

## Letter from J. E. Finch to Governor John Erickson, July 16, 1931

*Sumatra, Montana  
July 16, 1931*

Dear Governor Erickson:

I am writing you regarding the deplorable conditions existing at the present time. . . . Many people here are now and will be suffering for the necessities of life. Many of us still wish to keep our self respect and wish to get along if possible without appealing to Charity. . . . Is there any place in the State where we people here can go to get State work? Why are not road projects in active operation at the present time when so many of us poor farmers are in such desperate need? Do not the officials of this State realize the desperate financial condition of the people of Eastern Montana? Can you not realize yourself Governor that 90 percent of the cattle, sheep, and horses here will be forced on the market in the next few weeks . . . and that this stock when placed upon the markets will not bring  $\frac{1}{4}$  of it's real value . . . These sacrifices will injure this whole State for the next ten years and at the same time fill up our prisons

and lunatic Asylums to a still higher degree. A man who has been driven half crazy by stress of circumstances does not care much about law and order. Or a man and woman who see there accumulation of years foreclosed upon and sold for a song will soon be fit candidates for Warm Springs. . . .

I am an old man, 70 years old. I and my old wife at the present time have one baking of flour left and one pound of coffee. We have no credit and no work. Our 400 acres of crop is utterly destroyed. We had no crop last year and only a poor yield in 1929. In 1928 hail destroyed our crop with no insurance. In a short time the Bank will take our stock and other creditors our Machinery. We have lived here 20 years and I have paid \$3500 in taxes since I have been in Montana and this is the end. What can you or anyone do about it?

*Very Sincerely Yours,  
J. E. Finch*

Source: *Not In Precious Metals Alone: A Manuscript History of Montana* (Helena, 1976): 182.