

Franklin d. roosevelt's actions helped overcome the great depression

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During the Great Depression, the American people started to lose hope and President Hoover just waited for things to right themselves, believing that the government should avoid interference with the economy. The American people were in dire need of rescue to pull them out of the widespread debt and disparity that gripped the nation. From the beginning of President Roosevelt's first term as President, he was productive. Not only did he and his Administration shepherd 15 major bills through Congress in his first 100 days as President, but he also passed around 25 pieces of landmark legislation that worked to aid the country during the Depression. Though World War Two was eventually the event that overtook the Depression, President Roosevelt and his Administration's were able to successfully respond to the problems of the Great Depression with legislation to reform the economy, establish workers' rights, and assist the unemployed. These responses were successful in addressing reform and relief while also expanding the scope of the government, but the responses were unsuccessful in addressing recovery.

In his first " Fireside Chat" Roosevelt addressed the recent banking crisis and how he would respond to it. The first issue of the program was to explain to the American people exactly what happened and why it happened. He proceeded to explain why he called a National Banking Holiday, and what he hopes to accomplish. Roosevelt responded to Black Tuesday and the successive crisis with the Emergency Banking Act which shut down all banks across the United States and only allowed them to reopen upon government inspection. After emphasizing that most of the banks would open in the next few days, Americans began to restore their trust in the banking system and

the next day people making deposits far outnumbered those making withdrawals. The Emergency Banking Act was an impressive demonstration of how government power was expanding under Roosevelt, as the program allowed the government to ignore states' and businesses' rights to shut down the banks. Later on in his Presidency, Roosevelt proposed the Second New Deal because his radical critics were becoming more popular and because the first wave of New Deal measures did not end the Depression. One critic in particular sparked the proposal of the Social Security Act. Dr. Francis E. Townsend was a California physician who argued that the New Deal did not do enough for older Americans, and his movement contributed to the congressional approval of the Social Security Act. Document E is an advertisement for the Social Security Program which guaranteed retirement payments for enrolled workers beginning at the age of 65, and this act proved to be the most far-reaching New Deal program. Roosevelt and his administration worked diligently to get people enrolled in the Social Security Program, as the poster says " applications [were] being distributed at all workplaces." Not only were they making the applications accessible, they offered other means of support like the ability to obtain " information [...] at any post office." However, the effectiveness of the program was only satisfactory because it failed to assist farmers and domestic workers, but it successfully implanted hope into America. The Social Security program was also revolutionary in changing the government's role to one that took responsibility for citizen's welfare.

Not only did Roosevelt help the retired, he also aimed to establish workers' rights. One of his programs was the Wagner Labor Relations Act which

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recognized labor's right to bargain collectively. It created the National Labor Relations Board to protect workers from unfair practices and to arbitrate labor-management disputes. Document G is an NBC radio broadcast by a supporter of the Wagner Act John L. Lewis who believed workers had the right to join a union. He identifies that workers want "reasonable conditions" but the employers refused to "deal with their employees through collective bargaining." The broadcast demonstrates that poor working conditions still existed for many workers, strikes were coming, and that businesses were at fault for the recent issues concerning labor. The Wagner Act was FDR's response to "widespread labor unrest" and addressed the concerns workers had over their rights as union members and their ability to collectively bargain. His act was effective as labor unrest dwindled, and it also increased the government's power by establishing the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to enforce the terms of Wagner Act. This showed a changed role of government since it implied that social justice was now on the government agenda. Not everyone was as joyful towards Roosevelt's response to the worker's rights debates. In Document B, the fear of growing government power is evident and the idea that the current policies supported communism and socialism. Primarily, the author of the letter disagreed with the New Deal programs by saying they "continually promot[e] labor troubles, higher wages, shorter hours, and less profits for business." Portions of America saw the New Deal not as a helpful cause but a sly attempt by the government to expand its power, and these people thought that the government should interfere less with the economy.

Another problem that the Roosevelt Administration had to face was unemployment. In his New Deal, Roosevelt established many programs to aid the unemployed. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) revitalized the local relief programs by giving them funding and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) provided millions of jobs to unemployed workers to maintain and restore the environment. The Civil Works Administration (CWA) gave jobs to many people to build or repair roads, buildings and other structures. While the CWA was effective in dealing with the unemployment rates and improving parts of the country, it also increased the national debt. From Document J it is evident that the unemployment was up to 40% in 1933 and at its lowest in 1944, and that his restoration programs contributed to the unemployment drop. The First New Deal (FERA, CWA, CCC) was very effective in that it dropped unemployment about 25%. However, once Roosevelt saw the low rates, he decided to cut back on funding for the New Deal programs which led to the "Roosevelt Recession" from 1937 to 1938 in which the unemployment rate slightly spiked. Looking from another perspective at Roosevelt's policies, he was not equal in which Americans he supported. Document A shows it was likely that as many women suffered from poverty as men, but the women sought assistance less than men. It also shows that the concerns of unemployed and poor women were overlooked, as can be seen when Lesueur says "There are no flop houses for women as there are for men." Document I also shows how the New Deal affected the different races. African Americans were included in the New Deal, and were more supportive of government, though some segregation still existed in programs. One example of this was that the CCC camps were

available to all of the unemployed men meeting the criteria, but the camps were segregated. Document D portrays the cost of Roosevelt's New Deal programs, saying " An enormous outpouring of federal money for human relief and immense sums for public-works projects started to flow to all points of the compass." In order to employ the many Americans needing assistance, Roosevelt had to put enormous funds towards the public-works projects, adding " Six billion dollars ... to the national debt." Such programs expanded the government because the government was able to have a large bureaucracy, as Document D also says, the " bureaucracy in Washington grew by leaps and bounds." Document D is evidence that Keynesian economic theories of deficit spending were reflected in New Deal programs, and that these programs were suggested to be unrealistic and impractical.

Although the policies of Roosevelt were successful in addressing reform and relief and also expanding the role of government, they failed to address recovery. World War II initiated a large increase in military spending which jumpstarted the economy, not the New Deal programs. 2 chief recovery programs, National Industrial Recovery Act (June 1933) (NIRA) and the Agriculture Adjustment Administration (AAA) were repealed because they were seen as unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, and in Document D, Garrison says that some New Deal programs " retarded the recovery of industrial activity." This was true in the case of the NIRA, as it promoted a cycle of overproduction and underproduction and set many complicated codes. Document F shows that the government's powers have been expanded too much, and that the Supreme Court ended up ruling against NIRA during its legal troubles because it attempted to expand government

powers too much, saying it was unconstitutional and that “ The authority of the federal government may not be pushed to such an extreme.” The NIRA crossed the line for many of the justices on the Supreme Court. The AAA was also one of the programs that “ retarded the recovery of industrial activity” because it attempted to increase farm prices by paying farmers not to overproduce, thus keeping the prices stable. AAA was also deemed unconstitutional because it expanded the power of government too much. Under the AAA, the agriculture sector was viewed as a “ creeping socialism”, as the government regulated what to produce and how much of it, a power the Supreme Court denied the government. Document B also reflects fears of creeping socialism, “ that the Administration at Washington is accelerating it’s [sic] pace towards socialism.” Under FDR, Congress was made rubber stamp and FDR’s policies went through undisputed. Therefore, many of FDR’s “ socialist” policies ended up becoming implemented. The judiciary branch reacted and shut down both the NIRA and the AAA because they not only proved impractical, but also tried to greatly expand the role of the government.

Roosevelt’s responses to the problems of the Great Depression often attempted to expand the scope of government. Document C shows how FDR gradually attempted to magnify the expanse of government. It shows that the New Deal was a natural progression, and that academics were a leading role in the New Deal like the “ brains trust.” Under his policies, the power of government grew and expanded, as seen by the branching in the cartoon. Also, the quote “ It is evolution, not revolution, gentlemen!” shows that FDR sneakily attempted to increase the scope of government in such a gradual

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way that it would be seen as “ evolution” rather than radical “ revolution.”

Document H describes the policies of Roosevelt as the “ efficient organization of the whole executive department,” meaning that America improved with the New Deal programs, and that the government had improved under Roosevelt.

Although WWII ultimately recovered America from its depression, it was FDR’s response with the New Deal programs that stopped America’s economic downfall, relieved hundreds of Americans, reformed many policies, and consequently expanded government power.