



John T. McCutcheon, "A Victim of Bank Failure" (1931)

FORBES 9/15/30

(1886–1961) was educated  
pursued a career in govern

Sources: B. C. Forbes, "Snap Out c  
from Julius Klein, "New Business  
Sales Month Suggested," in "Fact a

### (a) Snap Out of It! by B. C. Forbes

Snap out of it! Gloom has reigned long enough. It is time to drop cowardice and exercise courage. Deflation has run an ample course—to carry it much further would mean endless destruction, criminal destruction. The country is sound at the core, sound politically, sound financially, sound industrially, sound commercially. Agricultural prices, too, have been thoroughly deflated, even overdepressed. The nation has its health. It has lost little or none of its real wealth. It is living saner than when everyone was unrestrainedly optimistic. The time has come to cast off our doubts and fears, our hesitancy and timidity, our spasm of "nerves." Summer, the season for holiday-making, is over. The season for fresh planning, new enterprise, hard work, driving force, initiative, concentration on business, is here. Let's go.

Snap out of it!

2. Why did Communism appeal to Wright as a possible solution to the problems he faced?
3. Judging from Wright's account, what factors prevented Communism from becoming a more popular movement?

## 24-9 A Letter to Eleanor Roosevelt (1934)

The Great Depression was particularly hard on the elderly, as this letter from Mrs. "A. A." to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt poignantly attests. The plight of the elderly, whether in the Great Plains states or elsewhere, illustrated the pressing need for a social safety net and accounted for the widespread popularity of the Townsend Plan and other plans that were designed to alleviate the hardships of the old and poor. The Social Security Act, a key piece of New Deal legislation that formed the foundation of American social welfare legislation, was passed in 1935.

*Source:* Mrs. A. A., letter to Mrs. Roosevelt, from *Down and Out in the Great Depression: Letters from the "Forgotten Man,"* ed. Robert S. McElvaine (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 105. Copyright © 1983 by the University of North Carolina Press. Used by permission of the publisher.

[Petersburg, North Dakota  
March 21, 1934]

[Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:]

you must excuse me for writing to you but I have heard that you would like the pension for old people to be set at \$30 a month. Mrs. Roosevelt I would be very thankful if you could force that through. I see that you have us old folks in mind that have not a thing.

I am living in North Dakota and we have just gotten through the old age pension bill. It will be \$12.50 a month (twelve dollars and fifty cents), so when one is going to pay house rent and have a little for clothes and some to eat, why it isn't much.

I am so glad to get that much but we are not able to get any before the first of May and that is a long time to wait, for we hasn't anything.

I am now 72 years old and have never had anything. I have always been poor and have always worked hard, so now

I am not able to do any more. I am all worn out but am able to be around and I thank God that I have no pains. It is hard to be old and not have anything. I do not own as much as one cent to my name, so I know God would bless you, if you could help us to get more money for pension, so we would have enough to eat.

I am sure Mrs. Roosevelt you will try all you can to help us old folks.

The President has done a great deal to help all the working people and I am sure he will help you too with this pension.

I enclose Mr. + Mrs. Roosevelt in my prayers, God bless you both and may you live long on this earth to be of help to all the needy.

God bless you always. From a poor Norwegian wife in North Dakota.

Mrs. A. A.  
Petersburg N. D.

### Questions

1. Why do you think Mrs. A. A. addressed her letter to Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt and not to the president?
2. How might this letter, and others like it, have strengthened the case for social welfare legislation?

ELÍAS GARZA

Eliás Garza is a native of Cuernavaca, Morelos, white.

"My life is a real story, especially here in the United States where they drive one crazy from working so much. They squeeze one here until one is left useless, and then one has to go back to Mexico to be a burden to one's countrymen. But the trouble is that is true not only here but over there also. It is a favor that we owe Don Porfirio [President Porfirio Díaz] that we were left so ignorant and so slow minded that we have only been fit for rough work. I began to work when I was twelve years old. My mother was a servant and I worked in one of those old mills which ground sugar cane. I took charge of driving the oxen. They called me the driver. This was on the estate of La Piedad, Michoacan. I think that they paid me \$0.25 a day and I had to go round and round the mill from the time the sun rose until it set. My mother, as well as I, had to work, because my father died when I was very small. I went on in that way until when I was fifteen or sixteen I planted corn on my own account on shares. The owners gave us the seed, the animals and the land, but it turned out that when the crop was harvested there wasn't anything left for us even if we had worked very hard. That was terrible. Those land-owners were robbers. At that time I heard that there were some good jobs

FROM

MANUEL

GAMIO,

THE

LIFE

STORY OF

THE

MEXICAN

(MIGRANT

(1931)

here in the United States and that good money could be made. Some other friends accompanied me and we went first to Mexico City and from there we came to Ciudad Juarez. We then went to El Paso and there we took a *renganche* for Kansas. We worked on the tracks, taking up and laying down the rails, removing the old ties and putting in new, and doing all kinds of hard work. They only paid us \$1.50 and exploited us without mercy in the Commissary camp, for they sold us everything very high. Nevertheless as at that time things generally were cheap I managed to make a little money with which I went back to La Piedad to see my mother. She died a little later and this left me very sad. I decided to come back to the United States, and I came to Los Angeles, California. Here I married a Mexican young lady. I went to work in a stone quarry. I placed the dynamite and did other work which took some care. They paid me \$1.95 a day but I worked 10 hours. Later I worked at a railroad station. I worked as a riveter, working a pressure gun for riveting. At that work I earned \$1.50 a day for nine hours, but it was very hard. My wife died at that time. I then got work in a packing plant. I began by earning \$1.25 a day there for nine hours of work and I got to earn \$4.00 a day for eight hours work. I learned to skin hogs there and slaughter them also. The work was very hard. Later I was married to a woman from San Antonio, Texas. She was young, beautiful, white, and she had two little children who became my step-children. We went to Mexico together. We boarded ship at San Pedro and from there went to Mazatlan until we got to Michoacan. We saw that things were bad there, for that was in 1912, and the disorders of the revolution had already started; so we came back to the United States by way of Laredo, Texas. In San Antonio we were under contract to go and pick cotton in a camp in the Valley of the Rio Grande. A group of countrymen and my wife and I went to pick. When

we arrived at the camp the planter gave us an old hovel which had been used as a chicken house before, to live in, out in the open. I didn't want to live there and told him that if he didn't give us a little house which was a little better we would go. He told us to go, and my wife and I and my children were leaving when the sheriff fell upon us. He took me to the jail and there the planter told them that I wanted to leave without paying him for my passage. He charged me twice the cost of the transportation, and though I tried first not to pay him, and then to pay him what it cost, I couldn't do anything. The authorities would only pay attention to him, and as they were in league with him they told me that if I didn't pay they would take my wife and my little children to work. Then I paid them. From there we went to Dallas, Texas, from where we worked on the tracks as far as El Paso. I kept on at the same work towards Tucson, Arizona, until I got to Los Angeles. I have worked in the packing plants here since then, in cement and other jobs, even as a farm laborer. In spite of it all I have managed to save some money with which I have bought this automobile and some clothes. I have now decided to work in the colony in Mexico and not come back to this country where I have left the best of my youth. I learned a little English here from hearing it so much. I can read and write it, but I don't even like to deal with those *bolillos* for the truth is that they don't like the Mexicans. Even the *pochos* don't like us. I have scarcely been able to stand up for my rights with the little English that I have learned, but I would like to know a lot of English so as to tell them what they are and in order to defend my poor countrymen.

"I am going to tell you what happened to me one day. Coming out of a packing plant in Alhambra where I worked, a Mexican policeman and an American stopped me, saying that I had escaped from I don't know where. I told them that no,

that I was coming out from my work. Then the *pocho* policeman gave me a push, and put me in the machine which he had and there began to insult me in English and told me that if I didn't shut up he was going to break my snout. They took me in the police-station and there made me fill my hand and thumbs with ink and put them down on a white paper. After they had examined that they let me go free without doing anything else. Once a poor Mexican bought a bottle of whisky to take to his house to drink it. He had put it in the back pocket of his trousers. That was at night and he was going home. He stopped in front of a work-shop to see some goods when he noticed that a policeman was drawing near. Then he slyly put his hand to his back pocket in order to take the little bottle out and perhaps throw it away when the policemen, without more ado, fired a shot at him and killed him. They didn't do anything to that policeman; he is going about free. And there have been an infinite number of cases like that. I know of others who at work in the factories have lost an arm or a leg, and they haven't been given a thing. What they do is to take away their jobs. That is why we don't like these people.

"I almost am, and almost am not, a Catholic. I remember that when I was very little, over there in Cuernavaca, my mother took me to some exercises of Holy Week and that the priest told all those who were in the Church that they should cry for their sins before Christ there in the temple and they all began to weep and to cry out all that they had done, even my own mother. But I couldn't weep nor did I want to cry out my sins. Since that time I have almost not gone back to the church nor do I pray at home.

"I read few newspapers for they almost don't say anything but lies and one comes out from work so tired that one doesn't even want to read papers of any kind. I have almost never read books; once in a long time I do read books of stories of Mexicans.

"I have always tried to be close to my countrymen and defend them, but there are some who are neither united nor do they want to defend themselves; that is why the Americans look down on us as they do."