

Harry S. Truman: Statement by the President Upon Signing the Employment Act.

I HAVE SIGNED today the Employment Act of 1946. In enacting this legislation the Congress and the President are responding to an overwhelming demand of the people. The legislation gives expression to a deep-seated desire for a conscious and positive attack upon the ever-recurring problems of mass unemployment and ruinous depression.

Within three years after the First World War, we experienced farm foreclosures, business failures, and mass unemployment. In fact, the history of the last several decades has been one of speculative booms alternating with deep depression. The people have found themselves defenseless in the face of economic forces beyond their control.

Democratic government has the responsibility to use all its resources to create and maintain conditions under which free competitive enterprise can operate effectively-conditions under which there is an abundance of employment opportunity for those who are able, willing, and seeking to work.

It is not the Government's duty to supplant the efforts of private enterprise to find markets, or of individuals to find jobs. The people do expect the Government, however, to create and maintain conditions in which the individual businessman and the individual job seeker have a chance to succeed by their own efforts. That is the objective of the Employment Act of 1946.

The major provisions of this important legislation can be briefly summarized.

1. The Act declares that it is "the continuing policy and responsibility of the federal Government ... to coordinate and utilize all its plans, functions, and

resources for the purpose of creating and maintaining . . . conditions under which there will be afforded useful employment opportunities, including self-employment, for those able, willing, and seeking to work..." The Congress by this declaration has accepted a great responsibility.

2. The Congress has placed on the President the duty of formulating programs designed to accomplish the purpose of the Act. In signing this Act, I accept this responsibility, which I believe is in line with the responsibility placed on the President by the Constitution. This task is so great that I can perform it only with the full and unqualified cooperation of all who are sincerely interested in the general welfare inside and outside the Government. Making this Act work must become one of the prime objectives of all of us: citizens generally, industry, labor, and agriculture, State and local governments, and the Federal Government.

3. The Act includes a significant provision that will facilitate cooperation between the Executive and the Congress in the formulation of policies and programs to accomplish the objectives of the Act. It establishes a joint Congressional Committee consisting of seven Members of the Senate and seven Members of the House. This committee is given an assignment of great scope and the highest importance.

4. The Act establishes in the Executive Office of the President a Council of Economic Advisers, composed of three members to be appointed by the President with the consent of the Senate. The new Council will be an important addition to the facilities available for preparing economic policies and programs. In carrying on this work, I expect the fullest cooperation between the Council, the Cabinet, and the several divisions of the Executive Office.

I am happy that the Senate adopted this legislation unanimously, the House of Representatives by a large majority. The result is not all I had hoped for, but I congratulate Members of both Houses and their leaders upon their constructive and fruitful efforts.

The Employment Act of 1946 is not the end of the road, but rather the beginning. It is a commitment by the Government to the people--a commitment to take any and all of the measures necessary for a healthy economy, one that provides opportunities for those able, willing, and seeking to work. We shall all try to honor that commitment.

Note: The Employment Act of 1946 is Public Law 304, 79th Congress (60 Stat. 23).

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