

Why did the wealthy
and educated classes
of the united states
despise and fear an...



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Andrew Jackson was the seventh president of the United States. He was regarded by many as the symbol and spokesman of the common man. One idea of Jacksonian Democracy was increased popular participation in government. Another thing the movement did was to attack those with privilege or monopolies; it wanted to offer new opportunities to the middle class or the 'common man'. Because of this, Jackson had support from most, but he did not have support from the established elite of the time. There are many reasons as to why the wealthy and educated classes despised and feared Jackson and his ideas. The first one is due to the introduction of education for the children of the poor. It was hoped that the eventual results of this new education system would be eventual better living conditions and material equality. It was also hoped it would "remove the veil of ignorance by which the poor who suffer are prevented from penetrating into the mysteries of that legislation of the rich by which their sufferings are produced" 1For the wealthy, if the poor were educated rather than ignorant it would make it a lot harder to exploit them as workers or clients, it would also mean that they would no longer rely so much on those richer than them as they would now have their own means of becoming rich. It was hoped that the new education system would contribute to the eventual disappearance of the elite in America. Another reason is due to the technological advances at the time which meant a surge in the number of newspapers, magazines, journals etc in production and on sale to all. This was a great thing for the rich and educated to fear as the press gave everyone a voice, it meant that it would become a lot harder to control the poor like they used to. "Any literate person could follow political events and so be an informed citizen" 2Silence

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was just a good a tool as ignorance for the rich in keeping the poor how they wanted, but now the silence was breaking and this gave them another great reason to despise Andrew Jackson. During the Jacksonian era there were numerous aristocratic dominated institutions. One of them was the practice of medicine and medical licensing. The 'medical monopoly' was fiercely attacked and named 'oppressors of the poor'. This was further something to spark fear in the minds of the rich and educated as once again something which they were in control of was being attacked by the ideas of Jacksonian Democracy. For them, if Jackson drew in more supporters and gained more power, they would eventually lose more and more of the power and authority they had in the majority of aspects of American society. The ideas of Jacksonian Democracy told the poor that anything was accessible to them, whether it be high powerful positions in society or simply money. They were told that hard work rather than what you were born in to determines ones future and success. If this had been the mindset of all the poor in America at the time then it is no wonder that the aristocrats feared these ideas. It seemed to be heading in the eventual direction of closing the economical and social divide between the rich and the poor. Jacksonian Democracy wanted to increase the common man's influence on the federal government and its running. In order to vote, one no longer needed to own a property and the old system of nominating candidates was also discarded. The political changes Jackson implemented all reduced the power and voice of the prosperous and elite, the common man wanted to be represented by the common man. Another factor as to why Jackson may have been feared and despised by the rich and educated was that people were taxed according to

personal and real property rather than income. And so the difference in the amount of taxes paid by the rich and poor was vast. Andrew Jackson believed that the second Bank of the United States favoured the privileged few at the expense of the common man and had failed to provide a stable currency. He felt that the bank was "the most corrupting influence in American life" It had received a charter in violation of the constitution; although Jackson's political enemies pushed a re-charter bill through congress. It was immediately vetoed by Jackson. Jackson continued the war with the bank and eventually removed all federal deposits from it. The issuing of notes not backed by specie caused an economic boom and meant financiers profited and others saw their real income decrease as prices rose. Because of this Jackson demanded all payments for government lands be made in specie or in notes of specie paying banks. This war with the bank was yet another reason for the rich and educated to despise and fear him. Yet again, he was trying to destroy another aspect of power for the rich and he did not give up until he succeeded. Jackson's appeal as a politician was to the common man. Many things Jackson did during his time as President shows us that he would do whatever he could to get what he wanted and to shape America into the country he liked. Because of his original appeal to one type of man he had many loyal supporters who would also follow him in making sure that he stayed in office and controlled the country as he liked. Jackson, when choosing who was to work by him as officeholders, looked primarily for those who could bring in voters and contribute to the party rather than who was best at the job. This showed the rich and educated that those not in support of Jackson how determined he was to stay at the top no

matter what was sacrificed to do so. The 'spoils system' created a bureaucracy of the 'common man' - who of course were primarily employed so he could further implement his policies. The personal character of Andrew Jackson may have also been something that the rich and educated did not like. It was said that he was a frightening character and that before he became president would not be adverse to threatening physical punishment on those who opposed or offended him. One example is that it is said that Jackson threatened to kill two men for calling him ambitious. Jackson could not accept criticism of himself and avoidable conflicts occurred because of this. Andrew Jackson was like a bomb waiting to explode and for those who already hated Jacksonian Democracy the character of the man behind it gave them reason to despise it even more. Jackson used various methods of propaganda to convince the common man of his potential. Soon, the American mind turned towards bettering oneself and ones circumstances materialistically. He appealed enormously to the ruthless and ambitious telling them that they could be what they wanted and eventually earn and own what they wanted too. From the point of view of those who had status in society, it looked as if everyone below them in status, economically and politically, wanted what they had and would do their best to get it. Due to many factors, including the improved education system and free press, the average white man had the means to be able to do this and so the rich were in fear of them and their ideas. Although the idea was to appeal to the common man the common man didn't necessarily benefit from Jacksonian Democracy. One reason for this was Jackson's conviction that it is not the function of a government to assist any economic group and that everyone

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should take advantage of the opportunities available to all. Jackson thoroughly encouraged the common man to do this via agents he employed to further his support and policies and to keep the common man happy. . He simply took the power of control over common man from the aristocrats and told him he was controlling his own destiny. This shift of power was why they despised him. During Jackson's era, more and more opportunities were arising for the common man. The manufacturing industry grew rapidly and a revolution occurred. This indicated the need for transport and so roads, bridges, canals etc appeared all over the states. These revolutions signified new opportunities for the common man, a way he could work hard to become successful and rich in certain fields. It made him more determined to gain status and money and it made him more impatient for a change where power shifted from the social, political and economic elite to them. The elite on the other hand despised Jacksonian Democracy for allowing these opportunities to be available to everyone. In conclusion the fundamental reason as to why the rich and educated despised and feared Andrew Jackson and the ideas of Jacksonian Democracy was because his policies meant a lessening of power and control over people, institutions and politics for them. Not only did his policies and ideas result in this but they also changed the mindset of the common man convincing him that he himself had the power to change the status quo. It was this new outlook that sparked the fear, as the elite were of course in the minority and the majority were becoming more and more powerful. It was what Jackson called " the first principle of our system - that the majority is to govern"