

Why was there  
opposition to  
kennedy's 'new  
frontier' and  
johnson's 'great  
society...



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President Kennedy's New Frontier and President Johnson's Great Society both proposed major changes to the USA under economic, social and civil rights issues. However, because some of the changes were so radical, the programs faced considerable opposition from a variety of groups and this had an effect on their success. Kennedy and Johnson both faced individual opposition to their policies. However Kennedy arguably got the worst of it because a) he was the first one to introduce these policies, and b) he could not deal with the opposition he received as well as Johnson could.

Kennedy received opposition from three main groups: Protestant Christians, older members of Congress and Southern Democrats. Each of these groups had a problem with the way Kennedy was going about his job. The Protestants were suspicious of Kennedy because he was Catholic, and the majority of presidents before him were Protestant. Older members of Congress felt Kennedy was too young and inexperienced to handle the job he had been given; this distrust was amplified by the fact that Kennedy never made much of an effort to persuade members of Congress to support his policies. But Kennedy received the most opposition from Southern Democrats, who were opposed to black Civil Rights. Kennedy hoped to be re-elected in 1964 and needed the support of these Congressmen, and as a result did not play a leading role in the Civil Rights Movement for fear of losing their support.

With Kennedy's assassination in 1963, Vice-President Johnson became President. As a foremost supporter of Kennedy he was faced with the task of continuing on Kennedy's policies alongside introducing his own. However the opposition he faced was not as much a problem for him as it was for

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Kennedy, because Johnson was a) a dominating figure, b) an experienced politician, and c) very persuasive in trying to get people on his side. Thus, he was able to get almost any bill he wanted passed through Congress (including such iconic bills as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965), and because he was a Southerner he easily dealt with the opposition to black civil rights received from Southern Democrats.

However, Johnson was not just a ghost of Kennedy and he had his own agenda, which he manifested in his Great Society campaign. This program including policies like tackling poverty and improving education and health resources. Like Kennedy, these measures faced opposition. Johnson was accused of overspending on welfare programmes and not doing enough to help inner city issues.

Although the campaign had started off well, it gradually lost momentum towards the end of Johnson's presidency. Enthusiasm faded for the campaign after taxes were increased to accommodate it, and, with the US involvement in the Vietnam War, lots of money was diverted away from the Great Society campaign to support the war cause. This prompted even further criticism of Johnson. By 1968 Johnson's popularity had almost completely diminished, and most were pleased to hear that he would not be running for president again in 1968.

To conclude, the New Frontier and Great Society regimes most likely faced opposition because they proposed such radical changes to the way things were run in the USA. Both campaigns were highly influenced by their implementers' own personal beliefs and dreams, and since these differ from

person to person, there is no doubt going to be lots of controversy. The USAs citizens most likely found the New Frontier and Great Society too much of a shock to the system.

Bibliography: " Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society" by John A. Andrew"  
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