

the plains, they blew the soil away in vast dust storms. An area known as the Dust Bowl was hardest hit. Many farmers packed up their belongings and moved to California to find work as migrant farm workers.

The Depression placed heavy pressures on the family. Many men felt ashamed because they had lost their jobs. Some abandoned their families. Women found work if they could, but they generally were paid less than men. Some people, too, argued that employers should hire men rather than women since they were seen as the primary support for a family.

Children suffered from poor diets and lack of health care. The number of children suffering illnesses due to lack of vitamins increased. Lacking money to continue, many school boards shut down schools or shortened the school year. Many children went to work to try to help their families survive. Others rode the railways in search of better lives.

● Hoover Struggles with the Depression

MAIN IDEA President Hoover's conservative response to the Great Depression drew criticism from many Americans.

Economic slowdowns happen with some frequency. President Hoover at first believed that the Depression was simply another slowdown that would end. Officials in his administration thought it best to do nothing and let the economy heal itself. Hoover believed government should take action, but be careful not to take too much power.

Hoover thought that the government's role should be to help different groups work together to improve the economy. He also believed that the government should encourage private groups to provide benefits—food and shelter—to the needy and jobless. He did not think that the government should provide direct aid to people, however.

Hoover met with bankers, business leaders, and labor leaders. He urged them to work together to revive the economy. Despite these efforts,

the economic situation simply got worse. People expressed their frustration at the situation. Farmers destroyed some food or refused to work. People without homes began to call their shantytowns "Hoovervilles."

Hoover did not change his principles and offer direct aid to the jobless and hungry. He did take steps to have a more active government role in the economy, however. He began a program of major public works, including building roads, bridges, and dams, to provide jobs. He launched a program to try to raise food prices and urged bankers to join a credit organization that would shore up ailing smaller banks.

By 1932, the economy had still not improved. Congress passed a law to lower the rates for home mortgages, hoping to spur the construction industry. Hoover created the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, aimed at funding projects that would create jobs. The RFC was a major change in policy, but it came too late to help.

Hoover's popularity plummeted even further in 1932 when World War I veterans came to Washington. They demanded early payment of the bonuses they had been promised. This Bonus Army began to live in tents near the Capitol building. Hoover helped them, but after Congress voted down the bill they had requested, he told the veterans to leave. About 2,000 stayed, and Hoover ordered the army to remove them. The sight of U.S. army troops gassing American citizens—including children—outraged many people. Hoover faced the 1932 presidential campaign more unpopular than ever.

Review

1. What caused the Great Depression?
2. What affect did the Depression have on different groups of people in society?
3. How did the Depression affect the family?
4. How did President Hoover's response to the Depression change over time?