

Process Paper

We started looking at the Native American takeover of Alcatraz Island, but the debate and diplomacy wasn't clear, and it would have been hard to communicate this on a website. The Bonus Army seemed to support the debate and diplomacy theme more effectively. We know from past experience in History Day that a clear topic results in a better project.

We used the internet to learn about the Bonus Army. We also used newspapers from that time to learn about how the Bonus Army was viewed at that time. There were videos of the march that helped me see the debate in action. The National Park Service website was really helpful.

We knew it was important to explain the context in which the Bonus Army was created so We made a page for that. We had to create multiple pages to show the stages of the march. The group went back more than once. When they went the second time, FDR was willing to be diplomatic, but it took congress to give the Bonus Army their bonuses.

After World War I, the government promised soldiers compensation that would be paid in the future. But the Great Depression which caused job losses meant that the soldiers needed the bonuses sooner rather than later. They traveled to Washington, DC to begin the debate about receiving the bonuses early. They set up camp in Washington, DC. While they were able to bring public attention to their cause, the Hoover administration responded negatively, sending troops to burn down the camps. The group was still interested in the debate and returned to Washington. FDR was more diplomatic than Hoover, offering jobs and rides home. He sent his wife to create good feelings. However, FDR was not willing to give the bonuses early. That took Congress in 1936 who passed a bill to give them the money nine years early.

The Bonus Army is significant in history because the debate the Bonus Army sparked changed the way that soldiers today are compensated for their service to the country. The actions that were taken by the Hoover administration angered the country and helped Hoover lose the presidency. Veterans today still need support from the government and organizing this kind of march could help them as well.