

### **Letters to Eleanor Roosevelt from Ordinary Citizens (1936, 1938)**

Americans held a range of opinions about Franklin Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt, and the New Deal. Many people wrote to the Roosevelts and to other members of the government, expressing their opinions. Some writers thought that the Roosevelts and the New Deal were saving the nation from ruin. Some went so far as to call President Roosevelt a "saint." Other writers disapproved of the Roosevelts' views, which they called socialist or Communist. They thought that the government was being taken over by revolutionaries.

People whom the New Deal was meant to help wrote many of the letters to the President and his wife. These letter writers were often the unemployed, farmers who could no longer afford to pay their debts, the elderly, ruined business-people, and others who believed in the Roosevelts' concern for ordinary people.

**A.**

Anderson County Schools  
Clinton, Tennessee  
January 26, 1936

Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt  
Washington, D.C.

My dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

You may think I am a very insignificant person to be writing to a person of your standing and ability but by reading your article and hearing your talks I know you are real and have an interest in people even my dear little needy boys and girls of the mountain schools.

I am Rural Supervisor of schools in my county. I have forty schools to supervise. Due to insufficient clothing and food many are unable to attend schools.

I wish it were possible for you to see some of the conditions. It is not uncommon for a child to have but one dress or shirt. They have to stay at home the day the mother laundries [launders] them.

I am just wishing that in some of your groups that it would be possible to interest them in our needs. The Save the Children Fund, with headquarters in New York, has helped me some. Many children of my schools would be unable to attend school had it not been for this organization.

I hope you will not consider me rude for writing. I have my heart in the work. I realize a hungry or a cold child cannot learn too much.

Yours very truly,  
C. B. S.

**B.**

Sikeston, Missouri  
January 20, 1938

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

I am writing this letter in hopes that you will answer in my favor.

My father H. C. has been in bed from a stroke for almost a year. We have no money and my brother works but makes \$3.00 a week and there are eight in our family.

My step-mother is very good to me and I try to help her. She takes in washings and I have to walk for six or eight blocks and then carry the washings home. I have to go of a morning before school and it has been very cold here. If you could send me a bicycle to ride when I go after washings for her I shall appreciate it. I am in eighth grade at school and work very hard to make passing grades. The Principal of the school bought two of my sisters and me a pair of slippers so we would not have to stay at home. If you would do this for me I shall be able to help my step-mother more. If you send me one I would like a girls bicycle. I am about 4 feet 3 inches tall so if you send me one you can judge as to what size.

Loving and appreciating—  
A. L. C.

### **Review Questions**

1. Why were some Americans enthusiastic about President Roosevelt's policies while others expressed serious reservations about them?
2. *How do you think the letter writers (in A and B) would have described Eleanor Roosevelt's personality?*
3. *Do you think that the writers of these letters still had faith in the U.S. system of government and in capitalism? Why or why not?*
4. *Considering these letters, how would you describe Eleanor Roosevelt's contributions to her husband's administration?*