

Discuss whether
franklin roosevelts
new deal was
successful history
essay



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The following investigation will discuss whether Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal was a success and whether it was the primary reason that the United States recovered from the Great Depression. This will talk in depth about the key ideas and goals of Roosevelt's New Deal. It will describe some of the programs administered during the Roosevelt administration and evaluate their successes and failures. From there, an evaluation of various opinions through different sources from books and internet websites will be used in order to draw a final conclusion over this investigation.

At the very depth of depression, a new president and a new administration came to power. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt tackled the job of recovery and realized that drastic measures had to be used to bring the faltering economy back to something approaching normal. These measures would create permanent and basic changes in the traditional relationship between government and the economy.[1]

The most significant of the programs made during the depression was the ambitious attempt to fashion and engineer the passage of legislation that would substitute industrial economy and at the same time institute a federal public works program that would repair and improve the nation's existing physical infrastructure, create thousands of long term jobs, stimulate local economies, develop hydropower and irrigation projects to enhance growth and economic health of entire regions, and generate general industrial recovery by creating markets for iron, steel, concrete, and other products.[2]

This program was called the National Industrial Recovery Act. Congress established the National Recovery Administration (NRA) to help revive

industry and labor through rational planning. The idea behind the NRA was simple: representatives of business, labor, and government would establish codes of fair practices that would set prices, production levels, minimum wages, and maximum hours within each industry.[3]

By the end of the NRA's first year, more than 550 codes had been developed and many businesses had signed up, but the success was illusory. Jealousies, disagreements, and plain recalcitrance on the part of many industries and businesses made the code system virtually unworkable. Moreover, the economy did not recover noticeably because unemployment was still high. The National Recovery Administration ultimately would be dismantled, but even in its failure, it had established a new relationship between governments and business and government and labor. 2

Another program, called the Public Works Administration spent over \$6 billion, but did not succeed in returning the level of industrial activity to pre-depression levels. Nor did it significantly reduce the unemployment level or help jump-start a widespread creation of small businesses. FDR, personally opposed to deficit spending, refused to spend the sums necessary to accomplish these goals. Nonetheless, the historical legacy of the PWA is perhaps as important as its practical accomplishments at the time. It provided the federal government with its first systematic network for the distribution of funds to localities, ensured that conservation would remain an element in the national discussion, and provided federal administrators with a broad amount of badly needed experience in public policy planning.[4]

Roosevelt's administration, however, had no "master" plan. It confronted a crisis and was determined to do something about it. Most of the New Deal programs were improvisational in character. Many were frank experiments that revealed serious flaws and contradictions. Points of strength and weaknesses in the New Deal programs, their success or failure, grew clearer as time passed. The New Deal, though it did much to alleviate some of the more desperate effects of the collapse, was not bringing recovery. Relief programs prevented starvation and helped many of the nation's poor and unemployed survive, and the huge public works projects helped to reduce unemployment, but recovery eluded the nation. 1[5]

Under the New Deal, the capital replaced Wall Street and government had become the largest enterprise in the country. 1 Despite all of the New Deal programs and legislation complete recovery continued to elude that nation's leaders. Although definite progress had been made, it was painfully slow. The New Deal was not the decisive factor in bringing an end to the depression. Certainly the New Deal had alleviated some of the worst suffering of the depression. Jobs were provided for millions, and relief programs aided millions more. 1

Part C: Evaluation of Sources:

After the Crash: America in the Great Depression was written by John Rublowsky who is the author of several other books. This book mainly deals with topics after the stock market crash and later discuss in the last few chapters about the New Deal and the country's recovery. The books value is that it clearly depicts American life after the depression had hit, and gives a thorough evaluation of the after events of the crash and of the New Deal. Its <https://assignbuster.com/discuss-whether-franklin-roosevelts-new-deal-was-successful-history-essay/>

limitation is that it does not thoroughly discuss the events that led up to the depression, but only briefly mentions it the Prelude of the book.

The next book being used for this assessment is the Great Depression: America in the 1930s. T. H Watkins wrote this book in the 1960s. The value of this book is that it offers a political, economic, and cultural account of the Great Depression. It discusses thoroughly of the many federal reforms during this time. Another value of this book is that it is a very reliable source. The author who wrote it has won several achievements for his writing. A limitation would be that although it covers many topics, it might not describe each topic with equal thoroughness.

Part D: Analysis:

Many argue whether or not the New Deal was fully successful in its goals. Although the various programs made during this time did prevent many from starving and did aid the people, they were still unable to get America fully out of the Depression. By 1937, a deep recession struck America, even with the many aid programs set by the Roosevelt administration. By 1939, there were still 8 million Americans without jobs. It was not until about 1941, that unemployment had ended, which many people believe to be the effect of the war rather than the New Deal.

When Roosevelt became president in 1932, he knew that drastic measures needed to be taken in order for America to prosper again. The historic First 100 Days brought with it many new programs and legislations that were being passed by congress. The goal for these waves of programs was primarily relief. The relief programs were successful in preventing more

starvation and aiding the unemployed, but it was not enough to fully stop the effects of the Depression. A reason for this could be that most of the programs administered during this time were for the most part experiments that had many flaws.

The agricultural program, for example, was based on an economics of scarcity in which artificially created shortages brought about through drastic cuts in production would be used to raise prices of agricultural products.

1[6]This was considered an ironic program because many people could not even afford food and raising the prices would only hinder the people. Other programs such as the NRA began successfully, but never fully succeeded and ended. The legacy that the NRA left was that it helped establish the relationship between government and business/labor. However, the NRA failed like many other programs to drastically change the American economy as businesses continually disagreed with each other and were determined to run their companies as they pleased.

Perhaps some of the more successful programs were the Civil Works Administration and the Public Works Administration. Although the C. W. A ended in 1943, it established the idea that any type of work was better than immediate relief money given by the F. E. R. A. During this time, the people were embarrassed to be given relief money without having worked for it and this often caused resentment and bitterness to some of the programs created during this time. The C. W. A allowed people to work for their money, even though some of the work may have been insignificant. The C. W. A set the model for other relief programs such as the W. P. A who helped employ people of any occupation.

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Another relief effort was the P. W. A, which took a different approach than the other programs. The P. W. A was designed to stimulate industry through public works projects that would require huge quantities of material. 1[7]The P. W. A provided many jobs to the unemployed, but also helped better the country by building hospitals, sewage systems, water supply works, schools etc. During the six effective years of its life, P. W. A would finance a total of 34, 508 projects at a cost of a little more than \$6 billion, employing in any given year half a million workers or more. 2[8]

Although there were many successes in the programs made during this time, its main objectives such as stimulating the industry failed. Industrial production and employment did rise, but soon again they would fall.

There was many opposition by the government interference, particularly from business and labor. Many claimed that government interference hurt business more than it helped them. They felt that the uncertainty of business was due to the businesses not knowing what action the government would take next. Others, such as labor, felt that the programs administered were not effective because there were still millions in the country unemployed by 1935.

Despite the many oppositions to the New Deal, one thing is very clear. The New Deal although not fully successful in its goals brought with it change to the government. Government now assumed an increasingly important role in all aspects of the social and economic life of the nation. 1[9]The New Deal brought change to the idea of taxation. Instead of being used as a way of finance, it was changed to distributing wealth equally among the people. The

government had began to enforce laws and operation rules on banks and the stock market and had made large social changes such as the Social Security Act, that secured those who were too old to work effectively. Because of the New Deal, the government replaced Wall Street as the nerve center of the nation. Government had become the largest enterprise in the country. 1

Part E- Conclusion:

There are many opinions as to whether the New Deal was successful in ending the depression. Some believe that although the New Deal did give America various forms of relief, in the end it was shorter lived than long term. Many critics to the New Deal say that even though the New Deal was not the key factor in ending the depression, it forever changed the relationship between the people and the government and between government and business. Towards the late 1930's, America had made some progress towards relief, but it was brutally slow. In the end, it was America's entrance into WWII that fully brought American businesses and the stock market back into action.