

# The worst hard time by timothy egan

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The Worst Hard Time by Timothy Egan Presently, as many people enjoy the beauty of the prairie either in the north or in south, they fail or do not understand that a big proportion of those plains are consequently modern era ecological disaster. It is common to hear people talk about " the Dust Bowl or " the Dirty ' 30s". This is where Timothy Egan in his non-fiction book The Worst Hard Time basis his book, i. e., on the historical 1930 Dust Bowl. In his book, Egan critically examines the origin and the consequences of the Dust Bowl. This book critically evaluates this dust ball and does not ignore the economic and physical effects while still touching one lives lost and lives of the survivors. In reference to The Worst Hard Time, the Dust Bowl hit a wide plain ranging from Oklahoma panhandles and Texas, extending to the southeastern Colorado and western bit of Kansas to borders of Nebraska. The Oklahoma panhandle was referred to as " no mans land". Egan writes that, " Anybody who lived in No Man's Land for long knew about nature's capricious power.... It was abusive, a beater, a snarling son of a bitch, and then it would forgive and give something back" (Egan 76). The white settlers found the native Americans living a nomadic way of life and came along with alternative land use. The white settler drove out the Native Americans who were nomads and later drove out the others from their homestead and began to grow crops by clearing the prairie grasses The clearing of the prairie grass was the beginning of what would be a national disaster. Initially the farmers earned great prices catalyzed by the high demand from the WWI. This high demand led to more acres of the great plains being cleared as more settlers flocked in to make quick money, it is this demand that resulted to inventions of tractor. 1929, October marked the black Friday as

the American economy began to collapse. Considering that 25% of the Americans worked in the farms, this would be a disaster since these farmers would have less purchasing power as the supply exceeded the demand on the market. In 1930 summer, a boom wheat harvest was realized but the market prices were 50% below the production prices. The ecological disaster occurred as the economy could not manage the clearing of the Prairie grass. Though there were economic activities, rain was cyclic and drought was common, hence the area was referred to as Great American Desert. In 1930, there was uncommon long drought that did not clear all the vegetation, but it was catalyzed by human activity. According to Egan, tractors did what had never occurred in the entire history of the southern plains. He notes, " They had removed the native prairie grass, a web of perennial species evolved over twenty thousand years or more, so completely that by the end of 1931 it was a different land" (ibid 101). an academic research revealed that study by 13 million acres of cultivated land were extremely eroded prior to the drought calcifying the soil, however the biggest cause of the Dust Blow was farmers negligence. It is concluded that the drought added more injury to the already eroded soil in which the prairie grass was acting as the plain's refinement. It is the prairie that held the soil together against the strong wind hailstorm, drought. Meanwhile the prairie able to overcome the adversity when the millions of acres of land were left uncovered, they blew up to the sky. The worst Dust Blow occurred on 1935, April 14; however, the numerous Dust Blows had devastating effects. Men could not shake hands due to the high voltage of static electricity while all metallic gadgets were shielded with cloth to avoid shock. Inhaling dust was inevitable for animals

and human yet the dust was accompanied with silica from prairie, which is lethal as it accumulates and causes silicosis. Egan notes " But it takes years to build up. In the High Plains, doctors were seeing a condition similar to silicosis after just three years of storms. ... By the mid-1930s, a fourth condition, dust pneumonia, was rampant. It was one of the biggest killers" (ibid 173). The years of Dust Blow devastated the towns and families economically, emotionally and physically. There was vast internal migration. In 1936, a Nebraska farmer noted, " July saw the worst month (so far) of the worst year ever" (ibid 247). It is inevitable to note that the Dust Bowl caused deaths to both the animals and the human beings. The farmers could not farm and lived on what they had saved and when their stock was exhausted, some had to eat tumbleweeds. Eventually, the all present dust slowed the economic growth of US. The US government authorized a study and on August 1938, the Great Plains Drought Area Committee report was issued to the government. The report clearly stated that the Dust Bowls were not driven by climatic change but laid blame on the federal government. Since the government " kept land allotments low and required that a portion of each should be plowed, is now seen to have caused immeasurable harm,... limiting an individual holding to 160 acres, was on the western plains almost an obligatory act of poverty"(ibid 268). The then president, Roosevelt, established several bodies to ensure conservation of soil and crops through adoption of several policies. The policies formulated and implemented guaranteed soil conservation and created jobs for the citizens in the hit areas. The soil erosion prevention strategies that included planting of windbreaks and the shelterbelts played a key role in restoring the present

day prairie. Roosevelt also put in place policies such as subsidies to farmers and paying farmers in order to practice good agricultural practices. The Dust Bowl produced positive economical and political effects and the residual restoration of the Prairies. In general the polices adopted to control the Dust Bowl were the best at the time taking into consideration that the government was faced with multi-facet challenges. The economy was collapsing; there was no farm production while many people were jobless. Faced with these challenges, Roosevelt's government adopted the best policies that remain in historical records for the US generations. The Dust Bowl should be used as a reference in the US history since its impacts touched all sectors of the economy. The US and the other economies should clearly monitor the man's activities to avoid such a catastrophe. The economic impact of the was great since agricultural productions stopped temporarily and food shortage and joblessness become an issue. The lives lost during the catastrophe should be a reference point to all the global citizens that they need to be cautious while at the same time controlling global warming. It is not a doubt that Egan is an accurate historian since his work has accurate date citations and properly referenced. More so, Egan's ability to write an historical event which shall be used by the future generations.