

Ch9 Study Guide

Ch9.1 FDR Offers Relief and Recovery

In November 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt won the presidency by more than 7 million votes. FDR had lost the use of his legs to polio in 1921. Because of his disability, he relied heavily on his wife, Eleanor Roosevelt. She served as his “eyes and ears” during his presidency.

In his first hundred days in office, FDR proposed and Congress passed 15 bills known as the First New Deal. These measures had three goals: relief, recovery, and reform. “Relief” referred to improving the immediate hardships of the depression; “recovery” was aimed at achieving a long-term economic recovery; and “reforms” were designed to prevent future depressions. One immediate relief effort involved the government paying farmers subsidies to reduce production, a move that would help raise farm prices.

Other relief efforts included establishment of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) to build dams in the Tennessee River valley to control floods and generate electric power, and the creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The CCC provided jobs for more than 2 million young men. They replanted forests, built trails, dug irrigation ditches, and fought fires. Recovery efforts included the National Recovery Administration (NRA) and the Public Works Administration (PWA). The NRA developed industry codes that set minimum wages for workers and minimum prices for goods. The PWA created millions of new jobs constructing bridges, dams, power plants, and government buildings. Additionally, FDR sought to reform the nation’s financial institutions. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) insured bank deposits, and the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) regulated the stock market.

Some Americans thought the New Deal made the government too powerful. Others thought that the New Deal did not provide enough help to citizens. The strongest criticism from this second group came from individuals with roots in the Populist movement. Father Charles Coughlin was a Roman Catholic priest who aired increasingly angry views on a weekly radio show. Roman Catholic officials eventually forced Coughlin to stop his broadcasts. Senator Huey Long of Louisiana proposed placing high taxes on wealthy Americans so that their income could be redistributed to the poor.

Ch9.2 The Second New Deal

President Franklin D. Roosevelt's goals for the first New Deal were relief, recovery, and reform. He used legislation passed by the second New Deal to accomplish the goals of promoting the general welfare and protecting citizens' rights.

In the spring of 1935, Congress created the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to provide new jobs doing public works. The WPA even provided programs to employ displaced artists. The government paid for WPA programs by spending money it didn't have. British economist John Maynard Keynes argued that such deficit spending was needed to end the depression.

The Social Security Act created a pension system for retirees, as well as unemployment insurance for workers who lost their jobs and aid for the disabled. New programs aided farmers. The Rural Electrification Administration (REA) helped bring electricity to farms. New laws also aided industrial workers. The Wagner Act gave workers the right to collective bargaining. This meant that employers had to negotiate with unions about hours, wages, and other working conditions. The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 established a minimum wage and a maximum number of hours for the workweek. It also outlawed child labor.

During the Great Depression, there was an upsurge in union activity. The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) was established to organize workers in major industries. In 1936, CIO members staged a sit-down strike against General Motors, refusing to leave the workplace until a settlement had been reached. Their success led to other strikes, which improved wages and working conditions for union members.

FDR faced challenges from the Supreme Court, which struck down a number of the key laws of the New Deal. To dilute the power of the sitting Justices, FDR asked Congress to add six new Justices to the nine-member court, a plan that became known as court packing. After 1937, the Supreme Court became more willing to accept New Deal legislation. After a new economic downturn in 1938, FDR chose not to try to force more reforms through Congress.

Ch9.3 Effects of the New Deal

The New Deal brought fundamental changes to the nation. Some women were provided with the opportunity to increase their political influence. Eleanor Roosevelt transformed the office of First Lady to a politically active position. She traveled extensively and advocated equal justice for all. The first female Cabinet member was Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, who played a leading role in establishing Social Security and a minimum wage. Despite this, the New Deal did not fight to end gender discrimination in the workplace.

President Roosevelt invited African American leaders to advise him. These unofficial advisers became known as the Black Cabinet. One member, Mary McLeod Bethune, was a powerful champion of racial equality. Even so, racial discrimination and injustice continued to plague African Americans.

The Indian New Deal was a program to help American Indians by providing funding for the construction of new schools and hospitals. In 1934, the Indian Reorganization Act restored tribal control of American Indian lands. The Bureau of Indian Affairs also stopped discouraging the practice of traditional American Indian customs.

By his death in 1945, FDR had united a culturally diverse group of Americans into a strong political force called the New Deal coalition, which gave the Democratic Party a sizable majority in both houses of Congress. FDR and the New Deal also helped to unify the nation. Programs such as the WPA allowed people of varied backgrounds to get to know one another, breaking down regional and ethnic prejudices.

New Deal programs increased the size and scope of the federal government like never before. The government assumed responsibility for providing for the welfare of children and the poor, elderly, sick, disabled, and unemployed. This led to the rise of a welfare state.

The expanding role of the government, including the creation of many new federal agencies, gave the executive branch much more power. Roosevelt was elected President four times. After his death, there was a call for limiting the President's term of office. In 1951, the Twenty-second Amendment limited the President to two consecutive terms in office.

Ch9.4 Culture of the 1930s

Entertainment became big business during the 1930s, creating a golden age in American culture. Large radio networks dominated the airwaves, while a cluster of film companies ruled the silver screen. Radio ownership grew during the decade, and nearly two thirds of all Americans attended at least one movie a week.

The movies were a form of escapism during the Great Depression as Americans sought relief from their concerns. Movies like *The Wizard of Oz* promised weary audiences that their dreams really could come true. In the early 1930s, many films reflected the public's distrust of big business and government. Others, such as the films of Frank Capra, celebrated American idealism and the triumph of the common man over adversity.

Radio brought news and entertainment into American homes. FDR used fireside radio chats to explain his New Deal programs. National radio networks broadcast dramas, comedies, soap operas, and variety shows. Episodes from *The Lone Ranger* began running in 1933 and lasted

for more than 20 years. Sometimes the lines between news and entertainment were blurred. When the Mercury Theatre broadcast a drama called *War of the Worlds* on October 30, 1938, many people panicked, believing that Martians were actually invading.

Music also provided a diversion from hard times, whether on the radio at home or in nightclubs. Americans enjoyed “swing” music played by “big bands.” Blues singers focused on the harsh conditions faced by African Americans. Woody Guthrie wrote ballads about the Okies, farmers who fled the Dust Bowl.

The federal government funded the arts for the first time through programs such as the Federal Art Project. Artists painted huge murals on public buildings across the nation. Dorothea Lange and other photographers documented the plight of America’s farmers.

Many writers produced novels featuring working-class heroes. John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* traces the fictional Joad family from the Oklahoma Dust Bowl to California. Lillian Hellman wrote several plays featuring strong roles for women as well as screenplays for movies. Americans also enjoyed comic strips and comic books.