

TEACHER'S GUIDE  
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MISSION 5: "Up from the Dust"

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**Fearing Socialism and Communism in the New Deal**

*The New Deal had many critics. Some feared that the dramatic increase in government intervention in the economy would lead to communism, or that Roosevelt's power would lead to fascism. Since the 19th century, some Americans feared that socialism or communism would upset the nation's capitalist system and threaten American liberty. These fears had been especially strong since the Red Scare following World War I. The rise of dictators such as Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, and Tojo in the 1920s and 1930s added new worries about the threat of fascism. (This letter was reproduced with all of the author's original spelling, syntax, and grammar.)*

Hornell, New York March 7, 1934

My Dear Senator:

It seems very apparent to me that the Administration at Washington is accelerating its pace towards socialism and communism... Everyone is sympathetic to the cause of creating more jobs and better wages for labor; but, a program continually promoting labor troubles, higher wages, shorter hours, and less profits for business, would seem to me to be leading us fast to a condition where the Government must more and more expand its relief activities, and will lead in the end to disaster to all classes. I believe that every citizen is entitled to know the policy of the Government, and I am so confused that I wish you would write me and advise me whether it is the policy of this Administration, of which you are a very important part, to further discourage business enterprise, and eventually set up a program which eliminates private industry and effort, and replaces it with Government control of industry and labor,— call it what you will: socialism, fascism, or communism, or by any other name. I am not addicted to annoying public office holders with correspondence, but if there are any private rights left in this country, then I would appreciate an early reply to this letter, so that I may take such action as is still possible, to protect myself and family. With kindest personal regards,

Yours truly, W.L.C. [male]

WLC:JFE

U.S. Senator Robert F. Wagner Senate Building  
Washington, D.C

Source: McElvaine, Robert S., ed., *Down & Out in the Great Depression: Letters from the Forgotten Man* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 150.

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