

The Great Depression as seen through the *Daily Record* in Morristown October 1929 through December 1930

On October 24th, 1929, the *Daily Record's* horoscope predicted “a most interesting and eventful year...employment is in jeopardy...shun extravagance and small losses” yet “this may be the presaged abrupt change that makes way for more aggressive and productive channels.”

PANIC ON WALL ST. AVERTED, cried the headline on the 24th. “The Bears were in such complete control that value melted like snow before the spring sun. The wildest scenes of disorder prevailed on the floor of the Stock Exchange as wave after wave of selling swamped the facilities of the Board...Conditions begged description on the stock exchange as brokers struggled and milled over the floor in a wild effort to fill their orders. Wall Street was as close to a panic as it has been at any time in the last decade and the best efforts of bankers and bull leaders to hold it in check seemed of no avail.”

October was a month of extreme ups and downs in **stock market trading**, followed by the same in November. On October 25th the market had recovered in a flood of buying and selling. On the 28th The *Daily Record's* front page reported “There was apparently no relief for the stricken market as selling orders piled in from all sources”. The 29th, reported “Stock prices...showed distinct signs of rallying at 1:30 this afternoon, when heavy buying began to counteract the tremendous wave of selling.” And on October 30, 1929, “returning confidence in security values and the definite waning of the hysteria which has held a large portion of the country's investors in its grip...”

An editorial on October 30, 1929 commented “The terrific crash of the stock market need not have come as a surprise to anyone...Stock after stock was selling at a price far above the figure that its earnings called for. These high prices were caused by the fact that people were buying, not for investment, but in the hope that they could sell at a still higher price. In the course of time a collapse was simply bound to comeThe old advice still holds good...Speculation is a game for experts only.”

But the very next day, 10/31, “the bull market in industrial stocks threw off its fetters...prices...leaped from 5 to 12 points”. By early November the trend was down and continuing further downward. November 6 reports “a deluge of selling orders”. November 11 reports “new drops”.

It was still early days of the Depression. The “Morris County Freeholders tentatively plan to spend about \$200,000...on roads next year...and make every

effort to keep its men working all winter”. President Hoover was bringing “together the business heads of the country [to] keep business moving at top speed. As far as Morris County was concerned there was no great amount of **unemployment** but there is the possibility that such a period might be encountered....Director Fletcher Fritts...suggested that the Board request contractors on County work to employ Morris County men and not import outside labor....The regular jobs would soon be finished but there were unfinished tasks on Schooley’s Mountain and Mase’s Mountain...” (*Daily Record*, **Nov. 27, 1929**, p.1)

“It is perhaps a good move for the Freeholders to tentatively plan to spend \$200,000 more on roads in 1930 and to contemplate other county work to help President Hoover in his scheme of keeping business moving at top speed. But it must be remembered that it is the case of a Republican board backing a Republican President. If the Democrats were in power it probably would be pointed out that now would be a good time to save money rather than spend it.” (Editorial, Nov. 29, 1929, p.4)

Luxury items continued to be prominently advertised in the pages of the *Daily Record*, including the brand new 1930 Hupmobile models. “Give a 1930 Hupmobile for Christmas 1929”, the Dec. 11, 1929 ad exhorted, with the eight-passenger sedan going for “\$1595...Custom equipment at slight extra cost.”

The *Daily Record’s* yearly roundup on **December 31, 1929** proclaimed “150th Anniversary Program Main Event Quiet Year Here, Three-Day Celebration Only Important Happening of 1929 – Graf Zeppelin Passed Over Town On Around-The-World Flight – Many Prominent Citizens Died” And the Depression? “business was fairly good”, says the article. Not only that, but Morristown was doing well, with an increase in tax ratables “of more than half a million dollars”. (January 10, 1930, p.1)

But already some local people and companies were suffering. Was “one of the largest sales in a long time” by a sheriff already a consequence of the economy? (November 19, 1929, p.1) “Five more properties were sold at Sheriff’s Sale yesterday afternoon, continuing the unusually heavy list of **foreclosures** of properties throughout the county during the last few months.” (*Daily Record*, March 4, 1930, p.1) These were early indicators, along with the Sheriff’s Sales reported November 19, 1929, and April 29, 1930 of worse to come. Sheriff sales continued at a high rate. “Fourteen sales, the largest in any one day’s history, was received in the sheriff’s office yesterday afternoon. (June 3, 1930, p.1) But on August 5, 1930, The *Daily Record* reported a significant drop in Sheriff’s sales to

only one during the past week, possibly “owing to the fact that such sales would come on Labor Day.”

“**Real Estate Transactions** Falling Off Due to General Depression Following Stock Market Crash”, announced the *Daily Record* on March 11, 1930, p.1. “The County Clerk’s office business is far quieter than usual, it is reported, due to this falling off of sales. There was a time when the office was so rushed that the clerks were around six weeks in arrears in the copying of deeds and mortgages but now these are right up to date.”

Optimism still reigned among the “experts”, with captains of industry in the lead, including Helena Rubinstein, who “just okayed an advertising appropriation for 1930 that would look pretty big even to the famous motor manufacturer.” “ ‘what woman will not go without food if thereby she can be slimmer and better looking?’” (*Daily Record*, **March 11, 1930**, p.3)

March 13, 1930 featured on page 1 a brief story about George Jenks, a married man with two children, son of Mr. and Mrs. William P. Jenks, of Mt. Kemble Avenue, who “shot himself with a 22 calibre revolver...In a note to his parents he blamed his act on inability to find work..” The *Daily Record* had not published any stories about investors jumping to their deaths from tall buildings; Jenks was the first Depression **suicide** to be so noted.

Throughout 1930 the *Daily Record* published many editorials in which they analyzed the Depression, while the news pages were filled with the usual society doings and scandals, sports and styles. (The paper was something of a scandal sheet at the time.)

A large photo front and center on the front page, **March 7, 1930** shows labor of the **Communist** persuasion, rather than the ultra-conservative variety, demonstrating in Union Square, New York City (March 7, 1930, p.1)

An editorial on **April 12, 1930**, says “President William Green of the American Federation of Labor is not an alarmist. In his tenure of office he has been known as a labor leader of the ultra-conservative type. It is, therefore, pretty disturbing to find him coolly predicting a revolution for the United States if some method of coping with the unemployment problem is not found. Mr. Green declares that at least 3,700,000 workers were without jobs in February...His remarks are timely and to the point. We need to be jarred into recognition of the seriousness of the unemployment situation. We have been too fond of contenting ourselves with an easy, ostrichlike optimism and leaving the problem to solve itself.”

The editorial of **April 18, 1930**, quotes B.C. Forbes, editor of Forbes Magazine, who lambasts American industry for not doing enough in the **unemployment crisis**. “ ‘ Industry feels perfectly free to dismiss breadwinners by the hundred and by the thousand without giving a thought as to how these breadwinners may succeed or fail in earning bread for themselves and their families....It is a commentary upon how this whole problem has been neglected that neither government nor industry has taken the pains even to keep track of the extent of unemployment from month to month, from season to season.’ “ And the editorial writer concludes “Industry would be well advised to take Mr. Forbes’ words to heart.”

A follow-up to this editorial appeared on **July 10, 1930**, in which the *Daily Record* quotes more fully the attitude of the “captains of industry”: In our eyes the most valuable executive is the one who can produce the most with the least amount of labor...Our latest labor-saving machinery and up-to-the-minute methods make it feasible for us to dispense with enormous numbers of workers. We know that we have caused grave dislocation of employment, but, instead of being criticized, we should be commended since it is conclusive proof of our master of the science of management. What happens to all the hordes of workers we release is not our concern.” And the newspaper comments “We have here a terrible picture of heartless self-interest, with more in it of fidelity to actual fact than many of us like to think.”

Unemployment was still minimal in Morris County, but around the country it was already a major problem. The editorial of March 21, 1930, tells us that the “Family Welfare Association of America, a federation of 234 charity and family welfare agencies”, did a survey of “member agencies in 100 cities and “found that 54 agencies had to spend twice as much for relief work in January of this year as in January of 1929...In January of 1929,...32 cities had a total of 7300 families in need of help; last January they had 21,600.”

Local solutions for unemployment were still the only possibility. The Morristown Chamber of Commerce “maintains a free employment agency to serve the citizens of Morristown and vicinity. At the present time there is an exceptionally large surplus of chauffeurs and skilled mechanics in building trades and common laborers. There is also a number of farm hands, retail sales people, bookkeepers, general office workers and other lines too numerous to mention....If everybody would do his bit in cleaning up the small jobs you have been waiting to do for the last year or so, many of our unemployed would find positions and the country at large by following this practice would get back to normal much more quickly than it is doing at the present time.” (**May 15, 1930**, p.1)

But by **September 11, 1930** “County Has Reached Its Limit In Helping End Unemployment”, cried an article at the top of page 1. “The Road Committee had put men on wherever possible....The major part of the program having been completed and the funds available exhausted, it is now necessary to lay off many...”

A tough summer was predicted for **students** needing jobs to earn money to put themselves through college. “These youngsters, who are putting themselves through college by their own efforts, are ambitious and energetic. They are the ones who stand to profit by their education....And yet – ...when a college boy lands a summer job this year he will, in most cases, simply be standing in the way of some older man who needs the work much more; needs it to provide food for himself and his family.” So the editorial (June 3, 1930) suggests that college students do not take the tough, day-labor jobs away from family men.

An editorial on **May 20, 1930** reports “E.J. MacEwan, Secretary of the Morristown Chamber of Commerce...struck the keynote of the situation by saying ‘in order to actually eliminate unemployment, we must cut out the optimistic bunk that has been prevalent ever since the Hoover Conference in Washington and get down to the real solution of the problem.’ Mr. MacEwan also suggests that the State and National Governments should be willing and ready to spend some real money to work out a concrete employment solution instead of employing experts in propaganda to preach optimism.”

June 25, 1930, indicated some **optimism** on the business front in Morristown. “Business is better, according to a statement issued by the Chamber of Commerce today...” A number of businesses, in awnings, stationery, automobiles, jewelry, reported their volume of sales to be “ahead of last year.” On September 15, 1930, J. Glick & Sons on Speedwell Avenue took out a large ad thanking customers for their patronage of the new hardware and paint store, and announcing that their opening sale was extended.

An **unemployment** rate of 2% was reported in Morris County for April 1930, “not an alarming figure”. (June 20, 1930, p.4)

A lengthy editorial on June 30, 1930 tells of a man who had fainted on the job due to **malnutrition**. Nothing was in his lunch pail but “the skins of the potatoes which the man’s children had eaten for supper the night before.” His coworkers came to his aid and bought food for him and his family, despite their own need. But the *Daily Record* points out that “a great many people have too much pride to let anyone witness their little tragedies” and that welfare organizations are the way

to go. “We are all willing to help when a direct case meets our attention. It would be infinitely wiser to take such cases for granted and let an agency serve those of whom we never hear. Helpless valor very frequently can run parallel to our paths without crossing it.”

A similar theme appeared on Oct. 29, 1930. “It is the American custom to criticize those whose manners and customs are radically different from the average”, opened the editorial, describing how the Amish of Ohio heard of want in Cleveland. “This distressed them very much; for the **Amish**, who accept the Bible with great devotion, take literally the stipulation that it is wrong for a man to live in plenty when his brother is starving.” So they loaded up their wagons with their own produce, delivering it to a mission in the city for relief of the hungry at no charge. “ ‘By their fruits ye shall know them.’ And when you judge them on that basis, the Amish come off rather better than many of the rest of us.”

The regular column Washington Letter by Rodney Dutcher, NEA Service Writer, focused on **unemployment insurance** (July 11, 1930). Private efforts were being made to counteract standard industrial practice of letting workers go without a safety net. “Payment of a dismissal wage to workers discharged because of lack of work is increasing among employers, although the practice is still extremely limited in application....The Bureau [U.S. Bureau of Labor] found that there was a slowly growing recognition among some employers that they were responsible in large measure when workers were dismissed because of curtailed production, changes in production methods and other reasons over which workers have no control....the dismissal wage...may also have the effect of reducing unemployment in the individual plant in which it is in effect, by curbing any tendency on the part of the employment manager or foreman to discharge employes for insufficient reasons.....Some concerns give reduced pensions to employes laid off after a certain period of service, and pensions plans, mostly contributory, sometimes benefit employes who must be discharged for one reason or another before retirement age.”

Optimism that the turnaround was just around the corner clearly continued to be common, in industry and Chambers of Commerce, though other voices (such as the *Daily Record* in its April 12th and May 20th editorials) called for greater realism and effective measures.

The *Daily Record* subscribed to another regular column, by John K. Fitch of Fitch Stock Ratings and Fitch Bond Ratings. The August 13, 1930 column, p.6, declared “price cutting which has been prevalent in all lines is on the wane...marked progress will be made toward price stabilization...All of this means that the

perverted optimism, so prevalent in the early part of the reaction has been discarded, and industrial leaders now are facing squarely known conditions and adjusting their businesses accordingly.”

More “perverted **optimism**” was displayed in a September 15, p.3 article with a series of charts showing an alleged bottoming out in industrial activity, freight loadings, automobile output, coal output, steel activity, and new building; therefore the only way to go was up, “according to Colonel Leonard P. Ayers, vice-president of the Cleveland Trust Company and one of the country’s best-known business experts.” Oh, well, so much for experts!

A photograph in the August 18, 1930 issue shows a crowd of approximately 1500 people crowded together at the New York City Employment Bureau. “...only 40 could be accommodated with work. One of the unfortunates, a young girl, was soaked with rain after an hour’s wait in the open. She has been looking for a job for 18 months.” Soon Morris County would be experiencing similar scenes.

The plight of American **farmers** was addressed in an editorial of August 29, 1930, p. 4. “If we should suddenly restore bread to its old-time position of pre-eminence on the dinner table, says Mr. Stude [of Houston, Tex., president of the American Bakers Association], we would increase the domestic consumption of wheat by no less than 130,000,000 bushels a year...Before the war, Mr. Stude points out, the average American consumed an average of 5.30 bushels of wheat a year. At present the per capita average is only 4.26 bushels....When the war ended...people had got out of the habit of eating so much bread, and they never got back into it...Here then is a form of farm relief that everyone can share in.”
...except some people were having trouble putting even bread on the table.

Banks and building & loan associations advertised the safety and sure returns of investing in their companies. Both the Morris County Building & Loan Association and the Hanover Building and Loan Association promoted new series of stocks in September. A follow-up article on September 22 stated “Retail selling is a reliable barometer of generally diffused prosperity, and department store executives are sensitively quick to feel the public pulse and arrange their business accordingly. Their diagnosis of the prevailing economic distemper as one that has practically passed the crisis is most encouraging both to those who read the signs of the times thru roseate spectacles, and to the more conservative economists who believe in the accelerating momentum of the upward trend of commerce and industry. Once the latent energy of the enormous home market in the United States is let loose, no qualified observer would be surprised by a business recovery so speedy and so thorough as to compel the whole world to take wondering notice.

That is the American way.” Unfortunately this was another example of misplaced optimism; the Depression was only beginning to reach its stride.

Reflecting the economy, the *Daily Record* suddenly changed its look and approach in October, becoming less fanciful, more sober – and much less fun.

The Tax Collector’s list of **unpaid taxes** “is said to be extra large this year, partially due to the slump in business. Notices were sent to all those who were behind on June 1 but few responded to this extra call.” (October 3, 1930, p.1) The Community Chest also had trouble reaching their goal, though it eventually did. Most organizations “have...taken a cut in their quotas, some voluntarily. Owing to the increased number of calls for help on the central bureau for social service and the Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Children its quota has been raised \$2,000. This is the only agency which has been increased. In the first eight months of this year there have been already 788 families apply for help from that organization, and in all of last year there were only 262 who asked aid.” (October 7, 1930, p.1)

The *Daily Record* took the philosophical approach in an Oct. 9, 1930 editorial. “Prior to the October catastrophe of 1929, none of us bothered much about the whys and wherefores of things. The country was highly prosperous, and we took it for granted, as if fate had, by some benign decree, willed it that we of the United States were to be blessed beyond all other people simply because of our inherent goodness. That frame of mind is comfortable but not healthy...Everlasting expansion was to be the rule. Well, we know better now; and knowing better, we are in a more wholesome frame of mind. We can see defects in our economic structure that passed unnoticed before. We can see the flaws in some of our industrial and business practices in a way that we could not see them in the old days.”

Another astute **analysis of the crash** appeared on November 1, 1930. “There has been a good deal of agitation recently about the desirability of putting some sort of curb on the activities of spectators on the stock exchange who sell stocks short – who sell, that is, stocks which they do not own, in the expectation that the price will drop so that they will be able to buy, before they have to make delivery, at a lower price than that at which they bought...He is a gambler, pure and simple. He cares nothing about the condition of the country or the welfare of industry generally...But...He is not the only type of speculator whose influence is damaging to the country at large. The bull – the speculator who buys in the expectation of a rise – can be quite as harmful a factor, if not more so...For fully three years previous to October of 1929...Everyone was gambling – gambling on a continuous rise in prices. As an inevitable result, the prices of stocks went soaring

up out of all proportion to their true value...The market gave the appearance of perfect health, but was extremely sick under the surface. Naturally enough, a crash had to come. It came, and prices went tumbling.”

The tone was more cautionary on the 27th of October, warning against protective tariffs. “It has always been a point of pride with Americans that their country was more nearly a self-contained nation than any other on earth...Our wealth of natural resources is enormous, and the variety of things with which the land provides us is almost infinite...However, we are not quite as self-contained as we like to think. The current issue of *The Index*, a little magazine published by The New York Trust Company, points out that we are strictly dependent on foreign raw materials in a great many important fields. This is especially true in the steel industry.... Manganese ...Tungsten...Vanadium...Chromium ...Nickel...and tin.... And so it goes. Stop our import trade and the country would be crippled.”

The stars were gloomy again for October 28 (p.4): “The lunar transits bearing rule on this day point to many conflicting and disappointing events and circumstances. There is a menace of loss through litigation, speculation, bad contracts and unwise use of moneys in many directions.” Hard to go wrong with such a prediction, considering the times.

The Morristown Chamber of Commerce devised a “national **prosperity** plan” which was released to the public in the Oct. 29, 1930 Daily Record on p.1. “Requests would be made of all employed people to contribute 1 per cent of salary, wages or income per week for a six months’ period.” The money would be used to pay salaries of manual laborers, up to \$20 per week, “or just enough so the average family could provide food and heat during the cold weather”. “Control of these funds so raised would be left in the hands of each local municipal committee....The money raised in each municipality would be entirely spent in that municipality.” It was estimated that \$1,000 would be available per week to “provide 50 men with work for the next six months”, and proportionately more nation-wide. No doubt this was one of many plans proposed nationally to alleviate unemployment.

While nothing yet had come of the Chamber of Commerce’s National Prosperity Plan, “the Board of Freeholders is most anxious ... in relieving the present unemployment situation” by utilizing men in road repair. (Oct. 30, 1930, p.1) “an ordinance introduced at the Board of Alderman meeting last night...provides for the borrowing of \$20,000 for this work and the giving of jobs only to the heads of families who are in need.” (Nov. 8, 1930, p.1)

In **Dover**, “the Board of Aldermen...passed a measure stating that every man now unemployed and out of work in Dover may start work today as an employee of the town of Dover. This plan...was unanimously adopted... According to the provision in the new measure, each man put to work will be allowed to put in twenty eight hours a week, at the rate of 55 cent an hour. This would amount to \$15.40 a week, which is hardly a respectable living wage. The men will be kept on the town payroll for as long as the present conditions exist. It is estimated that there are 250 unemployed men in Dover at the present time. The number is increasing gradually and it may be necessary for the Board of Aldermen to make several new appropriations to stand the burden.” (Nov. 11, 1930, p.1)

President Hoover got wind of the Dover initiative and sent, through his personal secretary, “a message of approval and congratulations to the Mayor and Board of Aldermen.” “Sixty-five men had been given employment since last week, while thirty more men will be hired on Monday.” (November 14, 1930, p.1)

The **automobile industry** was as critical to the economy in the 1930’s as it is now. “The Retail Trade Bulletin of the Alexander Hamilton Institute presents a picture of the automobile trade which is a lot more encouraging than it appears to be on the surface. The bulletin points out that...In September of 1930...there were 223,00 cars made; in September of 1929 the total was 416,000...It is estimated that this year’s entire output will be around 3,500,000 whereas last year saw 5,358,000 cars put on the market....

Last year the motor manufacturers built too many cars. The market became glutted...This year...production has been right down at the minimum.... With the market swept clear of surplus cars, the manufacturers will...turn out no less than 5,000,000 cars in 1931. That...would be an immense stimulus to a whole-hearted trade revival.” (Nov. 11, 1930, p.6)

On the **November 15, 1930**, p.1, the Morristown Chamber of Commerce expressed **optimism** about the business climate and complimented local businesses for maintaining their stock of merchandise. “The main thing for us is to keep our eyes on our objective and push forward toward our business goal just as definitely as though we were in a normal state.” But most of the interview was devoted to chiding the ranks of the unemployed for not taking available jobs....”Due to some reason or other the unskilled class of unemployed have added to their normal ranks a large percentage of people who don’t want to be employed, although apparently they are looking for work....The other day we had a request for two laborers. Twelve men were interviewed before we could find two who would accept the job which required pick and shovel experience. All of the twelve had stated that they would do any kind of rough labor....We defy anyone to give us the actual number of unemployed who actually will take employment when it is offered....Out-of-

town solicitors coming to Morristown are very numerous, but when a straight commission proposition is suggested to the average applicant for a white collar job in Morristown, they refuse even to try it, and remain among the ranks of unemployed rather than to attempt to earn what they can as a commission salesman.”

Page 1 on Nov. 22 reported that 34 men were working under Morristown’s plan for **relieving unemployment**, out of 146 applicants. “Only men in actual need are being employed and each case is especially investigated to make sure that the emergency relief work will do the greatest good to the largest number.”

Madison now saw the need for “an officially appointed emergency Employment Committee...[to] work with the Settlement House...and in co-operation with the work that the Settlement House is now doing in employment.” At the time (Nov. 25, 1930. p.1) Madison had only identified two to four cases of families in need of employment.”

The Atlanta Chamber of Commerce was actively discouraging migrants from coming to the area and looking for work.. “STAY HOME”, they exhorted. “Do not come South expecting to get a job. It is not here....You will simply become dependent upon charity, and a burden upon the community.” (**November 20, 1930**, p.10)

At this time ads, some whole page in giant type, appeared in the newspaper urging local residents to do their bit to keep people employed and the local economy humming by shopping up a storm for the Christmas season. “A DECLARATION OF WAR against Unemployment” bellowed the Nov. 22 ad. “Steady business means steadier jobs and more of them”, said the Nov. 29 ad. Also Nov. 11, 1930; p.12, Nov. 21, p.17;Nov. 24, p.13; Nov. 25, p.11, Nov. 28.

The “Did you ever stop to think” column by Edson R. Waite of Shawnee, Okla reiterated the calls of the advertising: “...When the merchants stop advertising, the citizens stop buying. When the citizens stop buying, the merchants stop selling. When the merchants stop buying, the manufacturer stops making. When the manufacturer stops making, many people stop working.” etc. (Nov. 26, 1930, p.6)

The Witte-Richards’ Coal Company placed a large ad on Nov. 21, 1930, p.13, stating that they would “do all in our power to extend credit” to those in desperate need, though others should restrain their requests for credit as much as possible.

“...a measure of confidence restored in the stock market and prospects for eventual business recovery” was seen in a column by Degener & Co. on Nov. 29, 1930,

p.10. “While mainly of a technical nature, the persistent gain in the face of interior bank failures, the suspension of a moderate-sized New York underwriting house and the very uncertain relationship between the Chicago and Winnipeg wheat markets, was encouraging.” In hindsight, this was more unjustified optimism. And the “mob of Communists who attempted to invade the capitol with revolutionary banners” would have agreed that optimism was misplaced. (Dec. 1, 1930, p.1)

President Hoover’s annual message to Congress was published in the December 2, 1930 issue starting on page 1, and The Daily Record excerpted “high-lights” which were featured in a box on page 1, including “Economic wounds must be healed by the action of the cells of the economic body – the producers and consumers themselves.” “Each community and state should assume its full responsibility for organization of employment and relief of distress with that sturdiness and independence which built a great nation.” “We have a definite duty as a nation to see that no deserving person in our country suffers from hunger or cold.” As the newspaper article introducing the message pointed out, “The message was mainly devoted to the business situation and what can be done to improve it. More will be accomplished by cooperative action in communities themselves, he [the President] said, than by any legislative action or executive pronouncement.”

The Board of Freeholders hoped to cooperate with the Naval Department in constructing buildings “at the Lake Denmark Naval Arsenal as one means of giving several hundred men employment....Freeholder A. S. Kirkpatrick ... was authorized...to write to the Naval Department, and members of the Senate and House of Representatives urging...appropriations.” (Dec. 11, 1930, p.1)

At the end of 1930 the *Daily Record* once again reflected on the causes of the depression. They quoted “Senator Henrik Shipstead of Minnesota, in an article in the current Magazine of Wall Street”. “ ‘You will remember,’ writes the senator, ‘that in those years there was a good deal of talk about ‘profitless prosperity.’ I think that it was justified. The way I look at it, our prosperity has been more or less artificial and of the paper-profits variety for some years. Artificial prosperity feels about as good as real prosperity while it lasts, for many elements of the community, but its aftermath is not so pleasant.’ ” The Daily Record then paraphrases the senator: “in the period from 1925 to 1929...there was a good deal of unemployment...Nor is that all. Between 1923 and 1929 employment in the manufacturing industries fell off 10 per cent., and the total yearly wages in those industries dropped 4 per cent. in those six years. Yet 1929 was considered the peak year of prosperity!” (Dec. 22, 1930, p.6)

Two articles on the **effects of the depression** appeared the day before Christmas, both on page 1. Junkmen asked for relief from their license fee of \$25, saying that “the business depression had hit their business hard”. The Morristown Board of Aldermen “received a report from the Central Bureau of Social Service of the work it had done in co-operation with the town. Most of the men who applied were anxious and willing to work, the report said, although a few wouldn’t take the jobs because they never worked in the winter, couldn’t stand outdoor jobs or refused to do laboring work. In all 250 men applied and 79 were put on the payroll. Those with children were first employed and later those with other dependents such as sister or parents....”

And in the end-of-the-year column on Dec. 29 of “John K. Fitch, president of the Fitch Publishing Co., Inc. of New York, statisticians”, “Mr. Fitch arrives at the conclusion that so far as the United States is concerned, undue credit expansion is the antecedent of our troubles. The installment purchase business, the use of bank credit on an unprecedented scale in the securities and commodities markets, and over-expansion of small loans are mentioned specifically in his arraignment.” This was another way of describing the recklessness in the economy that the *Daily Record* bemoaned in editorial after editorial.

January through December 1931

The glow of the holiday season pushed articles about the depression off the pages of the Daily Record until mid-January. On January 12 an article on page 1 related “that the Chamber of Commerce will employ a full-time clerk to take care of the work of the Chamber’s Free Employment Bureau”, as “During the last three months this work has increased so greatly that...there was insufficient time to develop an aggressive campaign for placements. This also resulted in the many activities of the Chamber of Commerce being almost entirely curtailed in order to take care of the more important work of trying to find positions for the unemployed.”

The Morristown Board of Aldermen reported on January 24th that eighty men were currently working on “developing the Morristown parks...Mr. Bowden [Superintendent of Parks] said it would be necessary to make a few shifts so as to give additional applicants a chance. The men are now working five days a week.”

On January 15th an editorial agreed with the report of the Russell Sage Foundation that “urges strongly that the emergency employment committees set up all over the nation to deal with the present situation do not disband when the emergency is over.....Our chief fault in the past has been an eagerness to forget all about

depressions once they are past; and inconsequence we have never prepared for them in advance...”

And on **June 3, 1931** an editorial reiterated the above point. “People are beginning to realize that something fundamental must be wrong with our economic order if a depression like the present one can engulf it, and people are beginning to insist that the defect be set right. The nation is not going to be satisfied much longer with a process of muddling through. If we have an economic system that produces periods of distress every few years, we shall insist that the system be changed, instead of being content to devise relief measures after the damage has been done.”

An editorial on January 23rd discussed a proposed study by scientists at Yale University along “with a number of leading industrialists and engineers” to delve into **the nature of unemployment**. “Professor Elliott D. Smith of Yale...remarked “ ‘ Unemployment...is not a single disorder but a common symptom of many, among others of seasonal production, cyclical depressions and unabsorbed increase in productive efficiency.” The Daily Record approved, saying “Some such study as this undertaken at Yale is long overdue.”

A despairing melodramatic poem was published January 24th, “No Help Wanted”, by Anthony DeRugiero. Part of it reads “In the town of many riches/Bringing sufferings and many promises/Still, no help wanted, no help wanted./Men walk the streets in rags/Starving and begging for cash;/**Morristown, Oh Morristown** what shame is upon us/Still, no help wanted, no help wanted.”

The **Market Street Mission** was there, though, to succor the starving and homeless. On January 27, p.5 the newspaper reported that “During the past week the Mission has cared for more homeless and unemployed men, by furnishing lodgings and meals, than in any other similar period for many years past it being necessary to install additional sleeping facilities to meet the demand. The number cared for Sunday night being the largest number that has ever been housed in any one night during the history of the Mission. It was found necessary to place cots in the reading room and the chapel to take care of those who need help.”

An editorial of January 28th updated the editorial of November 11, 1930 on the automobile industry. “...the prosperity of the entire nation is so closely tied up with the prosperity of the automobile industry. A recent bulletin from the Bureau of Business Conditions of the Alexander Hamilton Institute makes this clear. This bulletin...points out: ‘The **curtailment of automobile production** in 1930 was sufficient by itself to cause a substantial business setback. The industry not only supports directly a larger number of workers, but it is a leading consumer of raw materials. It is estimated that 4,700,000 persons were dependent on the automobile

industry in 1929, or one out of every 10 gainfully employed.’ And The Daily Record concludes, “Considered from the viewpoint provided by those figures, the importance of a healthy automobile industry to the nation at large is obvious.”

Accountability for **business management** was the subject of an editorial on January 30, 1931. “...when one looks back at the record of bank failures during the past year, one is forced to the belief that some of these... would have been averted if the directors had known before hand that they would be held strictly accountable for the collapse of their business....one is impelled to wonder...if such a system should not apply to all large business corporations as well as to banks.” “All too often, under present conditions, corporate directors are little more than rubber stamps for the management. The law, of course, looks on them as representatives of the stockholders; but...this, very frequently, is not the case in the modern business world.”

Indeed, on April 6, p.1, we read that “the Linden National Bank and Trust Company and the State Bank of Linden which were closed Saturday, the former by national bank examiners and the latter by the State Department of Banking and Insurance”, were to be reopened. “...a group of financially responsible persons would take over the banks, put in enough money to insure the banks against shortage of ready cash and continue to operate.”

Morris County ratables were up around \$4,000,000 (January 31, p.1), so the county was weathering the early depression pretty well. Yet inhabitants were feeling the pinch. The article on February 7, 1931, p.1 tries to put a positive spin on the situation. “Proof that the Morristown Chamber of Commerce Free Employment Bureau is accomplishing excellent work in aiding the unemployment situation now prevelant and that the local bureau is one of the most popular agencies in the State is shown in a report compiled by Edwin J. MacEwan, executive secretary of the Chamber. At the present time there are 706 applications for employment now on file at the Chamber free employment bureau. Forty-three towns and cities, excluding Morristown, are represented in that total of applications....there are 451 applications for work from Morristown on file.....As quickly as the positions are filled, new applications are received....In the month of January, 49 persons, both male and female, were placed at work...” People were applying for jobs in agriculture, building and construction, clerical, labor, and domestic work.

Despite bank panics and closures around the country, “Trust Companies Magazine, the leading publication in the trust company field has just completed a survey from the banking authorities of 48 states...and from the Comptroller of the Currency, showing with astonishing unanimity that the beneficiaries of estate or trust funds,

administered by trust companies and national banks, have not suffered the loss of a single dollar through failure of any bank or trust company. The survey acquires additional importance from the fact that it takes in the period of business depression in 1930 during which 1,326 banking suspensions have occurred.....'It must be frankly admitted that when this survey...was undertaken, serious misgivings were entertained as to the consequences of the more than 6,500 banking failures or suspensions of the past 10 years.....The proof now at hand shows that, with but few exceptions, the failed or suspended institutions which carried the words 'trust company' in their corporate titles, had neither trust departments or had made no attempt to assume trust responsibility.' ”
(February 10, 1931, p.2)

Morristown Trust Co. advertised as one of the trust companies that could be trusted. (p.12, June 3, 1931) Opposite a list of failed investment schemes over the years, the bank contrasted its stability: “A Trust Fund under our experienced and prudent management will protect your heirs from speculative temptations and risks. It will insure safety of principal and a regular income free from the problems and cares of investment.”

An editorial on **February 10, 1931** addresses the **dance marathon** phenomenon of the depression years, with a tone of mild disapproval. “For the last 500 hours, they [two dancers] said the other day at the Chicago dance hall where they are doing a marathon, they have been dancing without rest periods....they have been trying to keep step to the music for 1,343 hours.....The people who participate aren't to be censured. They are merely engaging in an occupation to earn some money. Those who sponsor the everlasting rhythm exercises by no means compel anyone to take part.....”

Was buying on the installment plan a cause of the depression? “Did it lead to bankruptcies and misery?” “The Magazine of Wall Street...contains a report ...which indicates that installment buying stood the strain remarkably well. It finds that during 1930 the installment buyers managed to liquidate the debts they had incurred in the boom year of 1929. The number of 'repossessions' and final losses was no greater than the average for the preceding five years. So far...there has not been a single failure among the thousand or more companies engaged in handling installment purchase paper. Installment sales are now going on, just as briskly in proportion to the total volume of trade as before the crash.” (February 20, 1931, editorial)

The trade deficit and protective tariff was the subject of an editorial on February 26, 1931. “An extremely sane discussion of the relation of the business depression to the nation's foreign trade was given recently before the Cleveland Chamber of

Commerce by John McHugh, chairman of the executive committee of the Chase National Bank of New York, the largest bank in the world. Part of it is worth reproducing here. '...Today we are seeing that if we do not buy we cannot sell. Our foreign bond market is congested and the interest service on our foreign debt is heavy. The foreigner must use such dollars as he can get, first to pay interest and amortization on the debt to us, and then only what is left is he free to use in buying our goods. We intensified his difficulty in this matter by raising our tariff in 1930. The time has surely come to forget whether we are Democrats or Republicans, and to think of this matter in business terms. This is no time to advocate free trade, nor to advocate the sweeping away of the whole protective tariff system....But it is time to consider downward adjustments designed to permit the foreigner to sell enough goods in our market to put him in possession of dollars that in turn will enable him to carry out the volume of exports which is necessary to keep a balanced situation in the United States.....' ”

On **March 9, 1931**, on the page Women's Organization Doings, appeared an article about **New Jersey state welfare bills**. “The Morris County League of Women Voters has taken the initiative in opening up for discussion in the county the welfare bills recommended by the State Pension Survey Commission.....These measures provide for a county welfare board composed of outstanding citizens, including a member of the board of chosen freeholders and the county adjuster. This board is appointed by the Freeholders and serves without pay, and a director of welfare...is appointed by the welfare board to take over all poor relief work now handled by the municipalities through the overseers of the poor.....The second bill...makes such welfare boards mandatory.....Provision for old age security has also been recommended by this [Pension Survey] commission, in the form of a bill in the Legislature. Representatives of various local organizations [many organizations listed]...have been specially invited to the meeting, and it is hoped that there will be participation in discussion...”

Alleviation of unemployment, and a criticism of the economic system that leads to unemployment, is the subject of a lengthy heartfelt editorial on March 24, 1931. “An Omaha judge...has arranged for several hundred [unemployed workers] to go to various Nebraska farms, working throughout the winter at farm chores in return for their room and board... In this way approximately 100 men a month have been kept from hunger and cold throughout the winter.....However, it is quite possible to pour out too much praise for this scheme... The judge is to be commended...but...the whole thing, at best, is only a pitiable makeshift. That is the trouble with all of these plans for unemployment relief. When they work out well, we are apt to get too satisfied with them – apt to feel that because they are working so well we need not worry very much about the general question of unemployment....The problem of the unemployed...is probably the biggest

problem the nation faces today; and it is not a problem that will be ended when prosperity returns and the men go back to work. For our present economic system seems to call for recurring waves of unemployment. It seems to be fated...that poverty and hunger shall descend on millions of Americans every eight or 10 years. But because we have a few years of prosperity between these depressions, and because, when the depressions come, clever stunts are devised to ward off actual starvation, we manage to pretend that the problem is not, after all, so very pressing....” (see also Jan. 15, 131 and June 3, 1931)

Only three days later (**March 27, 1931**) another editorial explored the consequences of unemployment. “It is worth while to look at a study of the effects of unemployment on 50 American families, made by the magazine, *The Family*, which is published by the Family Welfare Association of America....’The center of interest in these 50 households...was food...After a shortage of funds compelled public relief agencies to stop aiding these families, it was found that many of them were living on bread, potatoes, coffee and weak soup. This was especially a common diet for children....A scattering of part-time jobs kept the families from actual starvation. Their incomes, over a period of months, averaged from \$5 to \$15 a week per family. Rent and insurance were the first obligations allowed to lapse. Thirty-two of the families were from one to 16 months rent in arrears; and this was despite the fact that their rent averaged only about \$15 a month. Nine families had been evicted. The three families that had been buying their homes had either lost them or had received warning notices. Incidentally, there were more native-born than foreign-born families in this group, and some of the wage-earners had been highly skilled workers whose pay checks normally ranged from \$60 to \$75 a week....’ “

In yet another follow-up to this theme, the newspaper stated in an editorial on April 21, 1931, “We must have conditions in which an honest, capable and industrious worker will always be sure of steady work and a steady income.”

Local people and companies pitched in to help those in distress, as we read in an **April 6, 1931** article on page 1. “The employees of the Jersey Central Power and Light have helped many families through a special unemployment fund. Several families in dire distress were given food, coal, medicine and clothing...The Park Bakery for weeks baked about 50 extra loaves of bread every Saturday to give to families referred by the bureau [Central Bureau of Social Service] and churches. Hipson’s Dairy has been giving away gallons of skimmed milk to families with little children...Epstein’s, Greenberger’s and Salny Bros. have sent children’s clothing which was greatly needed this winter....”

Were wage reductions the answer for economic recovery? The editorial on April 22, 1931 discussed this issue. “In the depression of 1920-21, business and political leaders were almost unanimous in demanding that labor ‘be deflated’. We still felt, in those days, that it was somehow abnormal and improper for the factory hand to be buying luxuries. We still felt that the wage earner ought, normally, to be just a jump or two ahead of poverty....[in] the last decade...The country at large has accepted the notion that prosperity is not worth having unless it means prosperity for the mechanic, the weaver and the lathe-tender. Our conception of the workingman’s rights has broadened enormously....Cutting wages may reduce production costs; it also, inevitably, reduces purchasing power as well.”

A May 20, 1931 editorial followed up on the subject of **wage deflation**. “One by one, the deflationists are getting vocal....One of the sanest criticisms of this attitude was provided recently by Mr. Glenn Frank, president of the University of Wisconsin....’The inflationists of yesterday brought the stock market to collapse. The deflationists of today will bring our entire business system to collapse if they succeed in seducing the majority of American business men, bankers and industrialists to their point of view. ‘ ”

Radical ideas were becoming more common even in Congress. Regarding blame for the depression, “Senator James Couzens...insists that it is not a question of ‘who’ is to blame, but a question of ‘what’ – in other words, that the trouble does not spring from the wickedness of perverted individuals, but from a basic force.....’all those who are actuated by unrestrained greed share in the responsibility.’ “ The Daily Record editorial on **May 12, 1931** says “This is coming close to stepping over the line into the field of the **Socialists and the Communists**. It is one of the basic tenets of their creed.” But then the editorial adds, “And we can agree with it without in any way adopting socialism or communism. The whole business is worth looking into.....The most encouraging thing about the whole situation today is the fact that it is stimulating men to question things that never before were doubted. Greed – or, to put it more simply, the desire to make big profits – does not seem to be quite as beneficent a force in human affairs as it used to appear.”

A banker who went the extra mile is lauded in the editorial on May 16, 1931. “Last year a bank in Vineland failed. School children lost \$37,000 Colonel Evan O. Kimble, the head of another financial institution in the same city, knew...those youngsters...would come to the decision that the wisest thing to do is to spend your money before something happens to it. Colonel Kimble realized that boys and girls who held this attitude couldn’t train for the best citizenship. Therefore, from...his own bank, he dragged out the money bags and restored to each child the sum that he had lost....the children...are going to realize that fair

play and generosity still make up a big part in life....There are those who will say that the bank acted as a benefactor because it is counting on the profits which will accrue from the new accounts which will be opened. But such accounts will be small, at best.....”

The dole was the subject of the editorial on May 19, 1931 – a crutch in England, but “England has missed actual revolution, in the years since 1918, by an incredibly narrow margin – the margin of the despised dole. With all its evils, the dole has kept the nation from collapse....The ordinary man is entitled to a job. If his country’s economic system is so poorly constructed and so badly synchronized that he cannot get one, he is entitled to some sort of pittance that will keep him and his family from starvation....”

Unemployment was political. “G.O.P. to Offer Own Solution to Unemployment”, headlined an article on page 1, May 21, 1931. “The Republican platform builders...believe that relief should come first from the municipalities and the townships, with the state contributing its proportionate share to alleviate the situation. The local units of government, in their opinion, are better equipped to deal with the emergency than the federal government....It is hoped to have a constructive declaration that will offset any Democratic attack blaming the Republican for ‘hard times’.”

Should married women take priority over single women in the job market? “Thousands of girls and women who work in factories are doing it, not to earn pin money or to achieve a feeling of independence, but to support their families while their husbands remain unemployed....In normal times it may be no more than fair to give the preference to single women in passing out jobs. But times right now are far from normal.” So married women should take priority over single, concluded the paper. (May 21, 1931, editorial)

The economy was suffering, people were out of work, but “Exceptionally fine prices were obtained by both the Freeholders and Board of Education yesterday afternoon when bids for the sale of bonds were opened. At the Freeholders’ meeting, where \$1,000,000 worth of bonds were disposed of, the prices were said to have been the best ever obtained by a county in New Jersey.” (May 28, 1931, p.1) Bankers still had faith in the stability of the county’s finances.

Bamberger’s took a full-page ad (May 29, 1931, p.3) to promote their lower prices, based on the dramatically lower prices of raw materials such as cotton, rayon, wool, silk, and silver. This was followed by another full-page ad (page 7) on June 2nd saying, to persuade the buyer, “we don’t expect you to spend your money for altruistic reason, even though you will be glad that your buying helps

create jobs. The real reason you're going to spend money now is because you are going to get extraordinary bargains..."

The Morristown Chamber of Commerce proposed a plan to offer the unemployed **plots of land to grow their own vegetables**. But the plan was contingent on their being "vacant land owned in Morristown or in the immediate neighborhood that would be donated for gardening purposes by the owners...Whether or not the plan is put through depends on the amount of land that is offered and the number of applicants for these garden plots." (June 9, 1931, p.1)

"Pensions for the Needy" is the headline of an editorial on **June 9, 1931**, a discussion of married women in the job market and of the necessity, in the future, "of giving money from the public treasury to people who are unable to support themselves without help," furthering the discussion of May 19, 1931 about the dole and of May 21, 1931 about working women. "After the World War various states began to pay pensions to widows who were unable to support their children...The Children's Bureau of the Department of Labor...found that on the average only about a third of the families aided under these pension laws get as much as is necessary for bare existence." The newspaper concedes that women who work are "in most cases...entirely or partially supporting a family" and that "in some parts of the country...men's wage scales are based on the assumption that either the wife or...children will also be working..." "Direct payments to the needy from the public still are going to increase, not diminish. We might just as well make up our minds to it."

Competition for jobs was at a peak, as a front-page article on June 11, 1931 reveals. "Over 40 Firms After Contract for Construction Physician's House at Shongum Sanatorium" was the subhead. "For general construction a total of 17 bids were received...Eleven bids...for the plumbing contract...eleven...for the heating work...Only three...received for the electrical work contract..."

The stars were particularly malevolent for June 17, 1931: A day of disturbance, disruption and agitation is indicated...These dire situations may be suddenly precipitated and bring about far-reaching condition of unrest and anxiety in both business and personal affiliations....", though it was really just another bad day during the Great Depression.

DEFICIT ! "The threat of a huge deficit in the federal treasury has done more than call the public's attention to the decline in federal income due to the business depression. It has strikingly emphasized the tremendous increase in the government that has taken place during the past decade or two. In 1911...the federal government spent a little less than \$700,000,000. In the fiscal year now

ending the government has spent almost \$4,500,000,000....One item that bulks large in this increase is the practice of spending money from the federal treasury on state projects. Uncle Sam...now contributes around \$150,000,000 a year to state activities. Two decades ago such contributions came to only \$8,000,000. Many thinly-populated states receive far more from the federal treasury than they pay back into it in the form of taxes.” But all benefit. “State lines...are not water-tight boundaries. We do not live in isolation....” (**June 16, 1931** editorial)

John K. Fitch, president of the Fitch Publishing Co., Inc., financial statisticians” disputes the value of government expenditures, and argues against increased taxation that supports those expenditures, in his column on June 22, 1931, p.10. He writes, “Present onerous taxes are the result of a heavy increase in government expenditures during the years preceding the depression and of their steady expansion during the depression for financing ultimately needed construction work in efforts to reduce unemployment. This present increased construction program is a reversal of the traditional policy in depressions of reducing expenditures on construction work....efforts toward reduction will be slow of fruition....Encouragement is...to be had in the fact that Washington...is taking active measures toward retrenchment, even to the extent of letting up on its advocacy of public improvements as a panacea for depression ills.”

Hard times call for new measures, the *Daily Record* editorial argued in an editorial on June 17, 1931. “It is a fairly safe bet that some of the most radical speaking and planning of the coming decade is going to be indulged in by the country’s most fervent conservatives....Obviously it is the iron-ribbed conservative who has the greatest stake in the existing social and economic order. It is he who can be counted on to take the strongest measures to prevent a change in the direction of communism or socialism. How is he going to do it? Not, in the long run, by chanting over and over again the wearisome refrain that ‘conditions are fundamentally sound.’ Not by calling out the police to club the heads of dissatisfied men who can’t get the jobs they want. Not by insisting that business always has and always must run in cycles. He will do it, eventually, by making such changes in the machinery of production and distribution as will ensure to the ordinary men a chance to have steady work at good pay throughout his lifetime...To do that will take some very radical measures....He will adopt them because he will realize that there is no other way of saving the form of society that he wants to preserve. He will become a radical...to preserve and justify his conservatism. If he doesn’t the things he is so anxious to conserve are very apt to get knocked out from under him.”

The theme of repeating the past if changes weren’t made in the economic system, and of the psychological effects of the depression, was addressed once again in an

editorial on **June 26, 1931**. “The man who has lost his job...may lose the equity in his home. He may be forced to move into a less desirable neighborhood, or live in crowded quarters. He may have to let his insurance lapse. He will undoubtedly get saddled with a huge load of debt. Plans to give his children college educations may have to be given up...he undergoes a loss of self-confidence and self-reliance. He has lost, forever, that feeling of security that is essential to a contented life. In the future, even though times are good, he will never be quite free from the spectre of fear...that some day there may be another depression that will...plunge him into the depths of despondency again....if we...fail to insist that our business and political leaders do something to prevent a recurrence, there will be another depression in a few years, and all of this misery will be repeated. The ‘business cycle’ that we hear so much about is a frightfully expensive thing – expensive not only in dollars, but in suffering for millions of human beings.”

Another editorial cries out for a 10-year plan to dig the country out of the depths and assure its future prosperity. “Just what the details of such a plan might be is a matter for future discussion.” Without a plan, “We shall recover from this depression whether we lay our plans wisely or not; but if we let ourselves drift as we have in the past, we shall bump into another depression in a matter of eight or 10 years just as surely as the Lord made little green apples. And it all so unnecessary! Surely, no country on earth ever enjoyed the natural advantages that America enjoys today...is there anything lacking, except an intelligent plan that would insure the best use of these blessings?” (June 27, 1931)

Page 1 of the June 29, 1931 *Daily Record* featured a letter from the mayor of Morristown, Clyde Potts. “...the Brookside Reservoir is now substantially completed...**it is necessary for the Town to lay off men**...about fifty or more men will be thrown out of work....I am asking the citizens of Morristown who have any work to do on their property or any repairs or renewals about their homes to be made that they make them now so as to continue these men in some remunerative employment whereby they can take care of their families.