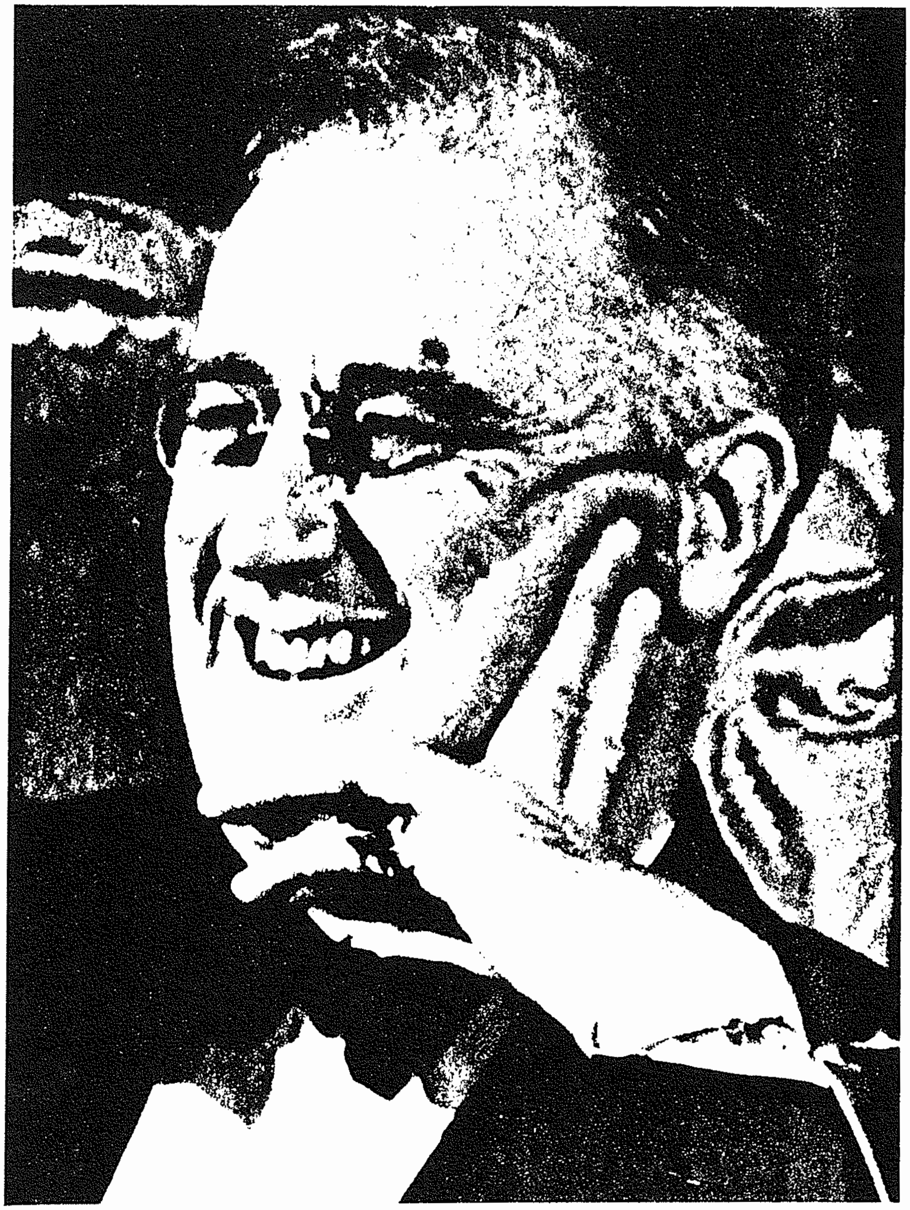

Franklin Roosevelt's confidence, expressed in such famous pronouncements as "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself" may have done as much as his policies to lift America's morale during the Depression; it also helped him win election to an unprecedented four terms as President.

The New Deal

"At the heart of the New Deal was not a philosophy but a temperament," wrote historian Richard Hofstadter. Whatever it was, it survived Franklin Delano Roosevelt, held the Democratic Party together for half a century, and inspired the champions of a growing welfare state. This year is both the centennial of Roosevelt's birth and the 50th anniversary of his election to the Presidency; scholars are meeting at the Wilson Center and other institutions to reassess Roosevelt, the New Deal, and related topics. FDR's record in office remains a matter of dispute. What did he promise? What did he accomplish? Where did he fail? These are timely questions as Americans, led by a conservative President, once again ponder the role they want government to play in their lives. Here, Alan Brinkley looks at the various American reform traditions that influenced FDR as he fashioned, willy-nilly, the New Deal; Bradford Lee supplies a "report card" on the Roosevelt administration's economic policies; and William Leuchtenburg examines FDR's lingering impact on the men who succeeded him in the White House.

PRELUDE

by Alan Brinkley

A century of political tradition was shattered in July 1932. Until Franklin Delano Roosevelt stood before his party's delegates that year in Chicago, no Democratic nominee had ever addressed a national convention. By custom, the candidate had remained at home for the duration, feigning surprise and delight when party officials called upon him several weeks later to "notify" him of his victory. Roosevelt had no patience with such niceties. He flew to Chicago, walked into the sweltering convention hall on his braced, paralyzed legs, and electrified the party with a fiery, combative speech—or, as he termed it, a "call to arms . . . to win in this crusade to restore America to its own people."

It was not an ordinary beginning for a presidential campaign, but then it was not an ordinary time. America was in the third summer of the worst economic crisis in its history. An estimated 25 percent of the work force was unemployed, and the rate was much higher in industrial cities. Akron reported 60 percent unemployment; Toledo, 80 percent. The agricultural economy had also collapsed, with farm prices down by more than half since 1929. As if nature itself were conspiring to add to the crisis, large areas of the nation's Midwestern farm belt had been turned into a "Dust Bowl" by severe drought. And in the White House sat a man who had fallen into such disrepute that the squalid shantytowns springing up on the edges of desperate cities now bore his name: "Hoovervilles." So it was a receptive audience—both in Chicago and in the nation at large—that heard Franklin Roosevelt conclude his acceptance speech with a ringing promise: "I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a new deal for the American people."

No one, however, knew precisely what he meant. And to many, listening to the candidate's genial evasiveness over the course of the campaign, it seemed as if he meant nothing at all. Newspaper columnist Walter Lippmann described him as "a highly impressionable person, without a firm grasp of public affairs and without very strong convictions."

Disorder and Instability

Yet those who dismissed Roosevelt as a man without convictions judged too quickly. It is true that the New Deal was the child of no single ideology. Indeed, few moments in American history reveal as many competing, even conflicting philosophies shaping public policy simultaneously. But the basic debate within the Roosevelt administration—over the proper role of the federal government in the economy—mirrored an argument that had been in progress for decades. Roosevelt's advisers, and Roosevelt himself, had long been involved in that debate. They

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Photo by Carl Mydans, Farm Security Administration. Library of Congress.

may have had no clear answers to the nation's problems, but the questions they would ask—the framework within which they would work—were already defined.

The federal government had, of course, been intruding itself into the American economy since the earliest days of the Republic. It had, for instance, influenced industry and commerce through its tariff policies and helped to finance the building of roads, canals, and railroads. But these early government excursions into the economy had been generally limited and indirect. The real origins of modern federal expansion lay in the rapid industrial growth of the late 1800s and the simultaneously nervous and optimistic response to it at the beginning of the 20th century.

Within the space of a few decades, the United States found itself transformed from a predominantly agrarian society into the greatest industrial power in the world. And it found itself, too, with a host of new problems: giant corporations with threatening power; a marketplace infected with corruption and brutality; an economy plagued by disorder and instability. The problems were national in scope; they required national solutions.

The young Winston Churchill, in a 1909 essay widely read by American reformers, wrote that industrial society had entered "a new time" in which "strange methods, huge forces, larger combinations—a Titanic world—have sprung up around us. . . . We will go forward into a way of life . . . more consciously national than any we have ever known."

In this optimistic spirit, Americans moved forward in the first years of the new century into what became known as the Progressive Era. During this time, many of the men who were to create the New Deal received their political educations, and the nation began to embrace a political vision that would enchant it for decades to come.

The New Freedom

At the heart of the progressive vision was a belief in system, in process. If institutions could be constructed along rational, scientific lines, if the economy could operate on the basis of enlightened procedures and through carefully designed structures, then the disorder of modern industrial life could be eliminated. No longer could the economy be entrusted to the untrained, inefficient, self-serving "robber barons" who had emerged during the late 19th century—men whom the influential social scientist Thorstein Veblen contemptuously dismissed as mainstays of the "leisure class." Instead, Veblen and many other progressives believed, the nation required a new species of *managers,* imbued with the "discipline of the machine" to transform the economy into a smoothly functioning mechanism.

Implicit in this vision was an acceptance of large-scale organization as the basic feature of the modern economy and a belief in the need for centralized coordination and control. "The essential condition of efficiency," wrote the progressive theorist Herbert Croly, "is always concentration of responsibility." But the advocates of centralized planning disagreed among themselves as to who would do the planning.

Some insisted that the power to regulate must remain in the hands of private institutions, each segment of the economy working to stabilize itself. To others, however, this private reordering of the economy seemed plainly insufficient. Giant corporations and trade associations could reduce disorder in some markets, but what of other, less powerful segments of society: farmers, workers, consumers? What institution would regulate the economy for the good of society as a whole? That institution, these reformers agreed, had to be the federal government.

The acknowledged leader of the progressive drive for active federal regulation and planning was Theodore Roosevelt. He earned that reputation less through his accomplishments as President (from 1901 to 1909) than through his celebrated Progressive ("Bull Moose") Party campaign to regain the White

House in 1912, when he articulated the ambitious economic program he called the New Nationalism. "We should," he declared, "enter upon a course of supervision, control, and regulation of those great corporations—a regulation which we should not fear, if necessary, to bring to the point of control of monopoly prices."

Other progressive reformers challenged the New Nationalism. Roosevelt accepted economic concentration as inevitable and sought to curb its evils; his opponents urged an assault upon economic concentration itself. Their vision of reform centered on a concerted government effort to eliminate what the legal scholar (and, after 1916, Supreme Court Justice) Louis D. Brandeis called the "curse of bigness." Corporations were too large, too powerful, and too unwieldy. The state, Brandeis and his followers believed, should act to eliminate monopoly and restore an economy of smaller, genuinely competitive units.

Woodrow Wilson took up this theme with his call for a "New Freedom" during the 1912 campaign. Theodore Roosevelt's approach, he warned, would create a dangerous "all-conquering combination between money and government." The promise of economic decentralization had great popular appeal, and it helped Wilson to triumph over Roosevelt and William Howard Taft (the Republican incumbent) in the 1912 contest. Never, however, did it have more than a secondary impact upon public policy. Wilson himself did virtually nothing to decentralize the economy. Instead, he created an array of Roosevelt-like regulatory institutions: the Federal Trade Commission, the Federal Reserve Board, and others.

The Planners' Triumph

And although the New Freedom continued to attract reformers in later years (including such influential future New Deal figures as Harvard's Felix Frankfurter), the New Nationalism always proved the stronger influence. Franklin Roosevelt, though he served as Assistant Secretary of the Navy under Wilson, felt a far closer sense of identification by the 1930s with his distant cousin (and uncle by marriage), Theodore. He surrounded himself with advisers who viewed themselves as modern-day champions of the New Nationalism. His powerful "Brains Trust"—Raymond Moley, Rexford Tugwell, Adolf Berle, and other academics—were without exception men who, as Moley later wrote, had rejected the "traditional Wilson-Brandeis philosophy that if America could once more become a nation of small proprietors, of corner grocers and smithies under spreading chestnut trees, we should have solved the problems of American life."

Out of the political battles of the Progressive Era, in other words, emerged not only the outlines of a debate but a clear indication of the relative strength of the opposing sides. The advocates of restoring competition would never dominate. The first impulse of policymakers dealing with the economy would be to impose centralized administration on it. The most important argument, therefore, would be between those who advocated private, corporate planning and those who believed in strong federal direction.

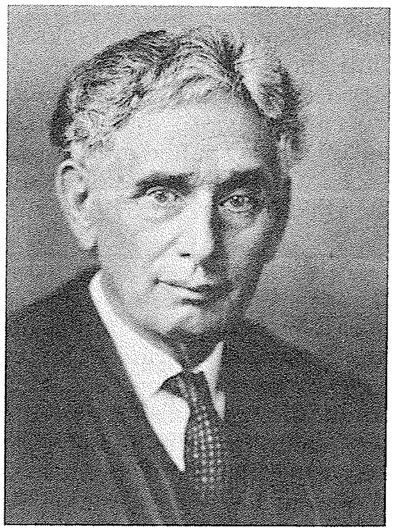
The New Era

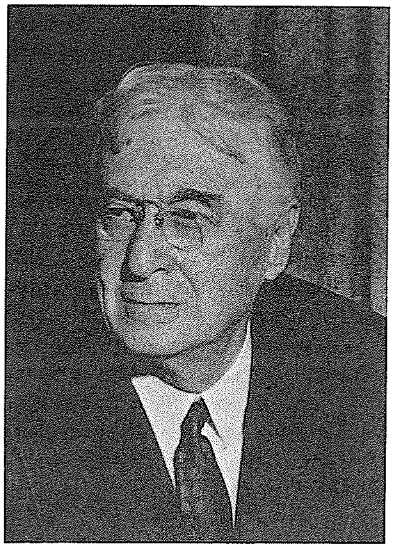
Many politicians drew on America's experience in World War I, when, suddenly, the proper organization of the economy was no longer a theoretical question but a matter of national urgency. The American war effort depended as much upon the country's industries, farms, and transportation systems as upon its military. In meeting its new needs, Washington gave little more than lip service to the ideal of decentralization.

Beginning in March 1918—after less centralized planning efforts had dissolved into bureaucratic chaos—a single agency, the War Industries Board (WIB), emerged as the undisputed center of the nation's mobilization effort. Under the leadership of corporate financier Bernard Baruch, the WIB served as a clearing house for virtually all industrial decisions: allocating scarce raw materials among competing industries, setting production quotas, overseeing prices. "Of the effects of the war on America," wrote the popular historian Mark Sullivan a few years later, "by far the most fundamental was our submission to autocracy in government. . . . The prohibition of individual liberty in the interest of the state could hardly be more complete."

In fact, Baruch was never the economic "dictator" that Sullivan and others described; nor was the wartime bureaucracy as efficient and successful as its advocates liked to claim. But the ultimate significance of the World War I experiment lay in the public's later perception of it. In popular mythology, America's military triumph was the result of fruitful cooperation between private interests and public authorities.

This vision of an organized, cooperative economy became the basis for a bold economic experiment in the 1920s: the federal government's attempt to create an American version of the "corporate" state. Despite the popular image of the '20s as a





Courtesy of the University of Louisville and of Brown Brothers, Sterling, Pa.

Harvard's Louis Brandeis (left) was a leading figure among the early progressive "trust busters"; Bernard Baruch (right), a Wall Street financier, was a champion of cooperative business-government planning after World War I. Both remained influential during the New Deal.

decade of political torpor, contemporaries were often dazzled by the pace of innovation and change. America, Herbert Hoover exuberantly proclaimed early in the decade, was "a nation of progressives." The nation had entered a "New Era" in which the industrial economy had finally achieved the stability Americans had long sought.

The reasons for the enthusiasm were clear. The United States during the '20s was in the midst of the greatest economic boom in its history. Manufacturing output rose more than 60 percent during the decade. Income per capita increased from $522 to $716. The gross national product grew by an average of five percent per year, amid low unemployment and negligible inflation.

To be sure, the Presidents of the '20s never viewed themselves as active agents of economic reform. Warren G. Harding stumbled genially but ineptly through his three years in office never fully able, as he put it, "to grasp that I am President." Calvin Coolidge, his successor, spent his few waking hours doing as little as possible, convinced that the smaller Washington's role in the economy, the healthier the nation would be. But elsewhere in the Republican government were men eagerly working to build the framework for what they called an "associative" state. Foremost among them was Herbert Hoover, the popular Secretary of Commerce through the Harding and Coolidge years.

Hoover had been educated as an engineer and trained—both in private industry and in his work as Food Administrator during World War I—as a bureaucrat. He brought to public life the technocratic assumptions of the Progressive Era. Efficiency and organization, he believed, were the keys to a modern society. Government and business could cooperate to restructure the industrial economy according to scientific principles.

The Commerce Department, a struggling, underfunded office when Hoover took command of it in 1921, grew under his leadership to one of the largest and most active departments in Washington. Hoover arranged countless conferences to expose corporate executives to scientific principles of organization, personally helped establish new trade associations, and persuaded businessmen to dampen labor discontent by bestowing new benefits upon workers through what some called a system of "welfare capitalism."

Black Friday

"There is reason to doubt," wrote *The New Republic's* columnist, TRB, in 1925, "whether in the whole history of the American government a Cabinet officer has engaged in such wide diversity of activities or covered quite so much ground."

But Hoover's prominence was not merely the product of his influence; it signaled the triumph of the "associative" ideal. Some, including Calvin Coolidge, considered Hoover uncomfortably liberal. Others—labor and farm leaders and their supporters in Congress—viewed him as too conservative and called for an even more forceful federal role in the economy. But these were clearly minority voices. Nobody could effectively challenge the Republican leadership in the face of rapid economic growth. And, as if to ratify the philosophy of voluntary, centralized cooperation, the American people unhesitatingly elected Herbert Hoover President of the United States in 1928. Less than a year later, the New Era economy collapsed.

It began unexpectedly, with a sudden and sickening stock market crash in October 1929. And as the economy began to slide slowly into the Depression, the inherent structural weaknesses of the New Era economy began to reveal themselves. There was the excessive dependence upon a few large industries, notably auto manufacturing and construction. Both had already begun to decline before 1929. There was the weakness of the banking and credit system, which began to collapse quickly at the first signs of economic trouble. There was the rickety system of international debt. Above all, there was the inadequate distribution of purchasing power within the United States itself. The American economy had become the most productive in the world, but the American people could not afford to buy its products.* The result of all this was a long deflationary spiral that dragged the nation into crisis.

A Vain Appeal

Herbert Hoover responded in classic progressive fashion: He promoted structural economic change and encouraged still greater organization and cooperation. In the process, he became the most forceful and intrusive President in American history to that point. Yet his efforts were painfully inadequate.

His attempts to persuade businessmen to maintain prices and wages voluntarily and to join new trade associations and other cooperative ventures foundered as individual companies scrambled to keep themselves afloat. The most innovative of his policies, the creation of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) in 1932, had only a limited impact. Not only was the $1.5 billion the RFC offered banks, railroads, and industries in long-term, low-interest loans inadequate, but the agency had no authority to require recipients to cooperate in any coherent program of recovery.

Hoover's commitment to voluntarism also shaped his approach to another major problem: the explosion of poverty and unemployment. He restricted his efforts to trying to coordinate the efforts of local and private relief agencies already in existence, most of which were collapsing under the unprecedented strain. Washington offered no direct financial assistance.

Hoover's economic programs failed in part because they lacked adequate funding and influence. They failed, too, because they were based upon a false premise. Faced with an economic

*More than 70 percent of American families during the 1920s continued to earn less than $2,500 a year, then considered the minimum for a "decent" standard of living. Not all of them were truly poor. But neither could they afford to buy the consumer goods—automobiles, refrigerators, radios—that American industry was so bountifully producing.

crisis that required innovative fiscal policies to increase purchasing power and thus stimulate demand, Hoover, like virtually every other public figure of the day, responded with the old nostrum of structural change. The solution to the Depression, Hoover believed, lay in rescuing the great institutions of business and finance and in helping them to maintain and increase prices. More than that, it lay in the creation of a harmonious, cooperative economy. It was a misguided vision. Yet it resolutely refused to die; not even the political demise of Herbert Hoover weakened its grasp upon the nation's imagination.

Franklin Roosevelt arrived in Washington in March 1933 confident and energetic, bringing with him a crowd of new policymakers and administrators determined to transform American government. He also brought a legacy of reform impulses stretching back over 30 years, which would do much to shape, and ultimately to limit, the New Deal.

Limits and Possibilities

It was not really one legacy, but many. As a result, there would be a bewildering variety of reforms and experiments operating simultaneously throughout the New Deal. The New Dealers took up posts in various arms of the bureaucracy, pursued their individual and often conflicting aims, and hoped that some good would emerge from the chaos. Many critics were dismayed by the apparent aimlessness of government policy. But among many old progressives and new liberals, there was exhilaration. The narrow, technocratic progressivism of Herbert Hoover had given way to a more expansive, optimistic, and experimental spirit where limits were less important than possibilities.

But all was not possible. While the past provided Franklin Roosevelt with many avenues of reform, it barred others. It prevented any serious challenge to the system of free enterprise, it discouraged moves to adopt the Keynesian demand-stimulating policies that might have produced recovery, and it inhibited any effort to establish a permanent, coherent federal welfare system.

What the past did mandate, and what became the closest thing to a philosophical core for the New Deal, was an expanded effort to construct a rationally organized economy. The New Dealers did not repudiate the New Era vision of harmonious cooperation in the economy, only the narrow means by which the Republicans had attempted to produce it. The federal government, they agreed, must be invested with far more power to compel recalcitrant companies and interest groups to cooperate on behalf of the common good.

How this conviction would translate into concrete public policy was not clear early in 1933. But that the new administration would be guided, and restrained, by the assumptions of the past was evident from the most important speech of the 1932 Democratic campaign, Roosevelt's one attempt to offer a consistent vision of New Deal reform.

Addressing the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco on September 23, 1932, the future President spoke warmly of the Democratic Party's Jeffersonian heritage and of his own commitment to individualism. But the problems of a modern, complex economy, Roosevelt explained, required important modifications of such traditions: "Our task now is not discovery or exploitation of natural resources, or necessarily producing more goods. It is the soberer, less dramatic business of administering resources and plants already in hand, of seeking to reestablish foreign markets for our surplus production, of meeting the problem of underconsumption, of adapting existing economic organizations to the service of the people. The day of the enlightened administration has come."

It was hardly a revolutionary vision. Other Americans—from the progressive reformers of the first years of the century, to the economic managers of World War I, to the advocates of voluntary cooperation in the 1920s—had been saying much the same thing. Roosevelt proposed only to enlarge the boundaries of their vision, to expand the ideal of "enlightened administration" to encompass new groups of people and larger tasks.

FDR's administration was no more able to make itself the agent of coordinated economic growth than were the administrations of the previous 30 years. The decades-old dream of a cooperative state crumbled in the face of harsh political and economic realities. Yet out of the eclectic array of programs and policies that survived emerged a new tradition: "New Deal liberalism," destined to inspire, for good and ill, the next generation of American reformers.

THE NEW DEAL RECONSIDERED

by Bradford A. Lee

"This nation asks for action, and action now," Franklin D. Roosevelt declared at his March 1933 inauguration. Eight months earlier, at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, he had confidently promised the American people a "New Deal" to fight the Great Depression, and his "Brains Trust" advisers had been hard at work on a program ever since.

In the famous First Hundred Days of FDR's Presidency, he sent 15 major legislative proposals to Congress: the Agricultural Adjustment Act, which awarded subsidies to farmers who limited their crops; the National Industrial Recovery Act, which permitted industries to form cartels to limit output and fix prices; and 13 other major laws—some of them passed after only token debate.

Over the next five years, these would be followed by several major relief measures (including the $5 billion Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935, the most expensive peacetime government program anywhere up to then), the establishment of the Social Security system in 1935, the Securities Exchange Act, and a host of other bills. The new government agencies created by Roosevelt strained the resources of the alphabet—AAA, CAB, CCC, CWA, FCA, FCC, FDIC, FERA, FHA, FSA, HOLC, NLRB, NRA, NYA, PWA, REA, SEC, TVA, WPA.

The results may have been mixed, but the impact was unmistakable. Even a cursory inspection of the New Deal shows that it reshaped American institutions and gave material sustenance to millions of people who had been thrown out of jobs and into various states of misery by the Depression. The greatest lift probably came from FDR himself. Of his predecessor in the White House, one observer remarked, "If you put a rose in Hoover's hand, it would wilt." Roosevelt, by contrast, radiated confidence. "Never was there such a change in the transfer of a government," *New York Times* columnist Arthur Krock exclaimed a week after the inauguration. "The President is the boss, the dynamo, the works."

Did any conscious grand design for American society underlie Roosevelt's policies? Pretty clearly, the answer is "No."

Civilian Conservation Corps workers in the field. The CCC was the inspiration for the Job Corps in President Johnson's War on Poverty.

Helen West Heller, for the WPA.

Roosevelt's advisers were perpetually at odds among themselves. Raymond Moley hoped to revive industry by allowing companies, in effect, to form cartels; his Columbia University colleague, Rexford G. Tugwell, advocated centralized government planning; and Felix Frankfurter, like Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, wanted to break up big corporations and restore a bygone economy of small businesses. FDR flirted with all of these ideas, often at the same time.

Yet, for a historian simply to paint a picture of blooming, buzzing confusion would be to obscure three broad aims that Roosevelt and his advisers *did* share.

Apart from keeping their countrymen alive, their first goal was to bring the economy out of the Depression. Their second objective was to make the distribution of wealth and especially income more equal—or, as they were wont to say, more "balanced." The major cause of the Depression, in Roosevelt's view, was the relatively small amount of purchasing power in the hands of farmers and workers; the cure was redistribution of income. Finally, the New Dealers hoped to realign the groupings in American politics to keep the Democratic Party in power.

To what extent did Roosevelt succeed in his principal aim, the restoration of prosperity? The conventional wisdom has it that only mobilization for war at the end of the 1930s pulled the American economy out of the Depression. And, in fact, the Gross National Product did not surpass its 1929 level until 1941. But there were some remarkable ups and downs along the way.

While almost all the major industrial countries (except France) enjoyed a fairly steady recovery after mid-1932, interrupted only by a mild setback in 1937–38, the American economy (measured by GNP) took a wild roller coaster ride. It plunged between the 1932 election and the 1933 inauguration and recovered briefly. It fell again in the autumn of 1933. Then, from late 1934 to mid-1937, the American economy grew by an average of about 15 percent annually (in current prices)—a rate never equalled in peacetime before or since. Soon, however, the country was wracked by an industrial decline even steeper than that in the initial post-1929 crash. Between Labor Day 1937 and New Year's Day 1938, two million people were abruptly thrown out of work. The economy began to recover once more a year later, as a surge of defense spending rolled the country toward a wartime boom.

Coincidence and Calamity

"Roosevelt's depression" of 1937, as the Republicans called it, was the result of two mistakes. Never comfortable with deficit spending—he had attacked Herbert Hoover for heading "the greatest spending administration in peace times in all our history"—FDR cut back Washington's outlays on relief and public works in a great show of budget balancing in 1936, an election year. The other mistake was committed by the independent Federal Reserve Board, which took it upon itself in 1936 and 1937 to shrink the volume of credit outstanding in the banking system. The two decisions, though arrived at separately, coincided to produce calamitous effects.

And, unfortunately for Roosevelt's reputation as an economic policymaker, he cannot take much credit for the boom of the mid-1930s. The major economic stimulus seems to have been an extraordinary annual increase of more than 13 percent

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(on average) in the money supply between 1934 and 1936, due not to any calculated policy but to an influx of gold from politically unstable Europe.*

Federal fiscal policy did little to spur the economic expansion of the mid-1930s. Roosevelt's deficits were unprecedented in peacetime, reaching $3.6 billion during his first full year in office. But raw deficit figures are not a good indicator of how much the economy is being stimulated. Economists today measure the effect of a fiscal policy by calculating the size of the hypothetical surplus that it would produce if the economy were at its full-employment level. The higher the hypothetical surplus, the lower the stimulus. By this standard, Roosevelt's budgets throughout the '30s provided little stimulus in any year except 1936—and then only because Congress passed a $2 billion bonus payment for war veterans over his veto. Indeed, Herbert Hoover's fiscal policy in 1930 and 1931 had about the same effect as any two consecutive New Deal budgets.

It was not until 1938 that Roosevelt finally accepted the principles of Keynesian fiscal policy. Up until then, he had viewed deficits as a necessary evil, tolerable only because Washington had to finance programs to keep people working or, in some cases, eating. When John Maynard Keynes himself had tried to tutor FDR in his theories in 1934, the President was unimpressed. Keynes, he remarked, "left a whole rigamarole of figures. He must be a mathematician rather than a political economist."

Only Four Stripteases

From the start, Roosevelt put his faith instead in "structural" measures that would directly raise prices and wages. If farmers got more money for their crops and workers got more for their labor, they would buy more goods; if there were increased demand and higher prices, businessmen would earn greater profits. This was the rationale behind the two main elements of the New Deal economic program—the Agricultural Adjustment Act, administered by the AAA, and the National Industrial Recovery Act, run by the NRA. "The aim of this whole effort," Roosevelt declared, "is to restore our rich domestic market by raising its vast consuming capacity."

Under the NRA, 765 codes were drawn up to regulate output, fix prices, reduce working hours, and increase wages in various industries. The NRA's famous blue eagle symbol was

*The dollar was then a gold-backed currency. The Federal Reserve Board passively allowed the increase in gold reserves to be translated into an expansion of credit in the economy.

seen everywhere as the most obscure industries were urged to adopt special codes. New York's burlesque houses even agreed in a code to allow no more than four stripteases per show. The eagles disappeared abruptly after the Supreme Court declared the act unconstitutional in 1935 on the ground that Congress had delegated too much of its authority to the agency. The AAA was just as far-reaching. In 1933 alone, cotton farmers collected \$100 million for taking 10 million acres out of production.

The AAA and NRA did indeed improve the lot of many farmers, workers, and businessmen. But, especially in the case of the NRA, the effect on the economy as a whole was not so positive.

Soaking the Rich?

Any economic stimulus will work itself out in a certain combination of increases in prices and increases in output, or quantities of goods and services produced (national income = prices × quantities). The NRA, AAA, and other government programs, such as those encouraging collective bargaining agreements, ensured that the economic stimulus provided by an expanding money supply would express itself more in terms of higher prices and less in terms of increased output. Thus, wholesale prices rose by 45 percent between 1933 and 1937—a perverse development at a time when millions of people were out of work and so many factories were operating at reduced capacity.

Higher output would have produced more jobs. In 1936, after two years of recovery, one out of six workers (about 17 percent of the labor force) remained unemployed. By diverting so much of the economy's upward thrust into higher prices, New Deal policymakers inadvertently prolonged the agony of joblessness for millions.

This brings us to the second question: How much did the distribution of income and wealth change during the New Deal?

Between the onset of the Depression in 1929 and the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, there was a shift toward greater equality of incomes in America for the first time in well over a century. The share of total national income received by families in the bottom two-fifths of the scale rose from 12.5 percent to 15.7 percent; the share of income for the top fifth fell 13 points to 41.6 percent. There was a trend toward greater equality of wealth as well: The share of the national wealth held by the richest one percent of adults fell from 38 percent in 1929 to 22 percent in 1949. The two key questions are: To what extent did these changes take place in 1933–38, the heyday of the New

THE MAJOR NEW DEAL AGENCIES

To cope with the Depression and implement New Deal programs, Congress set up scores of new federal entities. Notable among them:

Agricultural Adjustment Administration (1933–42) Raised farm prices by subsidizing reduced crop production.

Civil Works Administration (1933–34) Hired jobless workers, from carpenters to artists, to practice their crafts. Peak enrollment: four million.

Civilian Conservation Corps (1933–42) Employed a total of three million relief recipients to reforest public land and improve national parks under Army supervision.

Farm Security Administration (1937–46) Granted low-interest loans for farm improvements and for land purchases by tenant farmers. Set up model camps for migrant laborers. Spending totaled $1 billion by 1941.

Federal Emergency Relief Administration (1933–37) Financed state-run employment projects. Grants totaled $3 billion.

Home Owners Loan Corporation (1933–51) Refinanced mortgages for home owners in distress. Took over more than one million loans by 1936.

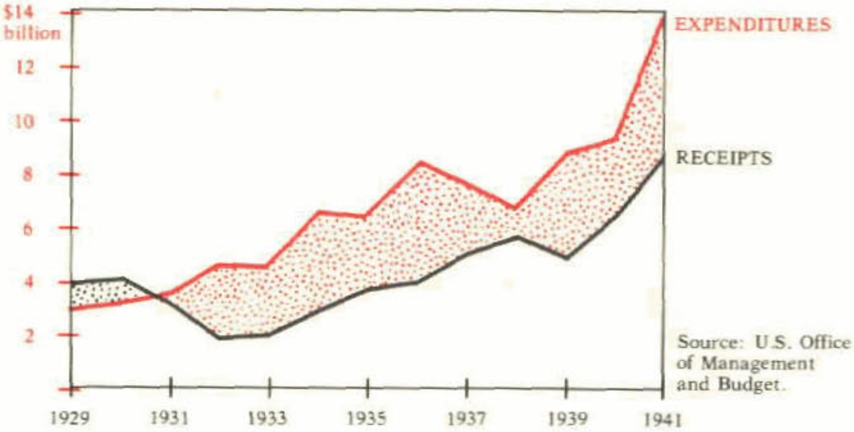
National Recovery Administration (1933–35) Directed government-business cooperation in cutting production and raising prices and wages.

Public Works Administration (1933–39) Provided jobs on major projects (highways and public buildings) for the unemployed. Spent some $6 billion.

Works Progress Administration (1935–43) Spent $11 billion to employ the jobless on small projects, from digging ditches to painting murals in government buildings.

Surviving New Deal agencies include: the Civil Aeronautics Board (formerly Authority); Commodity Credit Corporation; Export-Import Bank; Farm Credit Administration; Federal Communications Commission; Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation; Federal Housing Administration; Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation; National Labor Relations Board; Rural Electrification Administration; Securities and Exchange Commission; Social Security Administration (formerly Board); Tennessee Valley Authority.

FEDERAL SPENDING DURING THE DEPRESSION



Federal deficits were relatively small during the 1930s and did little to stimulate the economy. Yet by some measures America's 130 million people were better off by 1940, despite nagging poverty and unemployment.

SOCIAL INDICATORS	1928	1930	1932	1934	1936	1938	1940	1980
Marriage rate (per 1,000 pop.)	9.8	9.2	7.9	10.3	10.7	10.3	12.1	10.9
Birth rate (per 1,000 pop.)	22.2	21.3	19.5	19.0	18.4	19.2	19.4	16.2
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	68.7	64.6	57.6	60.1	57.1	51.0	47.0	12.5
Suicide rate (per 100,000 pop.)	13.5	15.6	17.4	14.9	14.3	15.3	14.4	12.7
Homicide rate (per 100,000 pop.)	8.6	8.8	9.0	9.5	8.0	6.8	6.3	11.3
Radios (% of households with)	27.5	45.8	60.6	65.2	70.5	79.2	81.1	99.9
Telephones (% of households with service)	40.8	40.9	33.5	31.4	33.1	34.6	36.9	96.3
Annual meat consumption (lbs. per capita)	124.3	121.7	124.2	134.1	120.9	118.6	134.1	157.2
College degrees (per 1,000 persons 23 yrs. old)	55	57	63	61	63	72	81	238

Source: American Telephone & Telegraph Co.; *Merchandising* (Mar. 1980); U.S. Department of Agriculture; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census; U.S. Department of Education; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Deal, and to what extent were shifts within that period due to New Deal policies?

In the case of wealth, the answers are simple: The New Deal had no effect. Spurred on by the growing popularity of the flamboyant Louisiana "Kingfish," Senator Huey Long, and his Share the Wealth movement, Roosevelt pushed stiffer taxes on gifts and estates through Congress in 1935. (William Randolph Hearst, the newspaper mogul, ordered his editors to call Roosevelt's policies the "Raw Deal" from then on.) Yet the share of wealth held by the richest one percent of the population actually rose from 30 to 33 percent between 1933 and 1939.

The answers are more complicated in the case of income, but one point is quite clear: About two-thirds of the shift toward more equality came in just three years, 1941–44. As in other countries during the 20th century, war was the great equalizer.

The rest of the shift took place sometime between 1929 and 1941. Since there are adequate income statistics for only one intervening point—1935—it is difficult to pin down when much of this more modest change occurred. One can make an educated guess that the steep economic decline in 1929–32 hit those at the upper and lower ends of the income ladder much harder than those in the middle and that the net overall effect was a small increase in inequality of earnings. If so, we can infer that there must have been a significant, though hardly spectacular, increase in income equality after that. But we cannot assume that New Deal policies were responsible for the shift. Other factors, such as the recovery itself and normal changes within the economy, also contributed.

Benefits for Big Business

What, then, *can* we say about the role of federal policy? Higher taxes after 1935 did take a bite out of large incomes. But it is easy to overstate what can be achieved by "soaking the rich." Wesleyan University economist Stanley Lebergott has pointed out that if Washington had taxed away all personal income over $20,000 in 1970 and distributed it to those below the poverty line, each family would have received just $350. And Roosevelt never contemplated so confiscatory a tax (though he once remarked during World War II that no one needed an after-tax income over $25,000). In fact, the overall tax structure did not become much more progressive during the 1930s.

Roosevelt was rather more adventurous when it came to spending. But the sums expended on public works and relief were never enough (even allowing for a generous "multiplier"

"And if Roosevelt is not reelected, perhaps even a villa in Newport, my dearest sweet" was the caption of this 1936 cartoon.

effect) to support more than a fraction of the vast numbers of jobless and destitute at anything but a minimum level. Harry Hopkins's Works Progress Administration, established in 1935 with a budget of $1.4 billion, provided work for only three million of the estimated 10 million unemployed—at wages as low as $19 per month. This was by far the most ambitious New Deal relief effort. Such programs did not, therefore, have much effect on income distribution.

Indeed, it is not at all clear that the government's money went to those whose absolute need was greatest. The states in the richest region of the country, the West, got 75 percent more federal relief and public works money per capita than those of the poorest region, the South. Anyone with a modicum of cynicism will (rightly) sense politics at work: The "Solid South" fared badly because the Democrats were sure of its electoral support. The Western states did well because their political loyalties were up for grabs.

Still, for all their limitations, the taxing and spending policies of the New Deal did at least slightly narrow the gap between those at the very top and those at the very bottom. Other policies, however, pushed the people in between further apart. The AAA's crop-restriction and subsidy program, for instance, helped big farmers more than smaller ones. On large farms, with hired labor and large amounts of machinery, fuel, and fertilizer, costs could be cut in many ways when the payments for curtailing acreage began. But smaller farmers who relied on the labor of their families had few extraneous costs to cut. The subsidies were worth comparatively less to them.*

Large-scale operations and influential producers in industry also enjoyed an advantage under the shortlived National Recovery Administration. Big business was generally able to control the formulation and administration of the NRA codes that fixed prices and output; they showed no great concern for the interests of the "little guy."

Contradictions

Even among workers, there was a tendency for the most vulnerable to be left behind. The NRA pushed employers to pay higher wages, and unskilled workers gained even more than their skilled counterparts. Thus, the most dramatic dividing line was not between the skilled and the unskilled, but between those with jobs and those without them.

After the Supreme Court put the NRA out of business in 1935, labor got a new boost from Washington. The landmark National Labor Relations Act of 1935 gave labor unions even more help in their efforts to organize workers (by guaranteeing secret ballots in representation elections, for instance) and allowed them to press wage demands more successfully than before. But, again, higher wages, like higher prices, meant fewer jobs would be created for the unemployed.

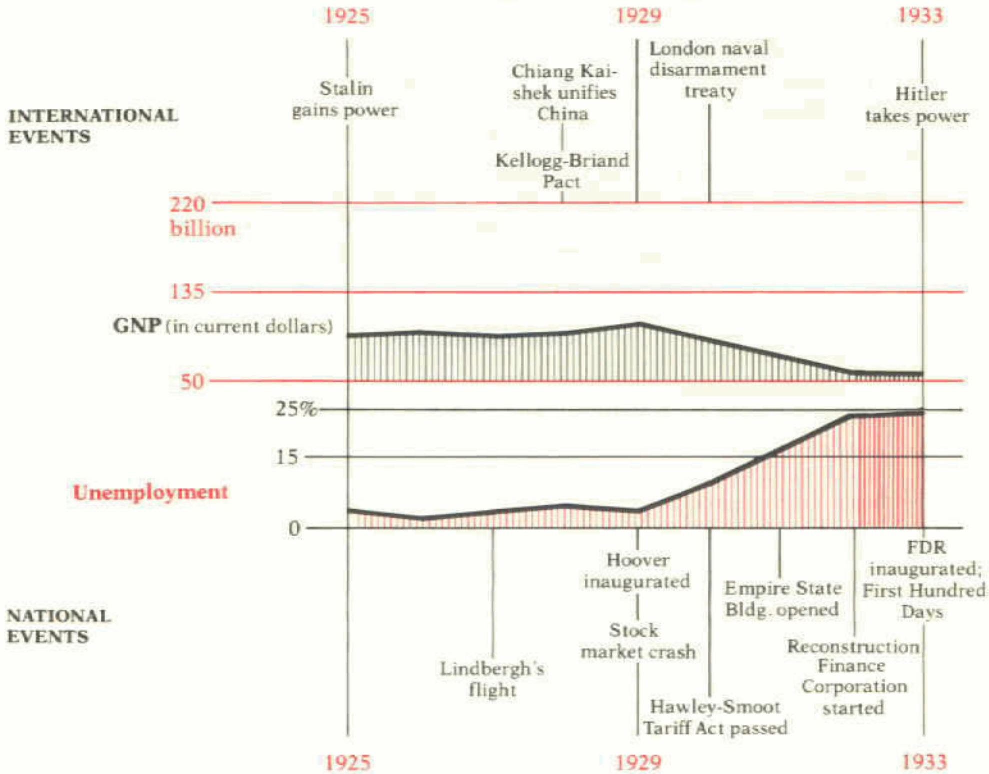
The unavoidable conclusion about New Deal economic policy is that, so far as both recovery and redistribution are concerned, FDR's "structural" measures offset much of whatever uplift effect his fiscal policy may have had. There was some progress during the New Deal, but government's contribution to it was scant.

All this, of course, is much clearer in hindsight than it was back then. When one looks over at the political side of the picture, it appears that a distinct majority of the American people at the time seemed quite satisfied with the New Deal—and wanted to play on. Or did they?

Roosevelt's victory in the 1932 election with more than 57

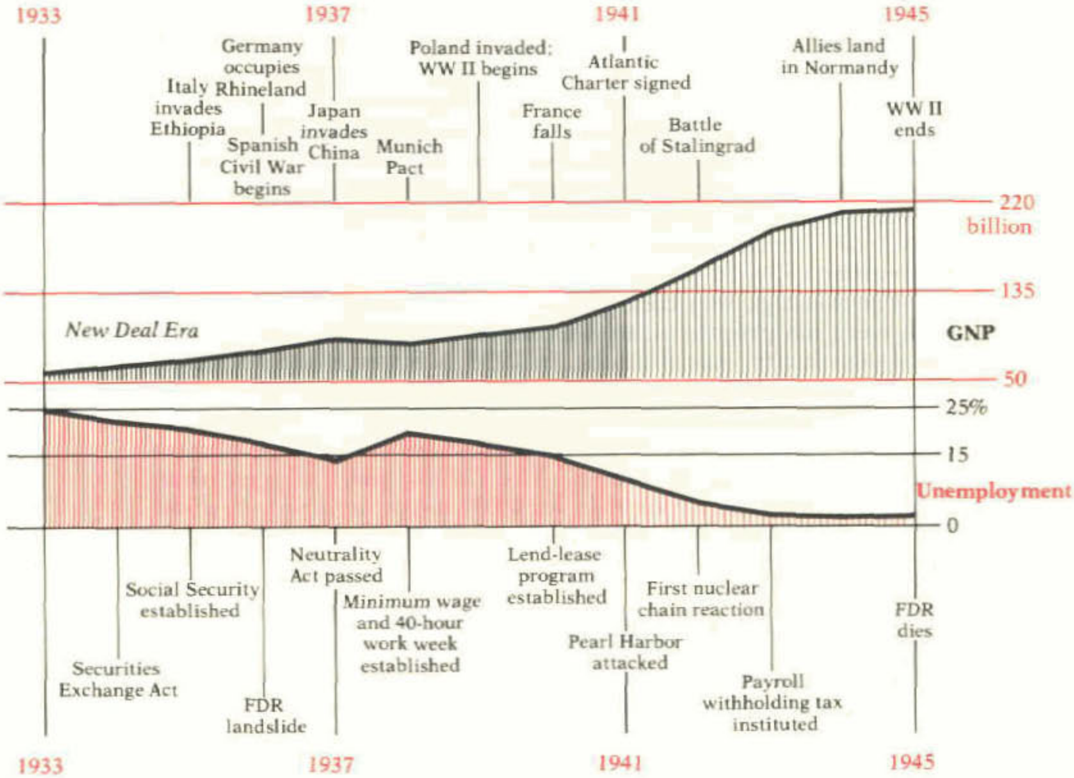
*There was another problem in the South, where there were many sharecroppers who customarily received from the landlord only a share of the crop they grew on his land. The sharecroppers were entitled to a corresponding portion of the AAA payments. But the program was implemented at the local level by farmer committees dominated by landlords, and, especially in cotton-growing areas, the sharecroppers did not get their due.

THE U.S. ECONOMY, 1925–45, including the NEW DEAL PERIOD



percent of the vote, and his even more spectacular triumph four years later with more than 60 percent, were the critical points in a massive electoral realignment. He put together a political coalition that has dominated American politics ever since, although the 1980 elections may have changed that. The realignment in the 1930s was the product of two phenomena. One was a switch-over among some Republicans to Roosevelt; the other was a surge of new participants into the electorate.

Prominent among the converts were blacks, who had been attached to the GOP, the party of Lincoln, since the Civil War. (A 1938 *Fortune* survey showed that 84.7 percent of the blacks polled supported Roosevelt.) But large numbers of white



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

middle-class progressives and farmers switched as well. (Later, they tended to gravitate back toward the Republican fold.) The new voters included most of the young and many women; they came above all from enclaves of Poles, Italians, and other recent immigrants in the big Northern cities. The upshot was an incongruous coalition whose staunchest elements were "minorities" of all sorts and white Southerners with racist and nativist views.

It is easier to identify who voted for Roosevelt than to be sure precisely why they did so. The farmers and middle-class "swing" voters were probably spurning the Republican Party for its mishandling of the Depression—they had a kind of Hoover hangover. Southerners no doubt continued to vote for the Democratic Party largely because it was part of their tradition. The ethnic groups were mobilizing to preserve the relief and public-works jobs that they gained under the New Deal.

Yet the bond between New Deal *programs* and the general public was never as strong and far-reaching as many people have since assumed. It was during the 1930s that "scientific" public opinion surveys made their debut. The first Gallup poll, taken in September 1935, revealed that 60 percent of a national cross-section thought government expenditures for relief and recovery were "too great" while only nine percent deemed them "too little." In December 1935, 59 percent opposed the AAA; in September 1936, 56 percent were against reviving the NRA.

The message was clear. Roosevelt was much more popular than were his programs. By the end of the 1930s, even his personal popularity was in doubt. In 1938, a bitter Hugh Johnson, whom Roosevelt had fired from his job as head of the NRA, wrote, "The old Roosevelt magic has lost its kick. . . . His Falstaffian army can no longer be kept together and led by a melodious whinny and a winning smile." The Gallup polls suggest that only the war made it possible for FDR to run and win in 1940 and, again, in 1944 (garnering 54.7 and 53.4 percent of the popular vote, respectively).

Sheepskins from Harvard

The lack of widespread ideological support for the New Deal was soon reflected—indeed magnified—in Congress. In 1937, Roosevelt's congressional coalition crumbled, and a bloc of conservative Democrats—mostly from the South—joined with the Republicans to oppose almost all further New Deal legislation. This happened despite the fact that Roosevelt himself had carried every state but two in the 1936 election. (His advisers joked, "As Maine goes, so goes Vermont.") It would be more than a quarter of a century before another reform-minded Democratic President, Lyndon B. Johnson, could overcome that stalemate on Capitol Hill.

The basic animus of these conservative Democrats was directed against the rapid growth of the federal government under Roosevelt. They were also repelled by the growing power of the new bureaucratic breed who were intellectuals first and party operators second. One Congressman complained in mid-1937 that "unless an applicant can murder the broad 'a' and present a Harvard sheepskin he is definitely out."

Another development that stymied FDR during the late 1930s was the growth in the power of interest groups. Since the late 19th century, they had made their voices heard in Washington on more and more issues. They had won many "pork barrel" concessions, but seldom triumphed on matters of principle. Big Business, for instance, had failed to get from the Republican administrations of the 1920s what it most wanted—a drastic relaxation of the antitrust laws.

A New Power Structure

Roosevelt himself promoted the growth of interest groups after 1933, partly in hopes of defusing criticism of the increasingly powerful bureaucracy he presided over and partly to line up support for the New Deal. The Roosevelt administration worked with the American Farm Bureau Federation, for instance, in designing and running the AAA. The result: The Farm Bureau's membership increased by 150 percent between 1933 and 1937. Union membership soared under the NRA, and even more under the National Labor Relations Act. The NRA not only allowed Big Business most of what it had wanted but also encouraged the growth of more powerful trade associations.*

But the strategy backfired. Business, disillusioned with the NRA and outraged by New Deal fiscal policy, soon turned against Roosevelt, as the Farm Bureau did later on. Part of the labor movement, led by the fiery John L. Lewis of the new Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), broke with FDR in the late 1930s. Thus, while the creation of a new power structure in Washington was probably Roosevelt's most lasting achievement, he himself ended up being immobilized by it—one reason why he put so few major New Deal measures before Congress after 1935. Future occupants of the White House would face the same array of powerful interests in and out of Congress.

To a historian born after Roosevelt's death and writing almost half a century after his first term in office, the New Deal lacks the epic quality that it has for many who lived through it. But my purpose is not to rewrite the New Deal as a tragedy of missed opportunities. In countries with pluralistic political systems and market economies—and not just in those countries—it is difficult for any government to bring about sudden but endur-

*The New Deal fostered the explosive growth of farm, labor, and business groups by providing an easy solution to what University of Maryland economist Mancur Olson has described as the "free rider problem": No individual has a great incentive to join such a group if he can reap the benefits it wins without paying the costs of membership. A farmer, for instance, could benefit from crop subsidies whether he belonged to an organization that helped win them or not. By bringing such groups directly into the policymaking process, however, the Roosevelt administration helped promote the impression that they were at the center of the action and winning battles—a sense of "collective efficacy"—that won the groups new members.

ing transformations in the structure of society.

The independent movements, decisions, and mentalities of millions of people are, in other words, more than a match for the flow of paper from the top. Even to begin to alter the existing distribution of income, the democratic state must reach deep into the pockets of taxpayers far down the middle tax brackets—and, for its efforts, it is likely to get its hand bitten. To revitalize an economy from above is no easy matter either. The U.S. government's share of GNP in the 1930s was still so small that even relatively large increases in spending would not have had decisive results. It may be possible to concentrate political power early in a President's term, but in a political system whose constitutional underpinnings encourage fragmentation, a reaction is inevitable. No President of the United States has been able to get his own way for long.

This is not to endorse the new conventional wisdom that governments can do nothing constructive. It is simply to say that in complex, advanced societies such as the United States, governments are most effective when they pursue sharply defined ends through consistent, carefully designed means. FDR could have achieved far more with more thought and less action. So, no doubt, could have his heirs of the Johnson years. And those who would repudiate the spirit of the New Deal today are prone to the same incoherence of means, the same inattention to unintended consequences, and the same unrealistic inflation of hopes. As any historian knows, however, it is much easier to see this in retrospect than from the eye of the storm.

THE LEGACY OF FDR

by William E. Leuchtenburg

During his long Presidency, Franklin Delano Roosevelt so dominated the political culture that historians have called the period "the age of Roosevelt." In the years since his death, he has continued to cast a giant shadow, especially on the White House. He has had the greatest influence, understandably, on the first three Democrats to succeed him—Harry S Truman, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson. But he has left his mark, too, on Republicans and upon those more remote from the heyday of the New Deal, not excepting the present incumbent.

Each of FDR's successors has, in different ways, had to cope with the question of how to comport himself with respect to the Roosevelt tradition. Much of America's political history since 1945 is a reflection of their responses.

On April 12, 1945, as World War II neared its end, Vice President Harry Truman was presiding over a dull Senate debate on a water treaty. When it ended, shortly before sunset, he made his way to the office of the Speaker of the House, Sam Rayburn. No sooner had he arrived than the Vice President was told to call the White House. The President's press secretary wanted him to come down right away, quickly and quietly. When he got there, Mrs. Roosevelt came up to him, put her arm on his shoulder, and said softly, "Harry, the President is dead." Franklin D. Roosevelt had died that afternoon in Warm Springs, Georgia. After a moment of shock, Truman recovered himself enough to ask Mrs. Roosevelt: "Is there anything I can do for you?" She replied: "Is there anything we can do for you? For you are the one in trouble now."

That was an odd remark to make to someone who had just ascended to the highest office in the land, but Truman saw immediately that he was indeed "in trouble." So totally had Roosevelt embodied everyone's notion of who "the President" was that it seemed incomprehensible that anyone else could hold the office. Many Americans could not remember when there had been anyone but Roosevelt in the White House, and they had assumed without thinking about it that he would be there forever. During the 1944 campaign, according to one story, a man said to a loyal Democrat who had just become father of a baby boy, "Maybe he'll grow up to be President." "Why?" the man replied, "What's the matter with Roosevelt?"

Truman himself found it difficult to assume his role as Roosevelt's successor. Five months after he took office, he was still writing Eleanor Roosevelt, "I never think of anyone as the President, but Mr. Roosevelt." Truman's deference to Eleanor Roosevelt went well beyond personal solicitude. He began his Presidency, according to one account, by regularly phoning his predecessor's widow to find out "what *he* would have done about this or that great problem." The President "consulted Mrs. Roosevelt as he might have consulted a medium."

Roosevelt's "Fifth Term"?

Many of those who had been close to Roosevelt doubted that Truman had a proper appreciation of liberal values or the capacity to translate those values into action. The head of the Tennessee Valley Authority wrote in his journal his response to the news of FDR's death: "Complete unbelief. That was first. Then a sick, hopeless feeling. Then consternation at the thought of that Throttlebottom, Truman. 'The country and the world doesn't deserve to be left this way, with Truman at the head of the country at such a time.'" Some New Dealers decided to abandon the new administration, while others were forced out. By the time of the 1946 midterm elections, little more than a year after V-J Day, not one member of the Roosevelt Cabinet of April 1945 remained.

During the 1946 elections, Truman's stock fell so low that the Democratic national chairman told the President to stay out of sight, and the party turned to recordings of Roosevelt's voice instead. In one radio commercial, a discussion of the meat shortage, a voice announced, "Here's what President Roosevelt had to say about it," although the shortage had developed after Roosevelt was in the grave. Worse yet, the Democratic Party's congressional candidates, running for the first time in 16 years without Roosevelt in the White House, lost their majority in both House and Senate. Truman was blamed, not altogether fairly, for lacking FDR's magic touch.

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The end of World War II brought a burst of prosperity, not the new depression that many had predicted. New Deal–style programs, however, were not dismantled but expanded.

As Truman entered the 1948 presidential campaign, he found that much of the contest centered not on what new steps the country should take, but on who was the real heir to Franklin Roosevelt: Truman, or his predecessor in the Vice Presidency, Henry Wallace, who ran as the third-party Progressive candidate. One journalist commented, "Nothing quite like this has happened since the turbulent debate over Lenin's will."

To offset Wallace's appeal to liberals, Truman deliberately based his campaign on an appeal to memories of Roosevelt and the New Deal. "Think of the gains you've obtained in the last 16 years—higher wages, Social Security, unemployment compensation, federal loans to save your homes and a thousand other things," he said. Like Roosevelt after 1932, he campaigned less against his current Republican rival than against Herbert Hoover. Though the odds against him seemed insurmountable, Truman confounded the experts by coming home a winner. (The Democrats also returned to power in the Senate and House.)

Yet even his upset triumph did not get Truman out from under Roosevelt's shadow. True, people paid tribute to his grit. But all Truman had done, they said, was to scrape by on the basis of the political coalition that Roosevelt had put together.

One of Winston Churchill's American correspondents held a similar view. The victory, Churchill was told, was the result of the "continuation of the policies which had been in effect for the last 16 years." The author of the letter: Harry Truman.

The aftermath was even more troubling for Truman. He had, all along, viewed his role as being that of a caretaker President filling out Roosevelt's fourth term. But now he thought he had been elected in his own right, and everything would be different. It was not to be.

In 1949, Truman tried to establish his own identity by offering a program under a different rubric, the "Fair Deal," with some proposals—such as national health insurance, federal aid to education, and civil rights legislation—that moved a step beyond the Roosevelt agenda. (All of these proposals went down to defeat in Congress.) However, critics regarded the Fair Deal as little more than a warmed-over New Deal; one called Truman's tenure after 1948 "Roosevelt's Fifth Term."

As a consequence, Truman, who had thought of himself as FDR's faithful servant, took a more questioning look at the Roosevelt heritage, particularly in one respect. Long before his term was scheduled to expire, Truman decided not to run for re-election because he disapproved of his predecessor's example in breaking the two-term tradition.

In an April 1950 memorandum, Truman stated: "There is a lure in power. It can get into a man's blood just as gambling and lust for money have been known to do. . . . When we forget the examples of such men as Washington, Jefferson, and Andrew Jackson, all of whom could have had a continuation in the office, then we will start down the road to dictatorship and ruin. I know I could be elected again and continue to break the old precedent as it was broken by F.D.R. It should not be done."

Frustrations

To Truman, who had a keen interest in his place in history, it could not help but seem unfair that he was being perceived only as FDR's stand-in. To be sure, Truman inherited a great many things from Franklin Roosevelt: a broad view of the prerogatives of the chief executive, a legacy of New Deal statutes and agencies, a legislative agenda, a matrix of foreign policy commitments and institutions, a corps of seasoned administrators with ties to academe, and a successful electoral coalition. Yet Truman made his own distinctive contributions—in domestic affairs, a greater emphasis on civil rights, notably in desegregating the military; in foreign policy, the Marshall Plan, the

Berlin airlift, and the intervention to rescue South Korea from communist invasion. But he never managed to walk out from under the giant shadow cast by FDR.

Ten days after Franklin Roosevelt was inaugurated in March 1933, a prominent financier wrote to him: "I just stopped off at Providence to see my oldest daughter at the Sacred Heart Convent. The Mother Superior of the Convent, a real saintly woman, said the nuns were praying for you and then made a remarkable statement for a religious woman to make, 'That since your inauguration peace seemed to come on the earth; in fact it seemed like another resurrection.'" The man who sent Roosevelt this report was Joseph P. Kennedy.

Family Feud

Five years later, a former Secretary of State met with Joe Kennedy and found that he had a very different attitude toward Roosevelt. Henry Stimson noted in his diary: "Speaking of the effect of [the New Deal] upon himself, Kennedy said that a few years ago he thought he had made money enough to provide for his children. He now saw it likely to be all gone and he lay awake nights over it."

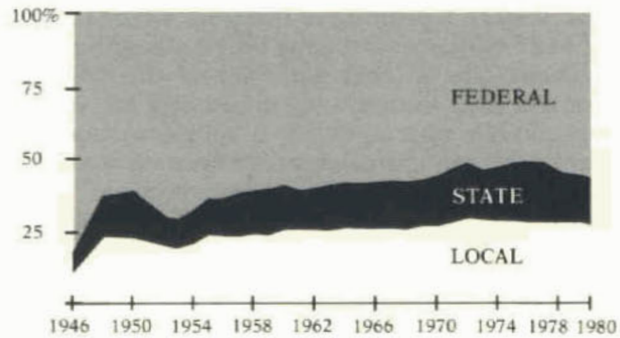
These two episodes indicate the parameters of the attitudes toward Roosevelt that John Kennedy absorbed as a young man. They may help to explain his failure to share the admiration of other Democrats of his generation for Roosevelt and the detachment with which he viewed the New Deal.

To be sure, the young Jack Kennedy could not escape an awareness of Franklin Roosevelt. He was 15 when Roosevelt came to power, 16 when his father became chairman of the Securities Exchange Commission and hence was linked to FDR in any newspaper Jack was likely to read. Furthermore, Joe Kennedy ran a remarkable dinner table. "I can hardly remember a mealtime," Robert Kennedy later said, "when the conversation was not dominated by what Franklin D. Roosevelt was doing or what was happening around the world."

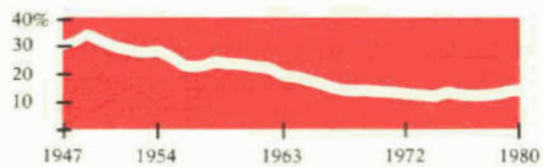
Still, it is striking how little impact Roosevelt appears to have had on Jack Kennedy in his youth. Much of the time he was at school, away from his father and cut off from the events of the Great Depression. "Please send me the Litary [sic] Digest," he wrote from the Canterbury School in the fall of 1930, "because I did not know about the Market Slump until a long time after, or a paper. Please send me some golf balls." More important, he displayed surprisingly little interest in national affairs as his schooling continued and no enthusiasm for FDR.

AFTER THE NEW DEAL AND WORLD WAR II

THE GOVERNMENT SPENDING "MIX"

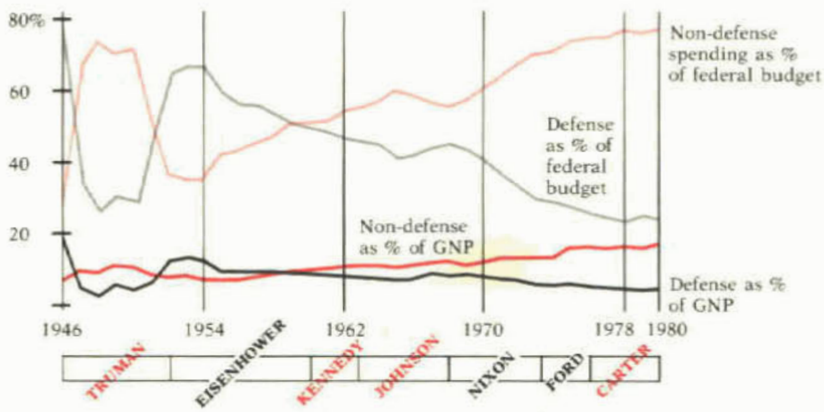


PERCENTAGE OF THE U.S. POPULATION IN POVERTY



Source: Office of Management and Budget: U.S. Council of Economic Advisors; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census and Bureau of Economic Analysis.

NEW TRENDS IN FEDERAL SPENDING



The signals Jack Kennedy received became even more confusing after December 1937 when Roosevelt appointed his father Ambassador to Great Britain. On the one hand, Jack, who was then in his third year at Harvard, understood that Roosevelt had bestowed a singular honor on an Irish Catholic of rude origins. On the other hand, Jack's father, as Ambassador, took an attitude toward foreign affairs markedly different from FDR's. The President became increasingly disturbed at reports that his envoy was saying that the Nazis could not be defeated, that the Jews were running America, and that Roosevelt would go down to defeat in 1940. At the 1940 Democratic convention, Jack's older brother, Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr., then being groomed for a political career, voted to deny Roosevelt nomination for a third term. The elder Kennedy resigned his post at the Court of St. James's the same year.

Less Profile, More Courage

Worse was still to come. During the war, Joe Kennedy, Jr., the apple of his father's eye, was killed, and Joe Kennedy never forgave Roosevelt for it. In 1945, when the nation was plunged into grief by the death of Roosevelt, Joe Kennedy wrote to his daughter, "There is . . . no doubt that it was a great thing for the country."

In 1946, Jack Kennedy was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. As a Congressman from a Boston waterfront district, however, he showed a curious lack of zeal to identify himself as a Roosevelt liberal. To be sure, he often voted with New Deal Democrats, but not always and with little ardor. He never joined any of the leading liberal organizations, did not seem to feel much empathy for the poor, and voted to slash funds for that archetypal New Deal project, the Tennessee Valley Authority. Furthermore, he more than once traced his country's difficulties in foreign affairs to "a sick Roosevelt" at the 1945 Yalta Conference with Stalin and Churchill.

If Kennedy expressed disdain (in private) for Roosevelt liberals during the 1950s, they returned it in kind. As Burton Hersh, Ted Kennedy's biographer, wrote: "The tendency among the . . . twilight-burnished New Deal liberals of the period . . . was to see this standard-bearer of a second generation bid for

Government spending (state, local, and federal) grew from 22 percent of GNP during the late 1940s to 40 percent in 1980. Postwar federal domestic outlays rose most rapidly under a Republican President, Richard Nixon. Economic growth and government programs, meanwhile, dramatically reduced poverty.

Courtesy of the New York Post.

Senator John F. Kennedy meets FDR's widow, Eleanor, in October 1960. Such symbolic acts helped bolster Kennedy's appeal to liberals.

political power as callow and opportunistic, able to summon up a little too self-consciously . . . a moderately recherché text from Burke or Stendhal or Dante or Duff Cooper."

He had one particularly sharp critic, Eleanor Roosevelt, the keeper of the liberal flame. When Kennedy went after the Democratic vice presidential nomination in 1956, Mrs. Roosevelt embarrassed him in public by asking him why he had not spoken out against Senator Joseph McCarthy. Kennedy had made himself particularly vulnerable on this question by writing a book with the title *Profiles in Courage.* This opened him to the gibe that he should have shown less profile and more courage. Kennedy, for his part, demonstrated little interest in assuaging the doubts of the Roosevelt liberals.

But in 1960 a change came. When he sought the Democratic presidential nomination that year, a pollster told Kennedy that it was essential to identify himself with FDR and liberal ideals if he hoped to win the critical state of West Virginia, where pictures of Roosevelt could be found in almost every coal miner's home. Kennedy took this advice. He even imported Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. to campaign for him. In one speech, FDR Jr. declared, "My daddy and Jack Kennedy's daddy were just like that!" as he raised two fingers tightly together, a notion that astonished those with long memories. In addition, at Joe Kennedy's suggestion, thousands of letters with FDR Jr.'s signature were mailed to West Virginia voters bearing the postmark of Hyde Park, New York, the ancestral Roosevelt home. Kennedy was victorious in the West Virginia primary and that put him well on his way to winning the presidential nomination.

Eleanor as Den Mother

John Kennedy had now crossed a divide. For the first time in his life, he was identifying himself with Franklin Roosevelt. Some liberals were quick to take him at his word, but one person remained unconvinced: Eleanor Roosevelt. In a last-ditch attempt to deny Kennedy the nomination in favor of Adlai Stevenson, she flew to the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles. "It seems absurd," she said with a twist of the knife, "to accept anyone as second best until you have done all you can do to get the best." After Kennedy won the nomination, she left the convention in tears.

As President, Kennedy satisfied some of the skeptics by showing an abiding interest in the style of Franklin Roosevelt. So many of the people who joined Kennedy's White House staff had intellectual backgrounds reminiscent of the New Deal bureaucrats that one Republican, eyeing a cadre of presidential assistants on Capitol Hill, said, "All they need now is Eleanor Roosevelt to be den mother." Kennedy took pains to seek Mrs. Roosevelt's counsel. The political scientist Lawrence Fuchs of Brandeis has observed that as early as the spring of 1961, "the relationship between the President and the Lady was blooming." By the end of Kennedy's first year in office, one could no longer discern even a smoldering ember of the old Kennedy-Roosevelt family animosity.

At a policy level, too, Kennedy drew upon the Roosevelt tradition, at least in part because there was no other source for a Democratic President to turn to for ideas. In the realm of domestic affairs, he reinstituted a modest food stamp plan that had originated in the New Deal, put through a watered-down $900 million Public Works Acceleration Act that derived from the Public Works Administration, modeled both his farm support and conservation programs in part on the legislation of the

1930s, and sketched out plans for an assault on poverty that drew upon FDR's relief operations. No less revealing was the lineage of his foreign policy. He instructed his advisers to come up with a catch phrase like FDR's "Good Neighbor" policy ("Alliance for Progress" was the answer), and he appropriated Roosevelt's term, *quarantine*, for his strategy during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. On the eve of taking office, he said: "In the final analysis, our foreign policy, our relations with other countries, will be most affected by what we do here in the United States. It was Franklin Roosevelt's compassionate actions here at home that built his great reputation abroad. What we are speaks much louder than what we say."

Yet, for all he owed to Roosevelt's style, for all of his efforts to cultivate the Roosevelt family, for all of his indebtedness to particular ideas of the earlier period, neither Kennedy nor the men around him thought that the Roosevelt legacy was really pertinent to the 1960s. On one occasion, holding up a memo from a White House aide, he said to a caller, "Look at that, will you? Seven single-spaced pages. And what a lot of blankety-blank. I dearly love this man. He has a fine mind and some fine ideas, but in this case. . . ." He paused, then said with a trace of a smile, "He is proposing that I conduct myself as Franklin Roosevelt did in 1933, but this fellow can't get through his head that first, I'm not FDR and this is 1963, not 1933. . . . Roosevelt faced one central problem, the Depression, and he could take more liberties with domestic matters than I could possibly enjoy today. Also, in 1933, there were no nuclear bombs or missiles or jet aircraft or Cold War."

Escaping History

No sooner had Kennedy died than historians and publicists felt compelled to assign him a place in history, and once more the comparison to Roosevelt seemed inevitable. Some regretted the fact that Kennedy's premature death denied him the chance to roll up the achievements of an FDR. It was, wrote Arthur Schlesinger, the sympathetic biographer of both men, as if Roosevelt had been killed at the end of 1935. However, other writers, recognizing how much Roosevelt had accomplished by 1935, emphasized how thin Kennedy's record was.

But while historic assessment was going on, something more important was happening: Kennedy was becoming part not of history but of myth. As Theodore White has written: "More than any other President since Lincoln, John F. Kennedy has become myth. The greatest President in the stretch between them was, of course, Franklin D. Roosevelt; but it was difficult to make myth of Franklin Roosevelt, the country squire, the friendly judge, the approachable politician, the father figure. . . . Kennedy was cut off at the promise, not after the performance, and so it was left to television and his widow, Jacqueline, to frame the man as legend."

Had Kennedy lived, he could not have escaped comparison to Roosevelt, and he might well have been judged never to have measured up to him. But by becoming part of myth rather than history, Kennedy was at last outside the shadow cast by FDR.

The Greatest of Them All?

A short time after Harry Truman left Speaker Rayburn's office on the afternoon of April 12, 1945, a young Texas Congressman showed up. He had first come to Congress in the spring of 1937 in a special election at a crucial moment for President Roosevelt. Only 29 years old, he had run as an outright supporter of FDR's controversial plan to "pack" the recalcitrant Supreme Court with New Deal supporters.

Opponents of Roosevelt's scheme, including most of the press, said that the country was against it, while the President claimed that the people were with him. When the young outsider was victorious, his triumph was hailed as a vote of confidence for Roosevelt. The President himself, then on a fishing vacation in the Gulf of Mexico, arranged to have him at the Galveston pier when his yacht docked and invited him to ride with him on the northbound train from Houston. The new Congressman's name: Lyndon Baines Johnson. Roosevelt offered Johnson some fatherly advice and gave him the telephone number of one of his closest aides.

Washington quickly reached the conclusion that Johnson was FDR's pet Congressman. Roosevelt was once heard to remark, "That's the kind of man I could have been if I hadn't had a Harvard education." The President understood that on most issues he had Johnson's vote in his pocket, and Johnson in turn had easy access to the White House. When Johnson learned the news of Roosevelt's death in Speaker Rayburn's office, he was grief-stricken. "He was like a daddy to me, always. He was the one person I ever knew—anywhere—who was never afraid."

When in November 1963, Johnson succeeded to the Presidency, he declared openly that Franklin Roosevelt was his model. Johnson surrounded himself with advisers who had been luminaries of the New Deal—Abe Fortas, Jim Rowe, Tommy Corcoran (the man whose telephone number FDR had given him

LBJ's GREAT SOCIETY

"We stand at the edge of the greatest era in the life of any nation," President Lyndon Baines Johnson declared in 1964. "For the first time in world history, we have the abundance and the ability to free every man from hopeless want . . . [T]his generation has man's first chance to create a Great Society."

During the next two years, under LBJ's prodding, Congress established no less than 21 new health programs, 17 others for assisting education, 15 for economic development, 12 for urban aid, and four for manpower training. The initial cost when all was in place: $11 billion in 1966, only 10 percent of the federal budget, which was then just beginning to feel the impact of the Vietnam War.

Some of the Great Society measures were simple (albeit generous) extensions of federal transfer payments, conceived during the New Deal, to the needy. Thus, the number of recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (first set up under FDR) rose from 3.5 million in 1962 to five million in 1967 (and to 10.8 million in 1980). Created in 1965, federal health insurance for the aged (Medicare) and for the poor (Medicaid) represented steps toward universal coverage that had been on the Democrats' agenda since FDR's day. Together, they cost $64 billion in 1980.

In various minor ways, Washington had long been involved in local public education. But under LBJ's Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Congress authorized no less than $1 billion to fund "compensatory" classes for "disadvantaged" children. The Head Start program (first appropriation: $96 million) was designed to provide special instruction, nutrition, and guidance for some 200,000 disadvantaged preschoolers. And in 1965, Congress passed the Higher Education Act, providing (among other things) loans and

26 years before), Ben Cohen—and he borrowed freely from the New Deal experience. Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps served as the inspiration for the Job Corps of Johnson's War on Poverty, and the National Youth Administration of the 1930s became the basis for the Youth Corps of the '60s.

President Johnson's chief assistant, Bill Moyers, once told me: "Johnson's relation to FDR was like that of Plato to Socrates. He was Roosevelt's pupil. Roosevelt may not have known grants to low-income college students.

Social engineering began with LBJ's ambitious 1964 Economic Opportunity Act — creating the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). One new program was the Job Corps, which brought 30,000 poor teenagers each year to live in 95 special camps where, it was hoped, they would learn both a trade and good work habits. The short-lived Model Cities program — "the Johnson administration's great adventure in structural tinkering," according to legal scholar Lance Liebman — was supposed to renovate slums and reinforce local social services in a carefully targeted drive to break the "cycle of poverty" in 150 cities.

Much Great Society legislation was aimed at ending racial discrimination. Through such measures as the 1964 Civil Rights Act (which banned discrimination in voting, employment, and public facilities), and the 1965 Voting Rights Act (which outlawed "Jim Crow" restrictions on blacks' right to vote), Congress tried to bring blacks and other minority groups into the American mainstream.

Some endeavors went further. Through creation of OEO's nationwide Legal Services Program, Congress gave minorities a powerful advocate in local courts. The OEO's Community Action Program was designed to enlist the "maximum feasible participation" of the poor in administering local antipoverty efforts. Such federal efforts soon sparked opposition from jealous local elected officials. Apathy, confusion, and red tape plagued urban uplift. Legal services lawyers were accused of radicalism and worse.

Community Action, OEO, and Model Cities no longer exist, even as civil rights laws remain in force. The future of the Legal Services Program (now Corporation) is uncertain. Medicare, Medicaid, student aid: These are the major Great Society innovations that will probably survive in some form for generations. Their intent was clear; their goals were attainable. They involved direct financial help to the needy. These measures, ironically, were closest in spirit to the main thrust of the New Deal that Lyndon Johnson had hoped to leave in the shade.

this, but Johnson was always studying him. The influence of Roosevelt on Johnson is like the mark a prehistoric river leaves in a cavern. If you go to some place like the Luray Caverns, you may not see the old river but you sense its presence everywhere."

Johnson, though, wanted a great deal more than to be FDR's follower. He had gargantuan ambitions. He would not be content to go down in the history books merely as a successful

President in the Roosevelt tradition. He wanted instead to be "the greatest of them all, the whole bunch of them." And to be the greatest President in history, he would need not merely to match Roosevelt's performance but to exceed it. Indeed, on Election Night 1964, a reporter, expecting him to be jubilant over his landslide victory over Senator Barry Goldwater, was startled to find him peevish instead. He had no doubt that he had beaten Goldwater, but he was still not sure that his percentage of the vote was greater than FDR's in 1936. (It was; Johnson won 61.1 percent of the popular vote versus FDR's 60.8 percent.) Johnson was not running against Goldwater. He was running against Roosevelt.

When I spoke to President Johnson at the White House in the fall of 1965, he made clear to me exactly how he measured himself against Roosevelt. He said: "He did get things done. There was regulation of business, but that was unimportant.

Courtesy of Wide World Photos (Associated Press).

Representative Lyndon Johnson joins FDR in Galveston in May 1937. Johnson's district was a top federal aid recipient during the New Deal.

Social Security and the Wagner Act (the National Labor Relations Act) were all that really amounted to much, and none of it compares to my education act."

If Johnson's claims were excessive, it was because Roosevelt was such a hard act to follow. Roosevelt did so many things for the first time that he pre-empted a huge amount of territory. Johnson could rightly claim that "the fabulous 89th Congress" had enacted a bevy of laws that went beyond the New Deal—not only federal aid to education but also Medicare, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and even a program to create "vest pocket" parks in cities. And Johnson's Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), established in 1964 by the previous Congress, went well beyond the New Deal in attempting to enlist the "maximum feasible participation" of the poor in federal efforts to *eradicate* poverty.

Yet the OEO, budgeted at only $237 million in 1965, was a small part of Johnson's program. Much of what he did was merely a gloss on the legislation of the Roosevelt years. Commentators had no doubt about the pedigree. One called the Johnson program a "Second New Deal," while another wrote flatly, "The Great Society is an attempt to codify the New Deal's vision of a good society."

Stumbling over Vietnam

Johnson was unwilling merely to remain in Roosevelt's shadow not only because of his vaulting ambitions but also because, in one crucial aspect, Johnson thought of FDR as a bad example. He had seen a President win an overwhelming victory at the polls in 1936 and then have his expectations explode only a few months later when the Court-packing bill went down to defeat. Never again would the prospects for New Deal reform be so promising. Johnson, too, had just won a landslide victory. But over lunch in 1964 Johnson told reporters that he meant to avoid Roosevelt's error. One of those present that day, Tom Wicker, later wrote: "Lyndon Johnson would not . . . carelessly throw away the fruits of his great victory for some unattainable goal, as Roosevelt had done in trying to pack the Supreme Court. But he did. . . . Like Roosevelt before him, he . . . scaled the heights only—in the blindness of his pride—to stumble and fall."

The stumble and fall came in foreign affairs, where, at least as much as in domestic policy, Franklin Roosevelt served as his model. Johnson was certain that in pressing the war in Vietnam he was doing only what Roosevelt would have done. (It is by no means clear that this is so—Roosevelt, in fact, had been sympathetic to the anti-colonialists in Indochina.) Not only did Johnson analogize the communist challenge in Southeast Asia to that posed by Hitler at Munich, but he even proposed to establish a TVA in the Mekong Basin. By carrying the ideas of the Roosevelt years far beyond FDR's achievement, he anticipated that he would be rewarded with glory that would put Roosevelt in *his* shadow.

However, by early 1968, Johnson had come to realize that he had reached the end of the road. The outcry and domestic disorder over Vietnam led Johnson to recognize that he had not escaped FDR's difficulties of 1937 after all. Roosevelt survived the Court-packing crisis, but for Johnson it was all over.

As he contemplated the painful decision not to seek reelection, the most vivid memory of the Roosevelt years returned to him. "He recalled coming in as a Congressman and seeing FDR immobilized domestically over the Supreme Court issue," Walt Rostow has reported. "He felt that he could beat Nixon but wouldn't be able to accomplish anything in his second term. He had too many 'tin cans' tied to him."

Fading Away?

Even after he left office, he continued to claim that history would vindicate him, but not even a man of Lyndon Johnson's enormous ego could any longer believe that history would say that he had placed Roosevelt in his penumbra.

To some, it seemed that Johnson had come to grief because he had tried to apply FDR's ideas when they had ceased to be germane. The historian Eric Goldman, who served on Johnson's White House staff, has written: "America had been rampaging between the 1930s and the 1960s. The alterations were so swift and so deep that the country was changing right out from under President Lyndon Johnson. [Johnson] was about as contemporary as padded shoulders, a night at the radio, and Clark Gable."

Implicit in such an analysis are two assumptions: that Johnson's last year spelled the end of the Roosevelt tradition and that the Roosevelt legacy is no longer usable.

But both of these contentions are open to challenge.

Every four years, the pundits say that the Roosevelt coalition is finished, and every four years the Democratic voting configuration, though modified, bears a striking resemblance to what it was under FDR. When Jimmy Carter launched his presidential campaign in 1976, he did so not in the traditional place—Detroit's Cadillac Square—but in Warm Springs, Georgia; when he chose to address the country on the energy crisis, he deliberately chose the format of the fireside chat.

Even Republican Presidents have bowed to the Roosevelt tradition. Eisenhower, though he did not wish to emulate Roosevelt, strengthened many New Deal programs, such as Social Security, and dismantled none. Richard Nixon borrowed from Roosevelt's experience with price controls, while allowing, however grudgingly, rapid growth in the social spending that had begun in the 1930s and increased during the '60s. During the 1980 campaign, Ronald Reagan, who had voted for Roosevelt four times, quoted from FDR so extensively that the *New York Times* entitled its lead editorial on the Republican convention "Franklin Delano Reagan."

Still, the legacy of FDR appears to be waning. Nixon, Carter, and Reagan all have acknowledged the influence of Roosevelt, but largely as a matter of ritual. Carter, the technocrat from Georgia, failed to inspire the elements of the FDR coalition in his party in good part because he was so far removed from the Roosevelt tradition in spirit and substance. Reagan may quote at length from Roosevelt, but at the same time he seeks to dismember New Deal–style programs. He has even suggested that the New Deal was modeled on Italian fascism. And some see evidence in the 1980 election that we have entered a new age in which the shadow of FDR will disappear.

That is not a conclusion one should embrace too quickly. The 1980 outcome gives little evidence of being a radical realignment like that of 1932, and the Republican success may prove to be short-lived. Though there is a widely felt sense that liberal Democrats must rethink their premises, the leaders of the party—Fritz Mondale and Ted Kennedy—are both Roosevelt legatees. No one will any longer live in FDR's shadow, as Harry Truman, John Kennedy, and Lyndon Johnson did, but it may be a considerable time before Roosevelt's presence is not felt at all.

BACKGROUND BOOKS

THE NEW DEAL

The term "New Deal" is convenient shorthand for various things: an era, a series of programs, a philosophy, a cluster of personalities, a collage of national memories and myths. If it is difficult to analyze the New Deal, it is even harder to fathom the complicated man who brought it to pass. The more one learns, the more one yearns to know.

Thus, it has taken four volumes—**The Apprenticeship, The Ordeal, The Triumph,** and **Launching the New Deal,** (Little, Brown, 1952, 1954, 1956, & 1973, respectively)—for historian Frank Freidel, in what is doubtless the definitive biography, to move from Roosevelt's childhood to the end of his First Hundred Days in office.

Roosevelt's patrician character was formed early. When young Franklin's mother reprimanded him for being high-handed with his playmates, Freidel writes, Roosevelt replied, "Mummie, if I didn't give the orders, nothing would happen."

As a young man, Roosevelt was strongly influenced by his distant cousin, Theodore, a vigorous leader who told Franklin during one of his infrequent visits to the White House that "men of good background and education owed their country public service."

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once remarked that FDR had a "second-rate intellect but a first-rate temperament." James MacGregor Burns reaches the same conclusion in his highly readable, two-volume biography, **Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox** (Harcourt, 1956, cloth; 1963, paper) and **Roosevelt: Soldier of Freedom** (Harcourt, 1970, cloth; 1973, paper). Burns describes the 32nd President as a man of "no fixed convictions about methods and policies" whose chief tenet was "Improvise."

Even so, writes historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Roosevelt never wavered in his efforts to create a society "as good as human ingenuity can devise and fit for the children of God."

Schlesinger's three-volume **The Age of Roosevelt—The Crisis of the Old Order** (Houghton, 1957, cloth & paper); **The Coming of the New Deal** (Houghton, 1959, cloth & paper); **The Politics of Upheaval** (Houghton, 1960, cloth; 1967, paper)—is the most comprehensive history of domestic affairs during Roosevelt's first term. It suffers, however, from Schlesinger's chronic tendency to view himself as one of FDR's intellectual apostles.

FDR steals less of the show (and gets a mixed review) in William E. Leuchtenburg's **Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal** (Harper, 1963, cloth; 1975, paper). Leuchtenburg considers the achievements of the New Deal a "halfway revolution." He concludes nevertheless that, despite its failure to solve many inherited problems, and its propensity for creating new ones, the New Deal probably changed America for the better.

Above all, Leuchtenburg argues, Roosevelt proved that democratic governments were disposed to respond, and could respond with at least partial effectiveness, to traumatic economic and social crises. This was no small accomplishment "at a time when democracy was under attack elsewhere in the world"—notably in Germany and Italy.

As a key member of the "Brains Trust" that advised President Roosevelt, Raymond Moley was in the thick of things from the start. But as he makes clear in **After Seven Years** (Harper, 1939; Da Capo, 1972), he soon became disillusioned with the "unskillful combinations of Gothic, Byzantine, and Le Corbusier" that comprised the social architecture of the New Deal.

Moley had at first deemed Roosevelt's freedom from dogma a virtue, but the "autointoxification of the intelligence" that lured FDR into contradictory policies ultimately drove him away. Moley felt that the New Deal sputtered ingloriously to a halt because Roosevelt tried to accomplish too much too quickly.

Roosevelt's quixotic nature was the despair of all who worked closely with him—and an endless source of fascination. "I cannot come to grips with him," complained the irascible Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, no easy person to get along with himself. The almost daily entries in Ickes's three-volume **Secret Diary** (Simon & Schuster, 1953–54; Da Capo, 1974) provide a sometimes narrow but always penetrating view of the political struggles, great and small, within the administration.

The man who may have understood FDR best was Harry Hopkins, the "minister of relief" who presided over the Works Progress Administration and Federal Emergency Relief Administration. During the war years, he served as Roosevelt's personal emissary to Churchill, Stalin, and other heads of state. His career is exhaustively chronicled in Robert E. Sherwood's **Roosevelt and Hopkins** (Grosset, 1950).

During the 1930s, Hopkins employed journalist Lorena Hickock as his confidential "eyes and ears" in the field to keep him apprised of the progress of New Deal relief programs. Her vivid dispatches have been collected in **One Third of a Nation** (Univ. of Ill., 1981), edited by Richard Lowitt and Maurine Beasley.

In June 1934, Hickock prepared an optimistic report on the Tennessee Valley Authority, then employing some 10,000 men:

> Thousands of them are residents of the valley, working five and a half hours a day, five days a week, for a really LIVING wage. Houses are going up for them to live in . . . And in their leisure time they are studying—farming, trades, the arts of living, preparing themselves for the fuller lives they are to lead in that Promised Land. You are probably saying, "Oh, come down to earth!" But that's the way the Tennessee Valley affects one these days.

Roosevelt's critics were numerous. On one flank were the disillusioned progressives—among them, journalist Walter Lippman and California's Senator Hiram Johnson—who make up the cast of Otis L. Graham, Jr.'s **An Encore for Reform** (Oxford, 1967). Most of them supported the New Deal at the outset but broke with FDR for carrying his reforms too far.

On the populist side, FDR's chief foe was Huey P. Long, the Louisiana Senator assassinated in 1935. A onetime Roosevelt supporter, Long was embittered by the President's reluctance to embrace more sweeping reforms, such as a drastic redistribution of wealth.

In the end, argues T. Harry Williams in **Huey Long** (Knopf, 1969, cloth; Random, 1981, paper), the

"Kingfish" was corrupted by his own quest for ever more power to accomplish ever more good. But Williams believes that the Senator's goals and the President's were remarkably similar, differing only in degree.

New Left historian Howard Zinn echoes many of Huey Long's complaints in his introduction to **New Deal Thought** (Bobbs-Merrill, 1966, paper only), a useful collection of speeches and essays from the 1930s by New Dealers and their critics on both the Left and the Right.

Zinn finds much to praise in the free-wheeling intellectual debate of the New Deal years. But he faults Roosevelt for failing to bring lasting help to the "permanent army of the unemployed; the poverty-ridden people blocked from public view by the huge prosperous and fervently consuming middle class."

In **A New Deal for Blacks** (Oxford, 1978, cloth; 1981, paper), Harvey Sitkoff agrees—up to a point. While FDR did not attempt to end racial discrimination, he did extend the benefits of such New Deal programs as the WPA to blacks. Ultimately, Sitkoff contends, the New Deal's most important contributions lay in creating a tradition of reform and in making explicit as never before "the federal government's recognition of and responsibility for the plight of Afro-Americans."

A New Deal experiment more notable for its aspirations than its achievements was the "back to the land" movement, promoted by several federal agencies. In **Tomorrow a New World: The New Deal Community Program** (Cornell, 1959), Paul K. Conkin writes that the movement reflected both a tradition of agrarian romanticism and the utopian thinking of social theorists. Approximately 100 newly created communities, mostly in the South and Southwest, brought "more tangible enduring achievements" than most other relief expenditures of the time, Conkin concludes, even though no more than 10,000 families were involved. One forgotten legacy of the programs: the impetus they gave to latter-day urban planning.

Another of Roosevelt's reforms, more Machiavellian than utopian, was his oft-forgotten reorganization of the executive branch. In 1939, at FDR's prompting, Congress authorized the creation of an Executive Office of the President, placing the Bureau of the Budget, the National Resources Planning Board, and a host of other agencies more firmly within the President's grasp.

As Barry D. Karl argues in **Executive Reorganization and Reform in the New Deal** (Harvard, 1963), the reform did not alter the balance of power among the three branches of government, but it did allow future Presidents to control potential in-house critics and, paradoxically, to isolate themselves.

While the White House was consolidating its power within Washington, the federal government was extending its authority over the states. James T. Patterson argues in **The New Deal and the States** (Princeton, 1969) that the ebbing of the states' power was due more to their inability to meet a crisis of national proportions than to any conscious decisions in Washington.

Harry Truman inherited the New Deal's legacy of federal activism but not the Depression-era sense of crisis that legitimized it. His challenge, during a period of both prosperity and inflation, was to translate the "emergency" measures of the 1930s into an enduring liberal program.

In **Beyond the New Deal** (Columbia, 1973, cloth & paper), Alonzo L. Hamby maintains that Truman succeeded in this task. By combining Keynesian economics and "Fair Deal" social programs at home and adopting a firm anti-communist stance abroad, Truman established a postwar liberal consensus that helped keep the Democratic Party at the "vital center" of American politics.

But America's liberal reformers had to wait almost 20 years after Franklin Roosevelt's death to see anything comparable to the New Deal. Some of the thrill returned in 1964 when Lyndon Johnson embarked on the ambitious program of economic and social renewal he called the Great Society even as he intervened militarily in Vietnam. The most comprehensive assessment is **The Great Society** (Basic, 1974, cloth & paper), edited by Eli Ginzberg and Robert M. Solow. Its contributors focus on LBJ's initiatives in specific areas—health, education, welfare, income redistribution, housing and urban renewal, manpower training, black poverty. "The record of the Great Society," the editors conclude, "is one of successes mixed with failures . . . as any sensible person should have expected."

Some programs, such as Medicare and remedial education, worked fairly well. The "War on Poverty" initiatives—e.g., the Community Action Program, the Model Cities program—did not: "The promises were extreme; the specific remedial actions were untried and untested; the finances were grossly inadequate; the political structure was . . . vulnerable."

What of the New Deal that LBJ hoped to outshine?

A generation is still alive that remembers Roosevelt and holds him in high esteem; younger generations have grown up taking his achievements for granted. Franklin Roosevelt's programmatic legacy—Social Security, welfare, unemployment insurance, broad regulation of business—remains largely intact, and despite the new conservatism in Washington, no politician dares renounce it.

Among scholars, the debate continues over whether the promise of the New Deal was really fulfilled. Some believe that FDR ignored or overlooked opportunities for reform and failed to deliver the fruits of the New Deal to all Americans. It is a useful debate, and I think Roosevelt, were he alive today, might be pleased to learn that he is still the subject of controversy.

—Linda J. Lear

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Ms. Lear, adjunct associate professor of history at George Washington University, is working on a biography of Harold Ickes.*