



ELIZABETH STEWART MAGEE

(DECEASED)

ECONOMIST, AND SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ACTIVIST

ACHIEVEMENT: Ms. Magee's work and research laid the foundation for Ohio's and the nation's unemployment insurance program.

Following the stock market crash of 1929, the swelling numbers of unemployed workers brought to the forefront the need to find solutions to cyclical unemployment in the industrial world. Ms. Magee's analysis and published writings of the problems prompted Ohio Governor George White to appoint her in 1931 as executive secretary of Ohio's Commission on Unemployment Insurance.

The Commission created three committees to study unemployment: Research, Public Hearings, and Legislation. The Commission appointed Ms. Magee chair of the Public Hearings Committee. Throughout 1931, Elizabeth Magee conducted public hearings in the six largest Ohio cities where almost one hundred people testified on the problems of unemployment.

The Commission conducted an exhaustive study of the unemployment problem looking at the effects on the local and state level, the national level and at solutions implemented in Great Britain, Germany, and other industrial countries. In 1933, the Commission delivered its end product, the "Ohio Plan," which became a leading model for an unemployment insurance system in the United States. The key elements of the Ohio Plan included its stress on secure funding from employers and larger benefits to the unemployed.

As with any groundbreaking work affecting the economic fabric of society, it would take several more years before being implemented. In 1935, the Ohio Plan was incorporated into the Social Security Act, which created the unemployment insurance program in the United States.