United States negotiated free-trade agreements like NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement). Such agreements reduced or eliminated tariffs (taxes on goods imported into a country). Without tariffs, cheap foreign-made imports can often undercut the prices charged by American manufacturers with their higher paid workers.

Today, only 22 percent of all private enterprise output in the United States is in the manufacturing sector. The United States has changed into primarily a service economy.

Its economic output is the strongest in the world. Its gross domestic product (GDP) is almost equal to that of the next three highest nations' GDP combined.

## Outsourcing of Knowledge-Based Services

In the 1990s, the Internet began to revolutionize the workplace. One consequence is what some have called the "death of distance." With high-speed telecommunications, workers can complete many jobs on a computer anywhere, even overseas.

Outsourcing of computer or knowledge-based services got a big boost during the explosive expansion of World Wide Web "dot-com" companies in the late 1990s. Imports of outsourced private sector services grew almost 80 percent.

The first type of knowledge-based services to be outsourced was the management of computer networks (information technology, or IT). Next, businesses began to outsource their "call centers," places customers call to get help with a company's products or services.

American businesses discovered that low-wage foreign workers could do much "back office" work overseas. Such jobs as data entry, billing, accounting, and processing insurance claims, loan applications, and tax returns shifted out of the country to places like India.

Today, outsourcing of knowledge-based services is expanding to high tech and professional jobs. For example, overseas workers connected over the Internet with companies in the United States are now doing software programming, paralegal work, financial investment research, X-ray and CAT-scan analysis, and drug testing.

The main reason U.S. businesses give for outsourcing is to remain competitive by cutting costs, especially wages. For

example, American software programmers in 2004 averaged about \$70,000 per year while those in India earned about \$8,000.

Nearby Canada is number one in handling American outsourced knowledge-based work. But India has attracted services such as data processing and computer programming. In addition to its low labor costs, India has an advantage over other countries in its time zone difference with the United States. Workers in India can complete jobs while Americans sleep, enabling U.S. businesses to operate 24 hours a day. India's biggest outsourcing advantage, however, is that each year it produces up to 3 million college graduates, most of whom speak English.

There is much uncertainty about the impact of outsourcing on American knowledge-based jobs because of the lack of data collected in this area. The only U.S. government study so far reported that there were 13,000 layoffs in 2003 due to foreign outsourcing, but most of those were in manufacturing. Global Insight, a private firm, estimated that about 104,000 IT jobs were lost to outsourcing from 2000 to 2003. These numbers make up a small fraction of the 2.4 million IT workers (and the 140 million workers in the U.S. economy). In 2004, the U.S. Government Accountability Office cautiously concluded that outsourcing "is a small but growing trend in the U.S. economy."

### The Debate Over Outsourcing

One of the most prominent opponents of foreign outsourcing is Lou Dobbs, anchor of a business news program on CNN. He has written a book titled *Exporting America: Why Corporate Greed Is Shipping American Jobs Overseas*. He argues that multinational corporations are outsourcing American jobs for their own benefit and to the detriment of American workers. He says that we are weakening the American middle class by "firing" our consumers and taxpayers from these good-paying occupations.

### Top 20 Countries in Terms of GDP

<b>United States</b>	<b>\$9.2 trillion</b>
<b>Japan</b>	<b>5.7 trillion</b>
<b>Germany</b>	<b>2.7 trillion</b>
<b>France</b>	<b>1.8 trillion</b>
<b>U.K.</b>	<b>1.4 trillion</b>
<b>Italy</b>	<b>1.2 trillion</b>
<b>China</b>	<b>1.2 trillion</b>
<b>Brazil</b>	<b>812 billion</b>
<b>Canada</b>	<b>753 billion</b>
<b>Spain</b>	<b>739 billion</b>
<b>South Korea</b>	<b>680 billion</b>
<b>India</b>	<b>533 billion</b>
<b>Netherlands</b>	<b>505 billion</b>
<b>Australia</b>	<b>469 billion</b>
<b>Russia</b>	<b>381 billion</b>
<b>Mexico</b>	<b>375 billion</b>
<b>Taiwan</b>	<b>345 billion</b>
<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>339 billion</b>
<b>Belgium</b>	<b>321 billion</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>300 billion</b>

For the year 2002 calculated in 1995 dollars.

GDP is gross domestic product. It is the total value of a nation's output of goods and services.

Source: International Energy Annual 2002  
[www.eia.doe.gov/pub/international/iealf/tableb2.xls](http://www.eia.doe.gov/pub/international/iealf/tableb2.xls)

Dobbs argues that outsourcing unfairly forces American workers to compete with low-wage workers in poor countries. For example, the average hourly manufacturing wage in the United States is around \$16; in China it is less than \$1. Inevitably, he argues, outsourcing will force wages to go down in the United States.

Dobbs believes outsourcing will destroy our economy. He says: "India can provide our software; China can provide our toys; Sri Lanka can make our clothes; Japan can make our cars. But at some point we have to ask, what will *we* export? At what will Americans work? And for what kind of wages?"

Dobbs thinks that free-trade agreements, like NAFTA, have failed us. He points out that we import billions of dollars more in foreign-made goods than we export. While we still export more services than we import, he thinks outsourcing will change this.

Dobbs argues that the United States should engage in fair trade, not free trade. He cites as an example the agreement that the Reagan administration hammered out with Japan in the 1980s. It put a quota on imports of Japanese cars, but let Japan get around the quota by building manu-

facturing plants in the United States. Dobbs says: "Reagan's policy forced overseas corporations to make investments in the United States, from building factories to hiring American workers, if they wanted greater access to our market."

It troubles Dobbs that even government has resorted to outsourcing. Forty state governments outsource jobs to foreign countries. He cites the example of the Indiana Department of Workforce Development. It is in charge of helping unemployed people in Indiana find work. It awarded a \$15 million contract to a firm in India to update its computers. Fortunately, says Dobbs, the governor canceled the contract when people protested. The contract subsequently went to a U.S. company for \$23 million.

The American people seem to agree with Dobbs about outsourcing. An Associated Press-Ipsos poll in May 2004 showed that 69 percent of Americans believed that



outsourcing hurts the economy. Only 17 percent believed that it helps the economy.

Most economists, however, disagree with Dobbs on outsourcing. President George W. Bush's top economic adviser, Greg Mankiw, said that "outsourcing is probably a plus for the economy in the long run." Paul Krugman, a Princeton University economics professor and a harsh critic of the Bush administration's economic policies, echoed this opinion. He said that "outsourcing is less a threat than is widely perceived." He thinks that it has become an issue because of the weak economy. He advises going "very slowly on the issue and push hard on a domestic economic recovery program and then take a look around to see where we are after that."

Most economists view outsourcing as a form of trade. And they consider trade highly beneficial. Timothy Taylor, managing editor of the *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, said: "The circumstantial evidence that international trade provides economic benefits is overwhelming. Eras of expanding global trade, like recent decades, have generally been times of economic growth. Periods of contracting trade have often involved recession or worse. When a country's economy expands, its level of international trade typically increases."

Economists make several points about outsourcing. First, it makes up a small part of the economy, about .4 percent of GDP. Only a third of these services comes from poor countries. The rest comes from other industrial nations.

Second, outsourcing is a two-way street. The United States outsources services, and other countries outsource services to the United States. In fact, the world outsources to the United States about \$20 billion more each year in service jobs than the United States outsources. These include high-paying jobs such as professional and business services, education and health services, and information and financial services. The United States outsources mainly low-paying jobs.

Third, outsourcing lowers prices. This helps the American consumer. It also makes U.S. businesses more competitive in the globalized economy, enabling them to stay in business and hold on to higher-paying jobs in the United States. Furthermore, lower prices free up money for investing in innovative products and services. For example, outsourcing the manufacture of computer hardware led to an explosion of computer use, which drove the innovative development of software and the World Wide Web. The result was the creation of many new high-paying jobs.

Fourth, outsourcing accounts for few job losses. The overwhelming majority of jobs lost are not due to outsourcing. But many economists note that the modern American economy has much "job churning," people

moving from job to job. This can be extremely stressful to workers. Many economists call on government to help. Timothy Taylor advises: "The United States could stand to rethink its policies regarding workers who are forced or pressured to move between jobs. Unemployment insurance is one useful mechanism for softening the transition. But there is a range of additional assistance that might be offered to those between jobs, including health insurance, 'wage insurance,' and retraining."

Although most economists believe outsourcing will help the U.S. economy in the long run, some economists disagree. The Economic Policy Institute, a Washington think tank on economic issues, sees some dangers in outsourcing. Its "Issue Guide on Offshoring" acknowledges that the United States currently has a trade surplus in services. But it notes that the surplus is shrinking. In 1997, the surplus was 1.3 percent of GDP. In 2003, it had dropped to .6 percent. If the trend continues, it says, the United States will be losing more service jobs than it gains.

It also points out that India is graduating far more engineers each year than the United States. (In 2003, 250,000 Indians earned degrees in engineering versus 70,000 Americans.) With a highly trained workforce, India may challenge the U.S.'s lead in technical innovation and attract more and more skilled jobs away from the United States.

Writing in a research report for the Fisher Center for Real Estate & Urban Economics (University of California), economists Ashok Deo Bardhan and Cynthia Kroll lay out some possible outcomes from outsourcing. Among the scenarios are these three:

**1. Worst-case scenario.** The United States fails to continue leading in technical innovation. More high-wage jobs go overseas. Growth in high-wage jobs at home slows. Unemployment grows. Lower wages result.

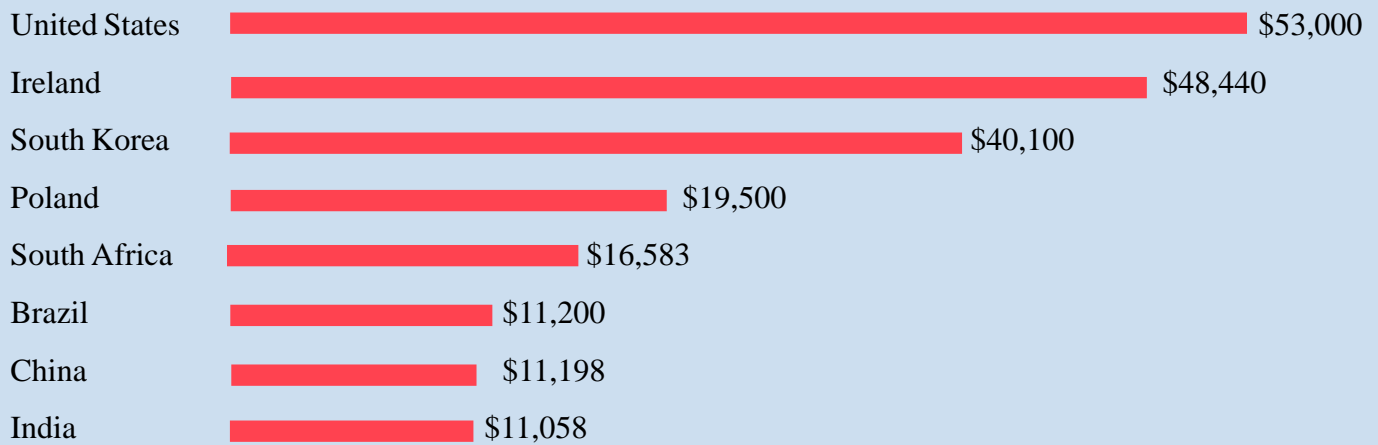
**2. Protectionist scenario.** The United States passes laws that prevent certain types of jobs from being outsourced overseas. If the laws are successful, jobs would be protected. The economy overall is less efficient.

**3. Best-case scenario.** The United States keeps its lead in technical innovation. The innovations lead to new high-paying jobs. The United States continues to outsource low-paying service jobs.

### What Should We Do About Outsourcing?

Dobbs believes the United States should negotiate "fair trade" agreements. Some critics of free-trade agreements want to renegotiate them to create a "more level playing field" with international standards for working conditions. Other opponents of outsourcing call for protecting American jobs by tariffs on imports. Protectionists also want to eliminate tax breaks for companies that outsource

### Median Salary of Software Engineers/Programmers in Various Countries



Source: PayScale.com

work. Many call for laws to protect the privacy and security of personal information sent abroad as well as an outright ban on the outsourcing of government work.

Critics of the protectionist approach point out that imposing import tariffs will only cause other countries to do the same, which will harm our export industries. Moreover, putting restrictions on outsourcing knowledge-based services will weaken the competitiveness of U.S. companies and be almost impossible to enforce.

Others propose that the federal government should provide tax credits to encourage research and innovation by U.S. businesses, making them more competitive in the global economy. Some call for the federal government to increase its budget on science and technology research, which has been cut in recent years.

American workers who lose their jobs because of outsourcing may need retraining and extended unemployment benefits. Furthermore, American taxpayers will undoubtedly have to make major investments in public education at all levels. In the new globalized job market, American workers will have to prepare to compete not only with each other but also with those in India, China, and everywhere else in the world.

### For Discussion and Writing

1. What are similarities and differences between the outsourcing of manufacturing and knowledge-based work?
2. What do you think is the main reason for U.S. businesses outsourcing work?
3. Do you think outsourcing is a bad thing or a good thing? Why?

### For Further Reading

United States Government Accountability Office. *International Trade, Current Government Data Provide Limited Insight into Offshoring of Services*. Sept. 2004. 14 Mar. 2005. URL: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d04932.pdf>

Yourdon, Edward. *Outsource, Competing in the Global Productivity Race*. Boston: Prentice-Hall, 2005.

## A C T I V I T Y

### What Should the United States Do About Outsourcing?

Below are four proposals for dealing with outsourcing. In small groups, do the following:

- a. Discuss the pros and cons of each proposal.
- b. Decide which proposal you most favor.
- c. Prepare to report your decision and the reasons for it to the class.

### Proposals

1. Do nothing.
2. Ban outsourcing.
3. Offer unemployed workers retraining and extended unemployment benefits.
4. Offer businesses tax credits for research and raise federal spending on science research.
5. Increase spending on elementary and secondary education, especially in math and science.

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## Standards Addressed

**National High School Standard 23: Understands the causes of the Great Depression and how it affected American society.** (2) Understands the impact of the Great Depression on American culture (e.g., art, literature, and music . . . ; how the works of various American artists reflected American conditions in the 1930s . . . )

**California History-Social Science Content Standard 11.6: Students analyze the different explanations for the Great Depression and how the New Deal fundamentally changed the role of the federal government.** (3) Discuss the human toll of the Depression, natural disasters, and unwise agricultural practices and their effects on the depopulation of rural regions and on political movements of the left and right, with particular attention to the Dust Bowl refugees and their social and economic impacts in California.

**National High School World History Standard 40: Understands the search for peace and stability throughout the world in the 1920s and 1930s.** (2) Understands how World War I influenced demographics and the international economy. (6) Understands the causes of the Great Depression and its immediate and long-term consequences for the world . . .

**California History-Social Science Content Standard 10.6: Students analyze the effects of the First World War.** (3) Understand the widespread disillusionment with prewar institutions, authorities, and values that resulted in a void that was later filled by totalitarians.

**California History-Social Science Content Standard 10.7: Students analyze the rise of totalitarian governments after World War I.** (3) Analyze the rise, aggression, and human costs of totalitarian regimes (Fascist and Communist) in Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union, noting especially their common and dissimilar traits.

**National High School World History Standard 45: Understands major global trends since World War II.** (3) Understands connections between globalizing trends in economy, technology, and culture and dynamic assertions of traditional cultural identity and distinctiveness

**California History-Social Science Content Standard 12e.6: Students analyze issues of international trade and explain how the U.S. economy affects, and is affected by, economic forces beyond its borders.**

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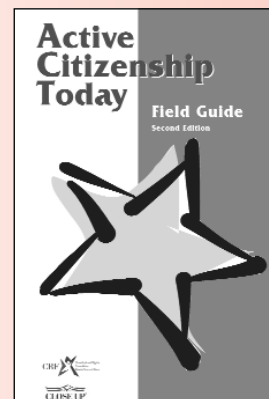


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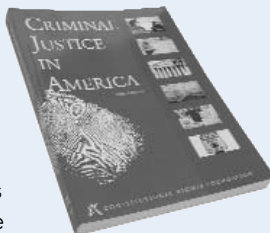
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