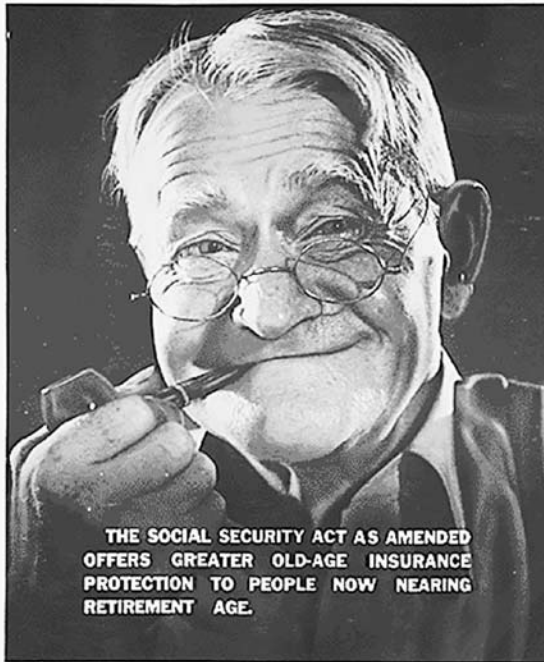


## DOCUMENT 4: THE NEW DEAL AND ELDERLY AMERICANS

### **MORE SECURITY FOR THE AMERICAN FAMILY**



FOR INFORMATION WRITE OR CALL AT THE NEAREST FIELD OFFICE OF THE  
**SOCIAL SECURITY BOARD**

During the Depression, many elderly Americans lost their life savings. As a result, many called for some form of “old age insurance” that would help elderly Americans survive when they no longer worked.

#### **Social Security poster, 1930s**

Courtesy of the Franklin D. Roosevelt  
Library Digital Archives  
<http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/>

Mancelona, Mich  
Aug 6 1934

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

I am writing to you to ask you to help me and my old Father to live I am in a farm which he owns and has planted or farmed all he was able to do we havnt any stock nothing to feed them until his corn is through growing we have a fuw chickens this is what I would like to ask of you and the President if I could have a small pinsion each month so we could not starve my father is seventy six to old to work at the Antriim Co furnace I cant go away and leave him alone for work and to stay here in such poverty I am so disturbed trying to know what to do I could write more of this but I think both you and the big boss meaning our President will understand:  
Thank you

Mrs. E.R.  
Mancelona, Michigan

Source: McElvaine, pp.100-101

My Dear Mrs Roosevelt:

Akron, Ohio  
February 1936

I thought I would write a letter hoping you would find time to read it, and if you thought it was worth answering it, I would be glad of any advice you would care to give me. A few weeks ago, I heard your talk over the air, on the subject of the Old age pension, and I got to thinking what a blessing it would be to my mother, if it was possible for her to receive that pension, if the bill should pass. My mother has been in this country since April 1914 but she has never made herself a American Citizen, as she was sixty years old when she came here, and now she is eighty...

...I thought as long as I lived there was no need to worry about her being taken care of, but I never dreamed of a depression like we have had well it has changed the whole course of our lives we have suffered, and no one knows but our own family...and we have had the awfulest time trying to get the bare necessary things in life.

I am in no position to do the right thing for mother, I cant give her anything but her living but I thought if it was possible for her to get that pension it would be like a gift from heaven, as in all the years she has been in this country she has never had a dollar of her own...

Mrs. Roosevelt you might think I have lots of nerve writing to you when you have so much to attend to but I could not help admiring you for the splendid way you talked about the old people of this nation I feel sorry for all of them, they seem to be forgotten, and most young people think they have had there day and should be glad to die. but this is not my idea, I think that their last few years should be made as pleasant for them as possible....Well whither my mother ever gets anything or not, I hope all the other old people that is intilted to it gets it soon, because there is nothing sadder than old people who have struggled hard all there lives to give there family a start in life, then to be forgotten, when they them self need it most...

Yours Respectfully,  
Mrs. J.S.  
Akron, Ohio

Source: McElvaine, pp.99-100

Dear Mr. President:

Along with my brethren of the clergy I wish to reply to your courteous letter asking our contribution of thought for the welfare of the nation.

Conditions are much better among the people whom I serve and whom I observe [in] this section. Practically all of the jobless in our large congregation are again employed. The unemployment situation is much better throughout our community. There is a new spirit of optimism and I feel with others that perhaps the depression conditions are passing.

Some kind of an old age pension is becoming absolutely necessary. Medical science is enabling people to live twenty years longer than they did a century ago. The machine age is creating technological unemployment which makes it impossible seemingly for all people to work. The old people are the ones who are squeezed out first because they are the least desirable of the workers. I find that it is hard for my people who are past fifty years of age to find reemployment if they are jarred loose from the economic order. Something must be done to meet this actuality. The Townsend Plan is fantastic and impossible. I bid you God-speed in the working out of a workable plan.

Economic security must be achieved. Our present system of alternate cycles of prosperity and depression is demoralizing to the whole social order and tragic for the vast area of our population who do not have large enough income to develop a savings account....

....Wishing you health, joy and good success in the high office which has been give you, I am

Cordially and respectfully,  
Jesse H. Baird, Pastor  
First Presbyterian Church  
Oakland, CA  
October 19, 1935

Source: New Deal Network--<http://newdeal.feri.org/index.htm>