

Franklin delano roosevelt and the new deal essay sample

[Law](#), [Security](#)



QUESTION FROM INSTRUCTOR:

Reform movements and impulses had had a long, albeit sometimes checkered, history in the United States by the time Franklin Delano Roosevelt promised Americans a “ new deal” during the 1932 election campaign. This essay focuses on the effectiveness and realism of the New Deal as domestic reform policy.

First, what were FDR’s beliefs about the role of American government in domestic affairs? As the federal government’s highest elected official, what did he believe to be his responsibilities within that context?

Second, discuss at least four examples of New Deal policy (may be from any of the legislation passed from 1933-1940) which reflects his beliefs/approach. Be sure to explain how your legislative examples altered the role of the American government in daily life and what Americans thought about the changes.

Last, in the end, did his New Deal truly represent a dramatic departure from the ideals of the progressive movement, or did it represent a continuation of that earlier movement and why/why not? Be sure to consider aims, results, motivations, and the reformers themselves when comparing the two reform agendas.

MY RESPONSE:

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt became president, on March 4, 1933, the Great Depression was at its worst. Sixteen million or more people were

unemployed, and many had been out of work for a year or even longer. The American banking system had collapsed. Whether Americans would be satisfied with the new leadership depended on Roosevelt's success in bringing aid to those in distress and in achieving some measure of economic improvement.

Roosevelt's first said, wanting to make war upon the depression, " the only thing we have to fear is fear itself." This brought a new style to the U. S. presidency. Roosevelt was confident, both in himself as a leader and in the American people. His liking for people came through to them over the radio and in the press.

First:

Roosevelt believed in work relief, or payment for work performed, rather than the dole, a simple payment without any work requirement. Although he felt that work relief would help to maintain the confidence, self-esteem, and spirits of the recipients, work projects took time to plan and were far more costly to administer than the simple dole. When Roosevelt took office, he felt that his basic problem was how to bring about economic recovery. He accepted government responsibility for improving the economy. Franklin Roosevelt had been a reformer, a believer in progress and in government-sponsored social and economic change; from the time he first took public office in 1911. The reform impulse in America had been frustrated since the 1918 election victories by conservative politicians, who believed that government should not be involved in social reform. Now that idea was

brought back in the Great Depression by President Roosevelt, often under pressure from congressional liberals, who were concerned with the development of personal freedom and social progress, and from reform movements outside the government.

Second:

The basic New Deal legislation was passed in slightly more than five years, from 1933 to 1938. Historians have frequently discussed these laws under the headings of the three Rs: relief, recovery, and reform.

The first example of the New Deal policy was providing relief for the unemployed and their families. Private charities had long since run out of money, and few states could still provide any assistance. Under Roosevelt's Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), the first of his major relief operations, large amounts of money were given to the states. Harry L. Hopkins, a professional social worker, made sure that available funds were spent quickly to provide help to as many as possible. Since Roosevelt liked the idea of work relief, the Civil Works Administration (CWA) provided work relief for a large number of men during the winter of 1933 and 1934. This altered daily life for Americans and they liked this change, because it gave them opportunities to work and earn money. However, due to the necessity of making the available money go as far as possible, the FERA essentially dispensed money through the state governments.

A second example of the New Deal policy was the Works Progress Administration (WPA, later renamed the Work Projects Administration

(established in 1935). The WPA was a new semi-permanent organization that was set up by executive order and placed under Hopkins, and the FERA was abolished. The WPA provided work relief only, and due to lack of money many people on relief had to depend on the hard-pressed states for a dole. The WPA projects were better planned than those of the CWA, and many of them were of lasting benefit to their communities. The WPA affected Americans because roads and streets were built or improved; schools, libraries, and other public buildings were constructed or repaired; and artists, musicians, and writers performed for the benefit of the public. Obviously, American greatly appreciated and welcomed the WPA.

A third and fourth example of the New Deal policy helped relief operations and was designed especially for young people. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) provided work for unemployed and unmarried young men. They received food and shelter and were paid \$30 per month, of which \$25 had to be given to relatives or dependents. More than a quarter of a million men, worked in the corps, living together in camps under the management of army officers. They benefited from the healthy outdoor work, their families benefited from the money, and the country benefited from the many worthy projects they completed. The National Youth Administration (NYA) provided needy high school and college students with part-time jobs at their schools. The NYA also gave useful part-time employment to poor young people who were no longer in school. NYA workers normally earned from \$5 to \$15 per month. Although these sums were small, they proved valuable for the support of the recipients and their families during this period of great

economic distress. Both examples were of great interest to Roosevelt, as well as people in need of aid.

A major recovery agency of the New Deal was the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC), which provided loans to financial institutions, railways, and public agencies. Roosevelt reappointed the head of the organization, and with congressional approval, he made RFC loans easier to get.

One of the most extensive and imaginative New Deal reforms was the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), an independent federal corporation set up to improve conditions in a depressed area of 40, 000 square miles in seven states. Senator George W. Norris of Nebraska was responsible for this scheme. Roosevelt was a widely known supporter of publicly owned power, which he saw as a way to measure the real costs of private power companies. He was greatly attracted to the TVA because of its possibilities for the conservation of natural and human resources. The TVA built a series of dams for power production, flood control, and navigation improvement. American enjoyed this new change (policy) because it distributed its own water-generated, or hydroelectric, power to many Americans who never before had enjoyed the benefits of electricity before. The TVA also produced cheap fertilizers. As a result, the standard of living of the people in its area steadily improved. However, on the other hand, the TVA was seen as a direct threat to the country's private-power companies, and it was not imitated elsewhere, although the Roosevelt administration did build dams and power plants in the West.

The most far-reaching of the New Deal reform measures was the Social Security Act of 1935. During the first two years of Roosevelt's presidency a commission studied the problems caused by unemployment, old age, and physical disability and wanted to determine the part that should be played by the federal government in improving these problems. Unemployment insurance was established as a joint federal-state program. An old-age pension system was financed by taxes on both employers and employees. Other provisions of the Social Security Act provided federal money to encourage the states to care for dependent children and the blind.

Last:

By 1939 public attention focused increasingly on foreign policy and national defense. The New Deal was over, but it had permanently expanded the role of the federal government, particularly in economic regulation, resource development, and income maintenance. Although in itself the New Deal failed to stimulate full economic recovery, it provided the federal government not only with increased controls over money supply and Federal Reserve policies but also with increased understanding of the economic consequences of its own taxing, borrowing, and spending—thus helping the government to limit the impact of later recessions. In addition, the New Deal policy dominated the electorate and the nation for years thereafter. The New Deal changed the relationship between the government and the people of the United States. In addition to increasing the involvement of the government in people's lives, the New Deal created a number of agencies that still exist, and it stimulated the growth of the Democratic Party.

Conclusion:

I think the New Deal was partly a continuation from the progressive movement, and partly a departure and a new idea. The progressive movement wanted to fix the problems created by industrialization and urbanization (while the New Deal was to fix economy problems from the depression). To progressives, economic privilege and corrupt politics threatened democracy. Progressivism embraced many types of reform, when the New Deal addressed reforms, relief, and recovery. Progressives strove, variously, to curb corporate power, to end business monopolies, and to wipe out political corruption. They also wanted to democratize electoral procedures, protect working people, and bridge the gap between social classes. Their aims and motivations were both to help the needy and unfortunate people and protected some of the more vulnerable Americans. Above all, progressivism changed American attitudes toward the power of government. In both cases, the attention was turned from the domestic concerns to foreign affairs (from the progressive movement) and to foreign policies (from the New Deal).

Nowadays, the laws that we tend to think of as the New Deal were mainly reform laws. Between 1933 and 1938, major legislation passed by Congress constituted the most sweeping reform program since the progressive period of 1901 to 1907. In general, these reforms increased the existing regulatory activities of the federal government. After Roosevelt's administrations the government was involved in regulating many more areas of economic activity. Out of Roosevelt's disappointment with the failure of the U. S.

economy came few specific promises, but Americans probably felt more comfortable under the leadership of a man pledged to experiment. At least the prospect of change offered hope to the millions of people trapped in the depression.