

Franklin delano roosevelt in 20th century

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In the 20th century, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was the president of the United States that shaped the American Empire. He was a charismatic optimist whose confidence helped sustain the nation during crisis like the Great Depression and World War II. He received overwhelming support from his citizens throughout his four terms in office. President Roosevelt began a new era in American history. Despite an attack of poliomyelitis, which paralyzed his legs in 1921, he established social reforms that gave people a new perspective on government.

Government was not only expected to protect the people from foreign invaders, but to protect against poverty and unemployment. Roosevelt had also shown his military and diplomatic skill as the Commander in Chief during World War II. Born in 1882 in Hyde Park N. Y, he was raised in a high class family, graduated from Harvard University and received his law degree from Columbia Law School. At age 23 he married Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, niece of President Theodore Roosevelt. Even though coming from a privileged childhood, Roosevelt was close to the simple citizen's aspirations.

His New Deal program gave jobs for the workers and his wartime policies protected democracy. In 1932, F. D. R took the Democratic presidential nomination on the fourth ballot with John Nance Garner of Texas as his Vice Presidential running mate. Although there was rough competition during the choosing process, most party leaders were happy with the Roosevelt choice. It would help pull votes from the urban-Eastern region of the country. During the November campaign against Hoover, Roosevelt suggested a few parts of the " New Deal". He spoke of relief and public works money.

He wanted to develop a plan to cut agricultural overproduction. He was for public power, conservation and unemployment insurance. The repeal of prohibition and stock exchange regulation were also big items on his platform. But he mentioned little about his plans for industrial recovery or labor laws. As much foreign policy experience as he had, he talked very little of it during the campaign. When it came to election day, Roosevelt was the only viable alternative to Hoover, who many blamed for the Great Depression, although critics argue that it was the presidents preceding the Hoover administration.

Roosevelt's second election was in 1936. As expected, Roosevelt won by a landslide. This reflected the nation's confidence in the man and his leadership ability. However, the nation still had a long way to go. After another over-all successful term, Roosevelt ran again in 1940. The Republicans based their campaign on the tradition that no President had ever gone for a third term in succession. To counter this, Roosevelt put the spotlight on his administration's achievements. Because of the risky situation abroad, many felt that Roosevelt's expertise was needed if war occurred.

The election results against Wendell Willkie were closer than the previous two times. Much of this feeling was based on the idea that it would be a bad thing for the country to change leadership in the middle of the war. Many of the president's advisors felt he would not live through a fourth term, considering his hypertension, and cardiac failure. Because of his condition, the Vice President nomination for the 1944 election was of utmost importance. Roosevelt was persuaded to drop Henry Wallace, whom many

regarded as too liberal and emotionally unsuited to be president. Harry Truman of Missouri was chosen to fill the spot.

Again, the Republicans argument was term length. No President should serve for 16 years, they declared. The opposing argument by the Democrats was that no country should " change horses in mid-stream". The election outcome was even slimmer this time, but Roosevelt still captured a hearty vote. By the time Roosevelt was inaugurated on March 4, 1933, the economic situation was desperate. Between 13 and 15 million Americans were unemployed. Of these, between 1 and 2 million people were wandering about the country looking for jobs. Thousands lived in cardboard shacks called " hooverilles".

Panic-stricken people hoping to rescue their deposits had forced 38 states to close their banks. The Depression hit all levels of the social scale, heads of corporations and Wall Street bankers were left begging on the street.

Roosevelt's action would be two parted: restore confidence and rebuild the economic and social structure. In one of his addresses, he pushed confidence with his statement, " the only thing we have to fear, is fear itself" . One of his first steps was to take action upon the bank problem. Because of the Depression, people rushed to the banks to pull their deposits out in return for paper cash and gold.

On March 6, 1933, Roosevelt declared a bank holiday that lasted four days. All banks in the nation were closed until the Department of Treasury could examine each one's fiscal situation. Those that were determined to correct their financial condition were allowed to reopen and those who had been

badly operated were not allowed. During the Great Depression, 5, 504 banks had closed and deposits of nearly \$3. 5 billion dollars were lost. Shortly after the President restored confidence in the banks, what is now known as the "100 days" began on March 9 and ended on June 16, 1933.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt began to submit recovery and reform laws for congressional approval. Congress passed nearly all the important bills that he requested, most of them by large majorities. The fact that there was a Democratic Party majority in both houses helped speed things along. What emerged from these 100 days was a 3-fold focus, Relief-Recovery-Reform. One of the relief actions was known as the Emergency Relief Act. This established the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) that pushed an appropriation of \$500 million to be spent immediately for quick relief.

Moreover, the Reforestation Act of 1933 helped stop and repair some of the environmental damage that had occurred as a result of the industrial revolution. More importantly, he created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), which eventually employed more than 2, 5 million men at various camps. Projects included reforestation, road construction, soil erosion and flood control as well as national park development. The Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) was designed to raise crop prices and raise the standard of living for American farmers.

Production was cut to increase demand, therefore raising the price. It also gave the president the power to inflate the currency by devaluating its gold content and issue about \$3 billion in paper currency. The United States Supreme Court later struck down the AAA as unconstitutional. Another

recovery measure was the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA). It was designed to balance the interests of business and labor and consumers/workers and to reduce unemployment. This act set codes of anti-trust laws and fair competition, as well as setting a new standard: minimum wage.

A new idea came about in those 100 days, it was known as the federal corporation. The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) was the first agency to work much like a private enterprise. The goal of the TVA was to reform one of the poorest parts of the country, the Tennessee River Valley. The TVA was responsible for the construction and management of power plants, dams, electricity, flood control systems and the development of navigation systems. After the initial 100 days, reform continued throughout the first term of the Roosevelt Administration.

In Roosevelt's annual address to Congress on January 4, 1935, he outlined phase two of the New Deal, whose main component would be the establishment of the modern welfare system. The federal government would withdraw from the direct relief, leaving it up to state and local governments. This would include social security for the aged, unemployed and ill. Moreover, the farmers were aided by the Rural Electrification Administration (REA). Its goals were to provide electricity to isolated areas where private utility companies did not see it profitable to run lines and set up service.

The year of 1935 brought with it numerous reform efforts. These were the final efforts of the New Deal before the nation geared up for war. Included in this was the National Labor Relations Act, whose most important function

was to set up the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), which monitored corporations to ensure worker rights and safety. One of the most important and lasting effects of the Roosevelt Administration was his push for the Social Security Act. This was an innovative plan that was supposed to lead to a nation-wide retirement system.

Finally, a Revenue Act of 1935 capped off the New Deal with a tax on the rich, and a tax break on the middle class citizens. The Supreme Court was fairly conservative, and attempted to shoot holes in many of Roosevelt's New Deal programs. The Supreme Court even went as far as to strike the entire AAA program down, claiming that it violated state's rights. FDR was infuriated at the actions of the Court. He thought of them as nine old men who were living in days gone by, far too conservative to see the economic and social needs of today. He soon began to plan retribution, however in secrecy.

He called upon his staff to write up the Judicial Reform Act of 1937.

Essentially, this document alleged that the Judicial Branch of the federal government was overwhelmed. His answer to solve the dilemma was to use his executive power of appointment and place more Justices on the Court. Another section of the Act suggested that at age 70, each Justice would be supplemented with an additional Justice. This meant up to 15 Supreme Court Justices serving at one time. Roosevelt hoped to load the Court with social liberal Democrats who would not oppose his New Deal programs.

After a long period of embarrassing debate, the Senate rejected Roosevelt's proposal. This, in turn, caused Roosevelt to reject the Senate. Roosevelt used

his diplomatic and military powers in the later part of his administration nearly as much as he used his executive and legislative powers in the first half. At the time Roosevelt took office, the nation was isolationist. When the Great Depression hit in the 1930's, America became even more concerned with its own problems. However, seeing the importance of a global view and seeing the possible impact of World War II, Roosevelt directed the country toward nations abroad.

He also withdrew American occupation forces from some Caribbean republics, and settled oil disputes with Mexico. His desire to spread ties across the Western Hemispheres led to trade agreements with Canada and many South American states. Furthermore, Recognition was given to the Soviet government in November of 1933. This was the first attempt at civil relations since the Russian Revolution in 1917. In 1933, for the first time in 16 years, the two nations exchanged representatives. The isolationist school of thought led to the Neutrality Acts of the 1930's.

These acts, passed by Congress, prohibited the US from furnishing weapons or supplies to any nation at war. President Roosevelt disliked the fact that these Acts treated all nations the same, whether a country had attacked another or not. Germany's aggressiveness in 1939 forced Roosevelt to take a tougher stance. On December 11th 1941, the United States declared war to Germany and Italy. With World War II still in progress, the commander in chief was a candidate in the 1944 elections for a fourth time.

He won over the Republican Thomas Dewey. The president's advisors feared that F. D. R might not live through another term. In fact, on April 12

1945, he died of a cerebral hemorrhage at the age of 63. Despite his physical limitations, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was a highly popular president. He shaped the value of the free world and guided his citizens through tumultuous years. ' 'Their Children would live to see the causes for which he stood for prosperity, freedom, economic justice and political democracy" . It can be said that President Roosevelt was a ' 'Founding Father" of the American nation, along with all the other greats of Mount Rushmore.