

The year was...

1937

If ever a period of twentieth century American history was beset by uncertainty, that period was the late 1930s. The world was not at war, but nearly everyone knew it soon would be. The worst of the Depression was over, but people were all too mindful of the hard times through which many still struggled and the distinct possibility that they might return. A growing sense of optimism fed by the apparent economic recovery alternated almost feverishly with a lack of confidence in its strength and permanence. It's no wonder much of the data in the Roper Center archive for 1937 conveys an air of ambiva-

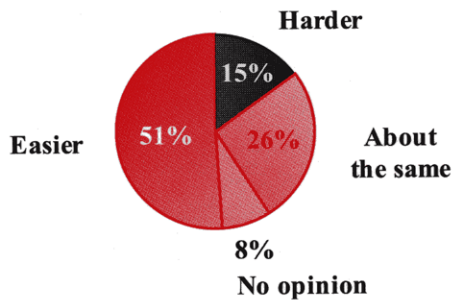
lence, punctuated occasionally by a feeling of impending doom.

Still, there was room for both hope and enjoyment. Among the bright spots were those that flickered on movie screens or appeared on baseball fields or in the comic pages of the newspapers. In the public's preference for "Little Orphan Annie," *Fortune* magazine pollsters saw reason to believe, even in those dark times, in the continued resilience of the American spirit.

—Lisa Ferraro Parmelee

Food Around the Corner

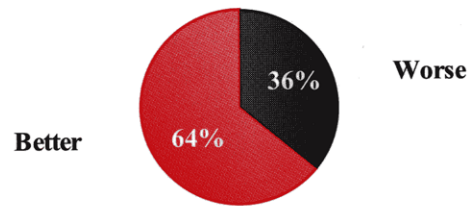
Question: Do you think it is easier or harder to find work in your community now, than it was a year ago?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, September 9-13, 1937.

Looking Better, In General

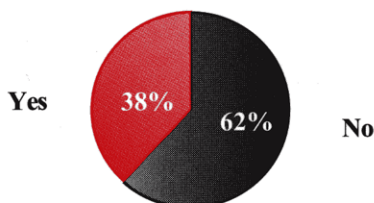
Question: Do you expect general business conditions to be better or worse in the next six months?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, October 20-25, 1937.

Recovery Still to Hit Home

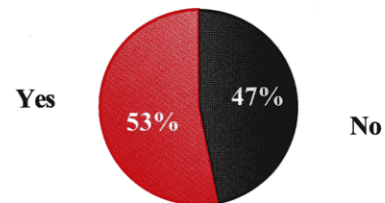
Question: Considering your income and your cost of living, do you feel you are better off today than a year ago?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, October 6-11, 1937.

Optimism Remains Guarded

Question: Do you think Congress and the President should seek to enact a second NRA (National Recovery Act)?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, February 17-22, 1937.

